



Ymddiriedolaeth
Natur
Gwent
Wildlife Trust

Water Vole

Arvicola amphibius

Species Action Plan



A semi-aquatic mammal, the water vole inhabits slow-flowing rivers and streams, canals, reedbeds and marshes. They prefer areas with fringes of lush, tall vegetation, which provides food, cover from predators and nesting material. They favour steep, earthy banks in which they create extensive burrow systems, above, at and below the waterline. They are sometimes seen, or a “plop” heard as dive into the water to escape threats. They are more often detected by their field signs such as latrines and distinctive feeding remains. Water vole numbers have undergone a dramatic decline since the 1900s, and 90% of occupied sites were lost between 1989-1998. There have been a number of recent reintroductions to try to halt and counter these losses.

Status

- ❖ Schedule 5 Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) as amended
- ❖ Species of Principal Importance - Section 7 - Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- ❖ Priority Species - UK Biodiversity Action Plan (2007)

Threats

- ❖ Loss of suitable habitat owing to agricultural practices
- ❖ River and canal-bank reinforcement
- ❖ Housing and infrastructure developments
- ❖ Grazing/poaching pressure
- ❖ Predation by American mink

Current Action

- ❖ Natur am Byth (2023-2027)
- ❖ UK Water Vole Steering Group
- ❖ National water vole database and mapping project
- ❖ National Water Vole Monitoring Programme (PTES)
- ❖ GWT reintroduction
- ❖ GWT mink monitoring at Magor
- ❖ MinkmApp (UK)
- ❖ IDB record burrows/sightings and modified bank management

	Objectives	Action
A	No net loss of occupied area for existing populations	1,2,3,5
B	Populations increasing in occupied area, abundance and viability	1,2,3,5
C	Water vole habitats increased in size, quality, resilience and connectivity	2,3,5
D	Knowledge and understanding of the species increased, leading to appreciation, sense of responsibility and action	1-5

	Key Actions	Target
1	Continue annual surveys on GWT reserves. Expand coverage of these surveys to monitor existing colonies	2024
2	Produce/distribute advice booklet and work with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate habitat management	2025 2030
3	Undertake survey and mapping to identify populations, key areas and opportunities to build connectivity	2027
4	Increase awareness through media and publishing platforms, talks, events, training	2030
5	Respond to potentially damaging developments through the planning process; campaign for better site protections	2030

Lead: Gwent Wildlife Trust

Key partners: TBC