

# Water Vole Tracks and Signs

Water voles are most active between spring and autumn. When carrying out any survey work it is very important to remember that water voles are a protected species and their habitat must not be disturbed.

For more information visit [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)

Water vole populations are being monitored. You can take part in a survey by recording tracks and signs, and sending records to the email below.



## Water Vole

- Black or dark brown
- Blunt nose
- Furry tail, shorter than body
- Small, hidden ears
- Droppings are blunt-ended
- Droppings found in latrines in breeding season (up to 100 in one place)
- Vegetarian, leave feeding signs

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## Brown Rat

- Grey brown
- Pointed nose
- Hairless tail, longer than body
- Obvious ears
- Droppings are pointed
- Droppings found singly

Water voles are not always that easy to see but you can tell if they are about by looking carefully for the following signs.

## Burrows

Burrow entrances are oval and 4cm -8cm in diameter. Sometimes a neat nibbled grass lawn can be seen.



## Feeding Signs

Water and field voles create piles of cut plants hidden in long vegetation. These are usually located along a well trodden route. Water vole feeding remains show a characteristic 45° angled cut.



## Latrines

Water voles mark their territory with piles of droppings. Droppings are bright green when fresh and olive/brown when dry and approximately 10mm in size.



## Vole Hills

These are similar to mole hills but less conical shaped. The technical name for this excavated soil is tumuli. These tumuli are more commonly seen on grassland sites.



General information on water voles:

[www.mammal.org.uk/species-hub](http://www.mammal.org.uk/species-hub)

Water voles and Glasgow:

[www.glasgow.gov.uk/watervoles](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/watervoles)

[www.facebook.com/Glasgow-Water-Vole-Project](https://www.facebook.com/Glasgow-Water-Vole-Project)

Contacts and further information

If you think you have seen water vole signs send your records to: [lesbiodiversity@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:lesbiodiversity@glasgow.gov.uk)

If you are seeking advice with a water vole related matter email: [Strathclyde\\_Ayrshire@nature.scot](mailto:Strathclyde_Ayrshire@nature.scot)



# Glasgow's Wetland and Grassland Water Voles

**Water voles**, are our largest voles, and as the name suggests, usually live near water. They are a native species and protected by law as they have suffered a huge population decline throughout the UK.

In Glasgow, water voles have long been recorded living in wetlands, mainly at the edge of the City.

However, recent findings have revealed that Glasgow, in particular the east of the city, is home to an incredible population of water voles living in grasslands with no water in sight. This is very unusual behaviour in the UK and is only recorded in a few locations.

It is likely that these water voles in the east end have been happily living near people for a long time but only came to our attention as surveys were extended to include grassland habitat.

## Wetland Water voles

Wetland water voles live near slow flowing or still water. They can be found in ditches, burns, ponds, marshes and canals with long vegetation. They have burrows in the bank and feed on wetland plants including grasses, sedges and rushes.



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A wetland water vole at home in the water



© Laurie Campbell  
A grassland water vole

## Grassland Water Voles

These extraordinary water voles were discovered in 2008 but a more recent in depth study by the University of Glasgow revealed populations in the east end were amongst the highest in the UK. The combination of their unusual grassland dwelling behaviour and high numbers means that Glasgow's water voles are now recognised as nationally significant and may be crucial for the future conservation of water voles in the UK.

Grassland water voles are exactly the same species as the wetland dwelling water voles but will make their home anywhere they find long grass and can burrow which includes places such as parks, road verges, vacant land and the occasional garden.

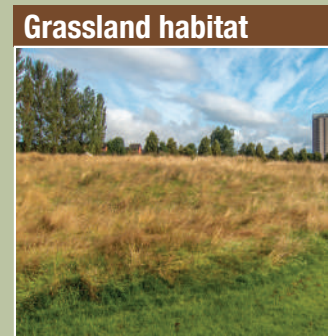


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## Water vole facts

- Water voles are semi- aquatic which means they usually live near water but have no specific adaptations to living in water.
- Glasgow's water voles can be either brown or black.
- Grassland water voles are technically termed fossorial.
- Fossorial means burrowing and they spend more time underground like a mole.
- It is the female, not the male, water vole which is territorial and will chase other females off her patch.
- Water voles are herbivores and have to eat 80% of their body weight each day.
- Water voles are protected by law.
- All water voles need long vegetation for cover and food



Grassland habitat