

## Glasgow's Weird Water Voles



Forget everything you ever knew about water voles! Glasgow, in particular the east of the city, is home to an incredible population of water voles. Instead of living in their usual wetland habitats like rivers, canals and marshes; these water voles are living in the middle of the city miles away from any water source.

Water voles are a native species and are protected by law in the UK because they are rare. They are our largest species of vole and are normally thought to be really fussy when it comes to the type of habitat they live in. They like rivers with soft banks to burrow into, slow moving water to swim in and lush vegetation to eat and hide in.

So what on earth are they doing living in the city nowhere near water? Well, this is still a bit of a mystery. We do not know exactly how or why the water voles moved away from wetlands and into grassland areas in Glasgow. However, we do know that in other areas of Europe where water voles are also found, they can live in both types of habitat.

The Glasgow ones are highly unusual for two reasons: firstly, they live in urban grasslands so close to people and second, their population density. They are currently being studied at the University of Glasgow and results so far show that Glasgow has some of the highest densities of water voles in the UK. Here, they have made the road verges of the M8 motorway their home, along with parks and brownfield sites. Occasionally, one will even pop up in somebody's back garden! Glasgow's water voles are now recognised to be of national significance.

### Did you know?

Water vole numbers have dropped by more than **80%** in the UK. They are one of our rarest mammals.

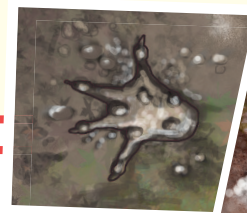
### How To Spot Water Voles

Water voles are masters of hiding. They need to be because they can end up as prey for many different animals, from foxes to gulls to cats.

So how do we know where they are? If you are lucky you may spot a water vole out foraging but they are normally hard to see.

The best way to know if there are water voles about is to look for the signs they leave behind: burrows, piles of vegetation they collect and store all over their territory, footprints or piles of droppings.

Front

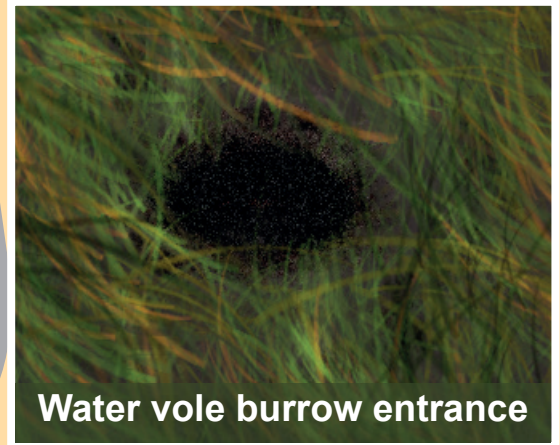


Back



## Did you know

Water voles are herbivores and have to eat **80%** of their body weight each day. That's the equivalent of the average 10 year old having to eat **215 carrots every day!** Water voles eat a broad range of grasses, rush, sedges, bark, seeds and berries.



Water vole burrow entrance

## Test Your Knowledge!

Can you find the 13 water vole words in the crossword puzzle below?

Water vole  
Glasgow  
Rare  
Wetland  
Canals  
River  
Herbivore  
Native  
Parks  
Burrow  
Furry  
Grassland  
Motorway

W	E	L	A	S	N	U	G	U	F	C	J	K	L	W
U	A	T	O	K	Y	A	W	R	O	T	O	M	H	A
T	M	T	W	A	E	B	S	L	E	S	M	I	O	T
E	U	N	E	P	N	U	O	N	D	Y	U	T	Y	N
V	A	V	T	R	S	R	G	L	A	S	G	O	W	Y
I	P	I	L	I	V	R	E	U	S	R	H	Z	R	A
T	W	S	A	V	D	O	T	N	D	G	O	R	E	L
A	R	I	N	E	H	W	L	H	L	E	U	B	V	R
N	O	J	D	R	R	L	C	E	F	F	Z	S	O	A
B	E	G	B	I	A	T	O	H	A	N	A	U	E	R
S	P	L	O	L	S	H	E	R	B	I	V	O	R	E
C	A	N	A	L	S	H	X	M	C	A	L	A	N	I
O	R	S	L	R	E	A	F	L	S	U	C	W	E	Q
U	K	W	E	D	I	B	N	K	D	Q	O	T	E	O
G	S	T	I	G	R	A	S	S	L	A	N	D	D	H

## Did you know

Scottish water voles tend to have black coats compared to the brown coat colour more commonly found in English and Welsh populations.

Life size water vole poop!



University of Glasgow

