Dormouse report 2025

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Introduction

Iberian populations of Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*) have been negatively affected by the low availability of natural cavities, a consequence of the intensive forest exploitation until the mid-20th century.
Due to its specialized and hibernating nature, this species is highly sensitive to environmental changes and habitat disturbances. In addition, as a small forest mammal, it plays a key role at the base of the food web in these ecosystems and serves as a recurrent prey item for emblematic and endangered carnivores such as the European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*).
The Iberian Peninsula represents the southwestern limit of the species' European distribution. (lirons.org, 2025)

However, its presence in certain regions remains uncertain because of limited data. Ongoing monitoring efforts are therefore essential to define the true boundaries of its range.
The southernmost populations in the Iberian Peninsula are located in Catalonia. Studying these populations provides valuable insights into the species' adaptive capacities in the context of global change, which is expected to reduce the extent of suitable habitats.
Although this animal is rarely seen in the forest, nest boxes constitute an excellent tool for its detection, study, and public awareness.
Continuous and systematic monitoring over time makes it possible to understand population fluctuations and to assess how climate and landscape changes may affect them (lirons.org, 2025).

The Natural Science Museum of Granollers coordinates the monitoring program, as well as a broad network of stations and collaborators that enable a permanent collection of data.
For the past three years, ICO ESC volunteers have been taking part in this project.

Materials and methods

The station is located at the Convent dels Salesians, 4 km from Santa Fe. It contains 20 nest boxes and is situated in a beech forest (*Fagus sylvatica*) with some common holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and a few pubescent oaks (*Quercus pubescens*).
The boxes are numbered and placed as a plot of 4 lines of 5 nest boxes each, at 30 meters from each other and about 2,5 to 3 meters from the ground.

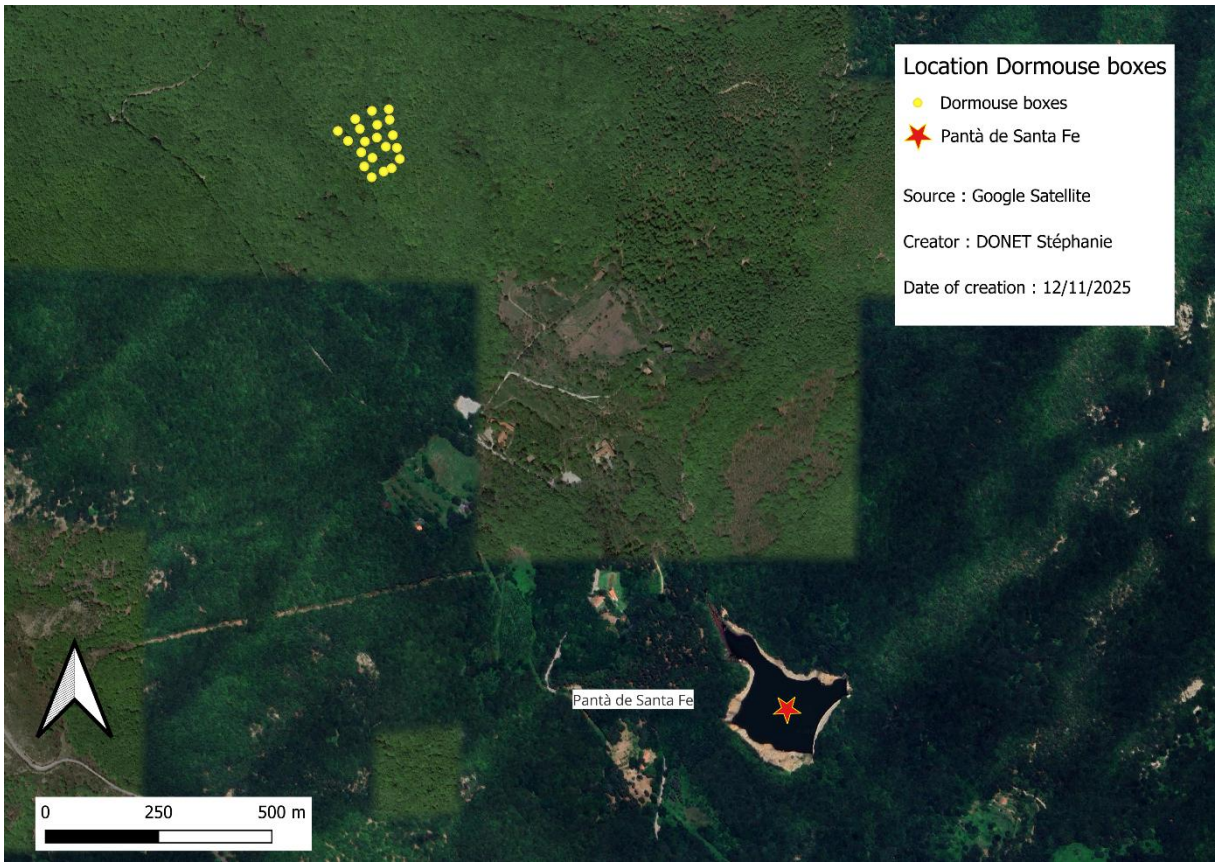

Figure 1: Location of the nest boxes, represented by the yellow points.

The boxes are checked a total of 5 times from July to October, between the 15th and 25th of each month. It is coinciding with the activity peak of the species inside the boxes. Moreover, a cleaning check is done during June.

Here is a resume of the expectations to find in the boxes per period:

1. **June**: Cleaning and maintenance check of the nest boxes. Some birds (e.g. the great tit) might have just left the boxes where they have bred. Besides, there may be some infrequent and exceptional occupation by edible dormice.
2. **July**: First regular occupations of Edible Dormouse. Mating and searching for breeding shelters by females.
3. **August:** Mating and start of breeding.
4. **September**: Breeding and lactation.
5. **October:** Dispersal of the young and pre-hibernation of the adults.

The volunteers followed the advanced protocol, which involves handling edible dormouse specimens to mark them and take biometric measurements for detailed population monitoring.

Since the volunteers are not authorised to handle the animals, all manipulations are carried out by an agent from the Natural Science Museum of Granollers. The agent also trains the volunteers coordinator to allow them to carry out the handling procedures on their own in the future.

Procedure:

1. Set up the ladder to access the nest box.
2. Insert an artificial plug (cloth) into the entrance hole of the box to prevent individuals from escaping before it is opened.
3. Open the lid of the nest box and observe its contents. In addition to edible dormice, other species of interest may occupy the boxes; their presence and any signs of activity should be noted.
4. Capture the edible dormice and place each individual in a separate cloth bag. For each specimen, check whether it is already marked (recapture) or unmarked by verifying the presence of an ear tag. Record the following data for each specimen: weight, sex, age, and reproductive status.
5. Return each individual carefully to its nest box once all measurements and observations have been taken.
6. Record all data on the Advanced Field Sheet.

Figure 2: The ICO volunteers checking a box under the supervision of an agent from the Natural Science Museum of Granollers.

Results

The results are presented by sampling period, indicating which species were detected in the nest boxes and providing detailed information on each individual edible dormouse found.

All tables present the information in the following order: first the data on Edible Dormouse, followed by information on inactive and active bird nests, and finally, in decreasing order, the other species and signs detected in the boxes.

Cleaning check

The cleaning check was done on 18th June, and all boxes were in a good state.

Cleaning check						
Old dormouse nest	Inactive bird nest	Active bird nest	Spiderweb & spider	Old bird faeces	Snail & little branches	Empty
1	7	3	5	2	1	1

Table 1: Presence and signs observed during the cleaning check.

As shown in Table 1, only one old dormouse nest was found, built with holly tree leaves. Because the leaves were dry and brown, it is certain that this nest was not constructed this year. This station is somewhat particular, as it is the only one where dormice use holly leaves to build their nest, an unusual choice because they are spiky.

The seven inactive bird nests were removed to make the boxes available for the Dormouse, while the active bird nests were left undisturbed.

All other species observed in the boxes (such as spiders and snails), as well as their associated signs, were removed.

Figure 3: ICO volunteer checking a box.

Figure 4: ICO volunteer removing an inactive bird nest.

Period 1

The check of the first period was done on 21 July, and all the boxes were in a good state.

First period							
Dormouse nest	Inactive bird nest	Active bird nest	Spiderweb & Spider	Roly-poly	Snail & Spider	Old bird faeces	Empty
1	3	1	10	1	1	1	2

Table 2: Presence and signs observed during the first period check.

A dormouse was found in its nest made of holly leaves (Table 2). This individual was already tagged, and based on the code, it was confirmed to be Sorora. This female was tagged on 24 September 2023 and was not recaptured in 2024.

The agent from the Natural Science Museum of Granollers recorded its weight and the measurements of the tibia, foot, and tail before releasing the animal. At the same time, a volunteer noted all the information, including the ear-tag code and the sex.

The inactive bird nests were cleaned, and the last active nest was left undisturbed because it contained four Great Tit chicks; these data were entered in Nius.cat. All other species observed in the boxes (such as spiders, Roly-poly, and snails), along with their associated signs, were also left undisturbed.

