

# MAMMAL

## CONSERVATION EUROPE

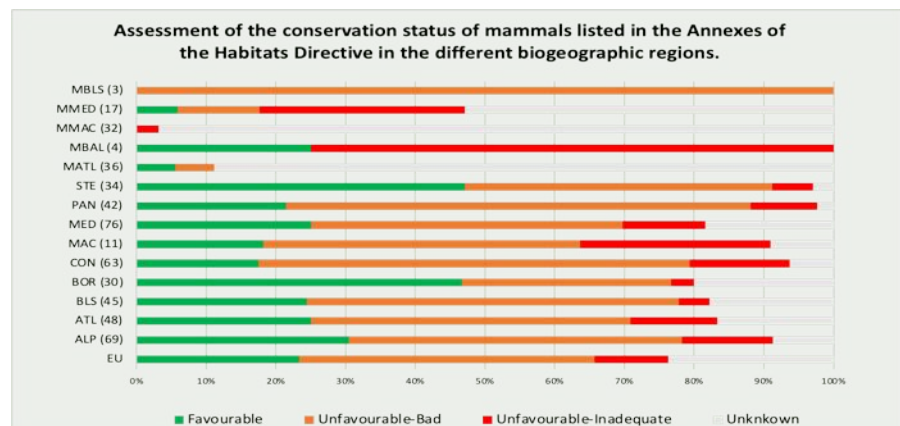
### POLICY

#### **MCE calls for a coherent monitoring and recording scheme for mammals**

Compared with many other taxonomic groups, Europe's native mammals are under-recorded and lack coherent monitoring strategies. We highlighted these issues in a position statement sent to the EU vice-president Frans Timmermans (Executive Vice-President of the European Commission European Green Deal) and Virginijus Sinkevičius (Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries) in 2021. This resulted in an online meeting with representatives of the European Commission's Directorate General for Environment, including Nicola Notaru and Frank Vassen, and we are now working on a proposal for systematic monitoring of dormice across Europe (more on this below).

#### **EU Nature Restoration Law**

[The EU Nature Restoration Law](#) was drafted in response to the long-term damage of habitats across the continent, recognising that healthy ecosystems are inextricably linked with the future of farming, fishing, forestry, human health, water supplies, and that all are threatened by climate change. The law would require EU countries to develop national restoration plans, with legally binding targets. There was significant opposition to the legislation from populist politicians. In order to ensure Mammals were represented in discussions and advice provided to policymakers, MCE became a member of the European Habitats Forum (EHF) in **March 2022** in order to be part of an effective larger network contributing information to the debate. In **June 2022** we took an active part on the discussion on the Nature Law Proposals, presenting data on the status of the European mammals, stressing on some of the main conservation problems with this group.



Source: Art.17 Webtool, 2013-2018 Mammals overall assessment.

Mammal  
Conservation  
Europe  
is a network of  
organisations  
working to the  
increase our  
knowledge and  
improve the  
conservation of the  
European mammals

61% of the mammals included in the EU Habitats Directive have unfavourable status

Key conclusions include:

- Knowledge on the conservation status of the terrestrial species of mammals has increased, but 78% of marine species remain of unknown conservation status.
- The overall conservation status of mammals in Mediterranean, Continental, Atlantic and Alpine biogeographic regions seem to have improved, which might be a result of conservation efforts. However, 61% have unfavourable status and those with mostly Favourable conservation status are predominantly southern species, which may be undergoing climate-related range expansion.
- The % of species in Favourable Conservation status in the Boreal region has increased, which might be also due to climate change.
- The Conservation status of the species in Macaronesian biogeographic region has deteriorated – from 30% in Favourable in 2011 to less than 20% in 2018.



Participation in the European Habitats Forum and DG Environment meeting

Most of the Nature Restoration Law negotiations have focused on designated protected areas (e.g. Natura 2000). However, many mammal species are critically dependent on the connectivity of the wider landscape, and the quality of habitats outside protected areas. MCE therefore wrote a position letter to the EU vice-president Frans Timmermans Executive Vice-President of the European Commission European Green Deal and Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries in **November 2022**.

The Nature Restoration Law negotiations have been complex, with attempts being led by the European People's Party (EPP) to defeat the proposal in July 2023. MCE worked closely with other NGOs to provide evidence, draft press releases, and take part in social media campaigns. However, many targets of importance for the biodiversity conservation impact of this law were dropped or watered down during the negotiation process. The final decision is expected to be taken on 24<sup>th</sup> of February this year.

### Hydropower

MCE discussed and co-signed an Open letter on "[Counting on new hydropower to accelerate Renewable Energy deployment in Europe is irresponsible.](#)" in March 2023.

