

## *Conserving the Water Vole in Buckinghamshire*



Voles are reported to be Britain's fastest declining mammal, with numbers dropping by nearly 90 percent in the last 20 years. The Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust is helping water vole populations recover locally with a programme of conservation measures. The decline in numbers started in the 1950s and 1960s when changes in river engineering practices and agriculture resulted in habitat loss and degradation causing the break up and isolation of water vole populations.

Another factor in the decline in vole numbers has been predation by mink that have escaped from local mink farms.

The Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust are running a long term vole conservation programme:

BBOWT's Water Vole Recovery Project, the longest standing local project in the UK dedicated to water vole conservation, has continued to work to help the water vole populations in the three counties. Working in partnership with the Environment Agency, the Canal & River Trust and Thames Water, we have been monitoring water voles, identifying habitat enhancement opportunities and influencing local landowners to manage sites sympathetically for water voles and implement mink control.

Our work has resulted in a continued increase in the known areas of local water vole activity. In 2012 the National Water Vole Mapping Project, to which the project contributes data, suggested water vole presence had declined by 22% across England and Wales during the previous 3 years. By contrast, our Local Key Areas for water voles increased during this period and continued to increase a further 10% between 2012 and 2015, extending from 506 to 560 km<sup>2</sup>. **Where to see and how to spot water voles**

- River Thames - visit [Chimney Meadows](#)
- River Windrush in Witney
- River Ock in Abingdon
- Look out for burrows in the riverbank, often with a nibbled 'lawn' of grass around the entrance.
- Piles of nibbled grass and stems may be found by the water's edge, showing a distinctive 45° angled-cut at the ends.
- **For more information please contact the [Water Vole Project Officer](#) or help support projects like this by [joining BBOWT today](#).**