

Water vole emerges from repurposed Pringles can ready for release

Water voles have returned to Kielder Forest for the first time in 30 years thanks to National Lottery players, and a new film has documented their journey.

The Restoring Ratty project, a nod to the character who brought the species fame in The Wind in the Willows, has just passed its one-year milestone.

In that time, 555 water voles have been reintroduced and three short films tell the story of 16 of those pioneering rodents – from their capture in the North Pennines (where population numbers are happily still strong) to their release in Kielder.

[quote= Nick Mason, Northumberland Wildlife Trust] "Ratty can now, thanks to support from National Lottery players, make a triumphant return to our riverbanks where it rightfully belongs." [/quote]

Volunteers have been vital to the project which is funded by a £421,000 National Lottery grant and led by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission and Tyne Rivers Trust.

Ratty facts

- Water voles can be told apart from other voles by their larger size and small non-protruding ears.

- They have favourite eating places. Little piles of nibbled grass can be a good way to tell when a water vole has been about!
- They make their burrows on river banks – often with underwater escape routes.
- Water voles are the UK's fastest declining mammal, with habitat loss and predation by American Mink among their biggest threats.

Northumberland Wildlife Trust's Development Manager, Nick Mason said: "We are delighted that the hard work of everybody who worked to create this wonderful project has paid off and 'Ratty' can now, thanks to support from National Lottery players, make a triumphant return to our riverbanks where it rightfully belongs."

By the end of the five-year project, the team hopes there will be well established water vole colonies at Kielder and a bright future for the much-loved mammal.

Visit Northumberland Wildlife Trust website to watch the films and find out more about the project.



One of Britain's most endangered mammals, the water vole Joan North



r vole, to be protected

Following a 200 year absence, ospreys returned to the area in 2009

Living Wild at Kielder secures National Lottery funding