



DESCRIPTION

The water vole is the largest British vole. It has dark brown fur and is a similar size to a rat.

TYPICAL HABITATS

Riparian; rivers, streams and lakes. They are rarely found far from water.

RANGE

Throughout mainland UK, highest density in southern and eastern England.

FIELD SIGNS

Droppings

Water vole droppings are particularly distinctive as they are often described as having a tic-tac shape—no other mammal has droppings comparable to the water vole. Droppings are usually found in latrines and in small heaps close to water. Width 8-12mm, 4-5mm thick.

Colour: variable; usually dark green when broken up.

Smell: odourless.

Feeding signs

Nibbled stalks of grass in small piles along tunnels in long grass indicate the presence of water voles. However, field voles and bank vole do leave similar feeding signs, so always look for supporting evidence, ideally droppings.

Water voles can be seen during the day feeding on grasses and reeds, sitting on their hind feet and holding a stalk in front of their paws. They will bite the grass at 45 degree angles, as shown in the photo.