Figure 5: The agent from the Natural Science Museum of Granollers recorded the weight of Sorora.

Figure 6: Sorora

Period 2

The check of the second period was done on 21 August, and all the boxes were in a good state.

Second period				
Dormouse nest	Inactive bird nest	Spiderweb & Spider	Snail & Spiderweb	Spider & Roly-poly
5	1	12	1	1

Table 3: Presence and signs observed during the second period check

As presented in Table 3, five dormouse nests were found: two constructed with holly leaves, two with beech leaves, and one composed of a mix of both holly and beech leaves. Only one of these nests was occupied. Female dormice can build multiple nests and use them at different times; for example, if disturbed, they may relocate their pups to an alternative nest.

The individual found was Sorora with six pups. For Sorora, only her weight needed to be recorded, as all other measurements had been taken during the previous check. She weighed 120 g during the first period and 125.1 g during the second. For the pups, it was necessary to record their sex, weight, and approximate age, which in this case was around 14 days.

The remaining inactive bird nest was cleaned. All other species observed in the boxes (such as spiders, Roly-poly, and snail), along with their associated signs, were not disturbed.

Figure 7: The six pups in the nest.

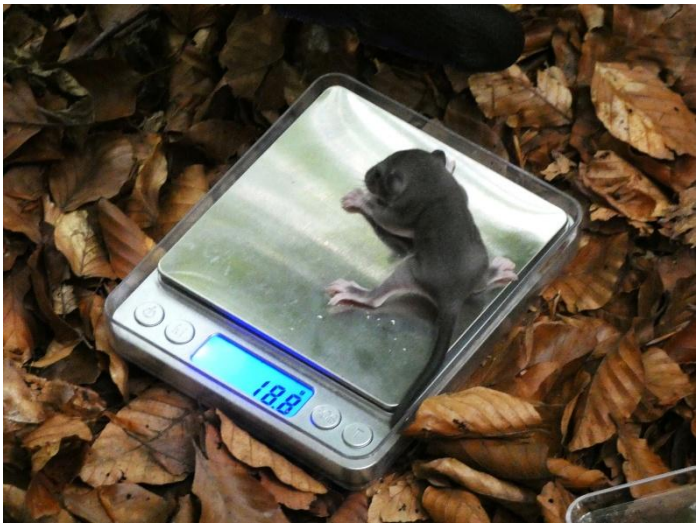

Figure 8: Weighing of a pup.

Period 3

The check of the third period was done on 17 September, and all the boxes were in a good state.

Third period			
Dormouse nest	Spiderweb & Spider	Spider & Roly-poly	Snail & Spider
5	11	3	1

Table 4: Presence and signs observed during the third period check

According to Table 4, five dormouse nests were found, all the same as the second period check. But two nests were occupied, one by Sorora and a juvenile and the second by 4 juveniles.

As the last check, only the weight needed to be recorded for Sorora. For the juveniles, it was necessary to record their sex, weight and tag them. Only three could be tagged because the others escaped. Thanks to their ear tags they will be recognised as Bobby, Tanguy, and Jean-Marcel.

All other species observed in the boxes (such as spiders, Roly-poly, and snails), along with their associated signs, were not disturbed.

Figure 9: The volunteers with the agent from the Natural Science Museum of Granollers are recording the measurement of the Edible Dormouse.

Period 4

The check of the fourth period was done on 22 October, and all the boxes were in a good state.

Fourth period				
Dormouse nest	Spiderweb & Spider	Spider & Roly-poly	Snail & Spider	Spider & Mice faeces
4	9	5	1	1

Table 5: Presence and signs observed during the third period check

As illustrated in Table 5, four dormouse nests were found, all with beech leaves. But no individuals were found. Probably because of the dispersal of the young and pre-hibernation of the adults, they don't use the boxes anymore until the next season.

Figure 10: Volunteer writing down the observations

Figure 11: Volunteer checking a box.

Comparison with previous years

As mentioned in the introduction, the volunteers have been participating for three years. In 2022 and 2023, only six nest boxes were installed, making the data from those years not directly comparable. The remaining sixteen boxes were added in 2024, but no individuals were observed, so these data are likewise not comparable with the results from this year.

Conclusion

In 2025, a pair of Edible Dormouse bred at the Convent dels Salesians station; however, only the female, Sorora, was found, accompanied by her six pups.

All collected data are available on lirons.org and contribute to the analysis of population trends in Catalonia.

Figure 12: Sorora (Photographer: DONET Stéphanie)

Reference

- https://www.lirons.org