

Have you found a **water vole** in South Lanarkshire?

The water vole has suffered greatly in the UK, disappearing from over 94% of its former sites during the last few decades as a result of habitat loss and predation by the American Mink.

Today many local authorities, wildlife trusts and volunteers are working together all over the UK to conserve and protect this rare species.

The Countryside and Greenspace team (CAG) are launching a campaign to determine the presence of the native water vole in South Lanarkshire.

The current records of this mammal are sparse in this large region and we would like your help to locate them.

Please send us any records of water voles using the contacts in this leaflet. You can use the following field signs to help you confirm the presence of water voles.

Water Vole field signs... what to look for

Water voles are the largest of the British voles, weighing up to 350g and measuring 14-22cm long (not including tail). The tail is 2/3 of their body length and furry. They have a short, rounded body, blunt muzzle and small ears almost entirely hidden in their thick brown fur. They might be confused with rats, but rats are larger (20-28cm long) with a pointed face and a scaly, hairless tail.

Where to find them?

Water voles occur mainly along well vegetated banks of slow flowing rivers, ditches and lakes. The burrows (holes) appear along the water's edge; the holes are wider than they are high with a diameter of 4-8cm. Water voles tend to be more active during the day than at night so you may see them during the daytime.



Droppings are the most distinctive sign of the water vole; they are cylindrical with blunt ends, 12mm long and 4-5mm wide. The colour can vary from green, brown to black.



Photos: Joanna Birkin

The droppings are deposited in clusters at discrete latrine sites at boundary ranges and where they leave / enter the water. (Rat droppings tend to be scattered along their runs).

“Lawns” of closely cropped grass, occasionally with piles of chopped food may surround burrow entrances. These occur when the female is nursing young and time away from the nest is kept to a minimum. The sections of vegetation are typically up to 10cm long, showing the marks of two large incisors.



If you would like more information on water voles or would like to get involved with surveying, further information can be found on our Facebook page or by contacting us. If you have any sightings of water voles please send your records to cag@southlanarkshire.gov.uk or call the Ranger Service on **0303 123 1015**.

Please give details of the location or name of the site (grid reference if known), the field signs you found, the date and if possible your contact details.



If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 0303 123 1015

Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk



South Lanarkshire
Countryside Rangers