



June 2021

Water vole site 1

Site location: A beautiful farmland site on the Essex coast. The survey route is dominated by thick reedbed making it really challenging to survey. Especially on very hot days like today when wearing wellies and long sleeves!

This site shows how much easier the water vole survey would be if we use latrine rafts. Water voles love to mark their territories by trampling their droppings in prominent places. They'll use floating rafts that are placed on the water, making it much easier to spot their presence!

My field notes from water vole surveying back in the summer. I hope it gives you a taste of what water vole surveying entails, and why we're trying to make the survey easier, so we can get more data on these lovely animals (so we can save them)

Kennetta



Spotting water voles' tic-tac sized droppings would be much quicker by using these rafts, meaning we can monitor more waterways and get more data

Water vole status: water voles have been recorded here every year (except 2020) since 2016, which is really encouraging

Site description: Being a reedbed, this site is not the most typical of survey sites. A lot of the more traditional survey routes tend to be along relatively



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open riverbanks. However, these reedbeds may well provide important refuges for water voles, as mink tend to forage closer to the water's edge.

The site's teeming with wildlife: reed buntings feeding their chicks, a reed warbler nest, and a marsh harrier floating above. The farmer proudly told us that turtle doves and barn owls are also present on site. And hooray!

We saw signs that water voles are living here! Lots of their characteristic feeding stations, where voles leave piles of munched vegetation.



A great example of a water vole feeding site. But it's not easy to spot. Our volunteers need careful training to spot these.



Water vole site 2

Site location: This is a more typical river site, with lots of grassy vegetation right down to the water's edge, and no trees to shade out the bank. By June, the grasses grow quite tall and thick, took our time not to miss any tell-tale signs. Used binoculars to double check. Another physically demanding surveying day – monitoring is definitely more than counting water voles!

Water vole status: water voles were recorded here in May 2019, but no one could survey in 2020 due to lockdown. The site looks better for water voles this year as the vegetation had been left to grow, but **sadly no signs found at all.**

Site description: In terms of wildlife, this was much quieter than the other site we visited, although plenty of damselflies dancing over the water.



Signs of miniature feeding stations, burrows and droppings – too small to be from water voles, most likely field voles