

Starring role for the water vole in Northumberland

17/08/2017



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](#)



[ter vole, to be protected](#)

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

Living Wild at Kielder secures National Lottery funding