

Water Vole

DESCRIPTION

Whilst it may resemble a rat (even being dubbed the "water rat" or "ratty"), the water vole has fur on its tail, paws and ears, and has a rounder nose than its distant cousin. It lives along rivers, streams and ditches, around ponds and lakes and in marshes, reedbeds and areas of wet moorland. Water voles like to sit and eat in the same place, so piles of nibbled grass and stems may be found by the water's edge. They are much bigger than other voles. Water voles are widespread, found everywhere in the UK except for the Channel Islands, the Isles of Scilly, Scottish islands, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man.

Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

DISTRIBUTION MAP



Water vole distribution in Scotland. Each 10km square shows presence of water vole. ©NBN 2013



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THREATS

The Water Vole is Britain's fastest declining wild mammal and has disappeared from many parts of the country where it was once common. It is threatened by habitat loss, but has suffered particularly from predation by the introduced American Mink.

ACTION REQUIRED

1. Restoration of riverbank habitats
2. Control of invasive American Mink
3. Support the Scottish Mink Initiative – which aims to protect native wildlife by removing breeding American mink from North Scotland and the Highlands.
<http://www.scottishmink.org.uk>

FURTHER READING

<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/species/water-vole>

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