

Gwent Wildlife Trust Lottery for Wildlife Update for 2016



The Magnificent Marshy Mammals Project

Thanks to the participants in this years Lottery for Wildlife, our Magnificent Marshy Mammals Project has gone from strength to strength! Read more about what we have achieved overleaf.

The project is based on the Gwent Levels which is a unique landscape of fields and drainage ditches, most of which are designated as SSSI. The ditches, known as reens, are home to a vast array of invertebrates and aquatic plants, some of which are very rare. The levels also support otter, water vole and a wide variety of birds, particularly waders and waterfowl. Directly adjacent to the city of Newport, the levels act as a 'green lung' for the city, contributing to flood defences and air pollution control, as well as recreation and tourism opportunities. Land management on the levels directly impacts the Severn Estuary, which is internationally important for wildlife.



In 2011, Gwent Wildlife Trust embarked on an ambitious project to reintroduce water voles to the Gwent Levels.

Historically, water voles were very common here, some say as common as rabbits! Sadly a combination of habitat loss and predation from the non-native American mink had reduced the population of water voles to just 10% of its former size; a trend reflected across the UK. On the Gwent Levels, water voles suffered dramatically as well, becoming seemingly extinct by the early 2000s.



Gwent Wildlife Trust have since worked with landowners and volunteers to improve conditions which meant that during 2012 and 2013, over 200 water voles were released within Magor Marsh Nature Reserve.

Our ongoing surveys of the water voles at Magor Marsh show the population is thriving and so in 2015 we started the Magnificent Marshy Mammals Project.

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The Magnificent Marshy Mammals Project aims to connect people with the magnificent marshy mammals on their doorstep, including the otter and the water vole. This is achieved by teaching people new skills about how to recognise water voles and otters and their field signs. We then invite these trained people to come and help us survey the reens and ditches across the Gwent Levels. As well as this we talk to landowners and document their memories of wildlife on the Gwent Levels. We also use the Magnificent Marshy Mammals theme to teach children about the importance of looking after the wetlands on the Gwent Levels and to cherish the species that inhabit it.



Where has your money been spent?

So much has been achieved this past year and we are so thrilled to have been able to complete our much needed work. With threats continuing to bombard the unique and historic landscape of the Gwent Levels it is so crucial we are able to continue to fight for the species and habitats which call it home.

We have conducted water vole surveys across the landscape which have shown the water voles are thriving and spreading out into their former range. It would be right to assume water voles could now be in any of the water ways on the Levels, and possibly even in those spreading out from it. Thanks to your support, we surveyed a new river which extends north away from the Gwent Levels and found evidence of water voles! Who knows how far they could reach now as they return to their rightful home.

We have also been training volunteers in how to survey for otters. These secretive creatures are not easy to spot, but thankfully they leave plenty of 'gifts' behind for us to survey. We are frequently finding evidence of otters across the Gwent Levels Living Landscape area. What a lovely thought to think these charismatic animals are living amongst us hidden away in the reens and ditches.

As well as this, we've brought the great outdoors to several school children; 1227 of them to be exact! We invited children along to learn about our Magnificent Marshy Mammals at Magor Marsh with our Community Education Officers Kathy and Petra. We also brought a production of 'The Wind in the Willows' to two schools on the Gwent Levels, enjoyed by the entire school! We even treated some schools with special Marshy Mammal assemblies, complete with giant water vole (aka Education Officers dressed up!).



So thank you so much for your continued support of this project and indeed all the work we do at Gwent Wildlife Trust.

Without your support **none** of it would be possible.