*The return of the wolf is a great success story where the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive have played an important role.*

## **Wolves**

MCE was very surprised to read the press statement from the European Commission urging member states to use all available legal frameworks to control wolf populations. This announcement followed a pony belonging to the EC President Ursula von der Leyen being killed by a wolf.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_23\\_4330](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_4330). It was highly unusual for such a statement to come directly from the office of the European Commission President, bypassing the normal processes; and we were also concerned that the call for evidence made in the statement lacked any controls on the quality of information that could be submitted. We therefore wrote to Mrs von der Leyen, and also the European Commission's Director General for the Environment, expressing our concerns.



We continue to follow this issue closely. The recolonisation of much of Europe by wolves has been one of the great success stories of recent decades, and their protection under the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive, has played an important role. There has been pressure for several years from Norway to reduce the protection of the wolf under the Bern Convention, and this has always been resisted by the European Union countries, which vote on block. Shortly before Christmas, the European Commission announced its intention to downgrade the status of the wolf from Strictly Protected to Protected, which would allow hunting. However, this change would be contrary to the Bern Convention for countries without clauses permitting hunting within the Convention (exception clauses apply to some Balkan and Eastern European countries with particularly large wolf populations). It is unclear how the differences between the Convention and the Habitats Directive will be resolved. It is also unclear whether the Commission will gain the support it needs from members and Council to pass the amendment.

You can read the letter in full [HERE](#).

## CONSERVATION

MCE has initiated a [Garden Dormouse Conservation Initiative](#). The garden dormouse *Eliomys quercinus*, is one of Europe's fastest declining mammals. A Working Group has been set up, involving about 50 researchers and conservationists from 20 countries, representing almost the complete geographical range of the species.

The goals are to identify the main drivers for the decline of the species, develop a systematic monitoring protocol applicable across its range, and to identify sustainable conservation strategies.

Countries in the Garden Dormouse Conservation Initiative

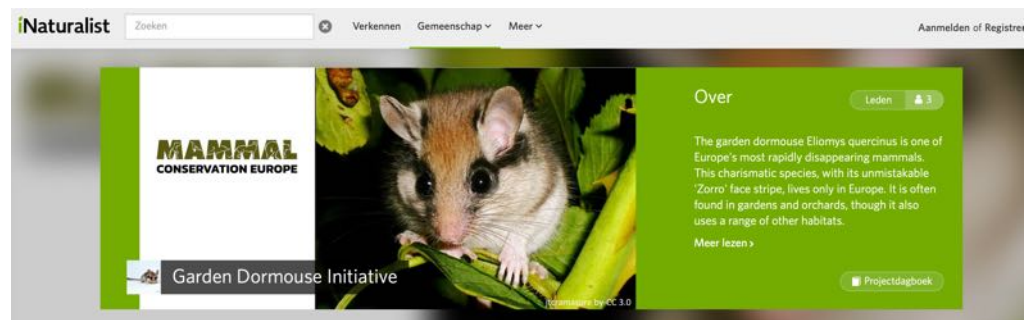
- Participating
- No representative yet
- Not participating
- Outside the species range



The Garden Dormouse is one of Europe's fastest declining mammals.

We need data and action for its sustainable conservation urgently.

As a first step to gathering more information on the distribution the species, an [iNaturalist page](#) has been active since August 2023. We encourage our members and supporters to submit their records and contribute to this important project.



Follow and support this project [here](#)

## Mammal Conservation Europe

Mammal Conservation Europe has the bold goal of uniting efforts, knowledge and resources to achieve thriving native mammal populations across the continent. We are keen to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, and the transfer of skills between mammal conservation organisations across Europe.

Although mammals are very diverse, many share similar threats, such as habitat destruction, pollution, and conflicts with humans and/or invasive species. By acting together, we will provide robust evidence, be in a better position to apply for substantive funding, and act as effective advocates for a sustainable future for Europe's mammals.

MCE includes so far 11 organisations from UK, The Netherlands, Italy, Albania, Spain, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Mammal Foundation, which works with mammal specialists in all countries in Europe. Please, visit the [MCE website](#) for more information

In addition, individuals and organisations can support our work by making a donation.

Join MCE

Donate to MCE



## Upcoming!!! 27-th of March 2024

We are pleased to invite you to the **first annual meeting of Mammal Conservation Europe.**

The meeting will be held online so we hope many people will participate.

**Wed, 27-th of March 2024, 13:00 – 14:30 CET**

The meeting will start with an open session that includes an introduction of MCE and two guest speakers: **John Linnell** on "Wolf conservation in Europe: how do we live with success?" and **Sandro Bertolino** on Dormice Restoration and Systematic Monitoring across Europe: a journey to sustainable forest conservation.

To attend the meeting, please register using the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/816826589317?aff=oddtcreator>.

*The European native mammals share similar threats: habitat destruction, pollution, conflicts with humans and/or invasive species.*

*Together, we can provide better evidence and advocacy, and ensure their sustainable future.*