



# get in **VOLE**ved

The Newsletter of the BBOWT Mammal Project *March 2026*

## 2025 Water Vole Survey Results

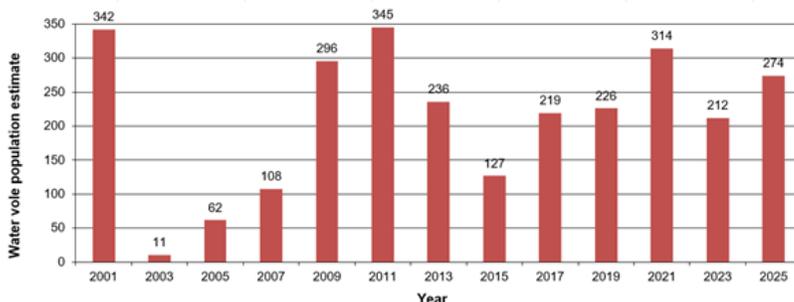
An impressive 353 water vole surveys were completed within the three counties in 2025, equating to approximately 176 km! *Thank you so much* to all of you who volunteered your time and **worked around the heavy rain and flooding in both spring and late summer**. 128 surveys were undertaken by our volunteers, 75 by BBOWT's Ecology Trainees, 150 by Hayley and Julia, and the rest by partner organisations including the River Chess Association, Wild Cookham and Benson Area Nature Group (BANG). You can view all the survey results 2002- 2025 [here](#).

We carried out surveys on the River Ock and its tributaries in partnership with the Ock and Thame Farmers Landscape Recovery Project in order to inform their water vole strategy and proposals for habitat enhancement work. Results of these surveys showed that there is still a healthy water vole population on the watercourses and that the population has spread further upstream on the main Ock towards Uffington. Results of surveys on the River Thames Oxford to Abingdon were disappointing, with water voles recorded on only one survey section. Water vole populations on the main River Thames locally tend to be quite transient, moving in response to threats such as mink or flooding, and the high-water levels seen may have impacted these results.

Surveys on the River Chess in south Bucks showed an increase in water vole activity this

Table 1. Summary of the 2025 survey results

Watercourse	Surveys		
	Positive	Negative	Total
<b>Berkshire</b>			
River Dun	5	8	13
Kennet & Avon Canal	12	47	59
River Thames Tributaries at Cookham	11	11	22
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>			
River Chess	28	9	37
<b>Oxfordshire</b>			
River Cherwell and Marston Brook	0	4	4
River Cole	13	28	41
Hinksey Stream	2	2	4
Lady Brook and River Thames at Benson	5	5	10
Mill Brook	10	4	14
River Ock	26	9	35
Childrey Brook	9	5	14
Frilford and Marcham Brook	2	5	7
Land Brook	1	4	5
Letcombe Brook	4	2	6
Sandford Brook	3	2	5
Stutfield Brook	2	1	3
Uffington Stream	2	5	7
Oxford Canal	1	22	23
River Thame	0	9	9
River Thames Oxford- Abingdon	1	39	40
Upper Thames at Newbridge	0	5	5
River Windrush	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>353</b>



year, with the population estimated at 274 voles (see graph). The river has been consistently surveyed in alternate years since 2001, with a detailed latrine count undertaken. This has allowed us to closely monitor the population following their dramatic decline due to mink predation in the early 2000s. The good news is that in 2025 there was a significant increase in voles and the population now stands at 80% of the 2001 numbers.

## American Mink Update

The most recent mink trapping season (01/07/2024 – 30/06/2025) yielded an impressive **61** mink captures within Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. In recent years we have adopted the use of remote trap monitoring alarm units to enhance our trapping efforts. This technology notifies operators by text message when a trap has been triggered and needs to be checked. We now have a total of over **386** mink rafts in place across the 3 counties and a high percentage of rafts in active trapping mode.

We continue to work alongside the [Waterlife Recovery Trust](#) to fill in gaps in mink control as we move ever closer to our shared ambition of a mink-free Britain. We have an exciting opportunity to work with the Waterlife Recovery Trust as they continue to expand their mink trapping efforts eastwards and we have partnered with them on two large-scale funding bids which, if successful, would mean that an impressive 40% of England would then be covered by coordinated mink trapping projects.

Locally we have been working in partnership with the Letcombe Brook Project to ensure full coverage of the brook, with the addition of 9 new smart rafts. We have also been liaising with local farmer clusters along the Ray catchment area, installing new rafts in east Oxfordshire.

Many of our waterways are still under protected and we are always seeking new locations for rafts and new volunteers to get involved. Please do get in touch if you know of any suitable trapping sites, riparian landowner contacts or are if you are willing to help monitor a raft and dispatch mink. Areas which would particularly benefit from additional mink control include the **River Kennet** (Kintbury - Newbury), the **River Thames** (Reading - Cookham, Lechlade - Radcot, Newbridge - Farmoor, Oxford - Abingdon, Abingdon - Wallingford, and Cookham - Denham), the **River Cherwell** (Banbury - Clifton), and the **River Evenlode** (Shipton - under Wychwood - Cassington).

We will be organising more mink dispatch training sessions led by BASC later in the year so please get in touch if you know anybody who would be interested in attending.

## Water Vole Survey Events

We have two water vole survey events scheduled for this spring. These events are a great opportunity to refresh your field skills, as well as to meet other surveyors.



Please let us know if you would like to attend one of the sessions and we will send full joining instructions. If you are unable to make the dates but are keen to refresh your field skills, then do get in touch and we may be able to arrange for you to join a member of the team on another survey.

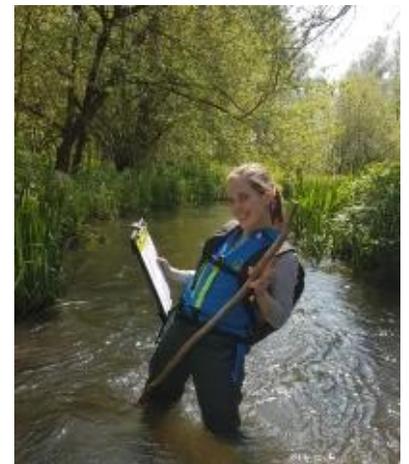
**Sun 12<sup>th</sup> April** 10:00 – 12:30  
Childrey Brook, Garford,  
Abingdon OX13 5PB

**Sat 18<sup>th</sup> April** 10:00– 12:30  
Kennet & Avon Canal,  
Hamstead Marshall, RG20  
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## Mammal Team New Staff

Earlier in the year we bid farewell to Lucy Stoddart, who has been working as Field Officer on the project over the past five years. We also said goodbye to Clare Pitt, as our Joining the Dots mink trapping project came to an end. In July we welcomed Hayley Beck to the project (pictured right). Hayley has previously carried out water vole surveys working with the project as a BBOWT trainee in 2024 and last summer she thoroughly earned her stripes by completing a very impressive 129 water vole surveys! Hayley will be co-ordinating our volunteer surveys this year, as well as continuing to help expand our mink trapping.

In April we will also welcome Annie Simons to the team as our new Mink Eradication Officer. Annie joins us with a background in non-native species eradication, having worked on rat and cat eradication in the Seychelles and an invasive species eradication feasibility assessment in the South Atlantic Ocean.



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