

# Water Vole

Water Voles were once a common sight on watercourses throughout Britain, however several national surveys have reported a severe decline in recent decades, making it one of our most vulnerable species. Their decline has been caused by a number of factors including; habitat destruction, predation by American Mink, intensification of farming, drainage and over-abstraction.

The Water Vole and its habitat are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).



## How to help Water Voles

### Ditch Management

- Cut bankside vegetation in early autumn to allow some vegetation to re-cover before winter
- Cut only one bank in any one year and keep cutting blades high to leave adequate food and cover
- Clearance of vegetation is best done in sections, on a rotation, to help maintain a range of habitats
- Undertake ditch management from one bank side only, or for only half of its length/height in any one year and maintain a fringe of aquatic vegetation at the base of one or both banks
- Spread cut vegetation and silts on the bank top, not on the banks where it can smother burrows



### Mink Control

- Live trapping (with subsequent shooting) is the most appropriate means of controlling Mink
- Trapping is very labour intensive - traps must be checked daily and once started, trapping must be on-going as Mink will continually re-colonise unoccupied areas.
- More information about trapping can be found at [www.gwct.org.uk](http://www.gwct.org.uk)



### Bank Protection

- Leave buffer strips along ditches to help protect the bank from erosion and also the watercourse from pollution
- Reduce grazing density or consider fencing to protect burrows from poaching and allow vegetation to re-cover on grazed banks

For further information please contact: