

Water Vole Task Force Volunteer

Get InVOLEd Water Vole Reintroduction

Water Voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) are tragically known as the UK's fastest-declining mammal and face the risk of disappearing forever without intervention. Their decline is due to years of ongoing habitat degradation and fragmentation, combined with severe predation by non-native American mink. The species was lost from the Hogsmill River in 2017, but after a three-year, community-led campaign, returned to the river in 2022. Now back on the river, we are busy continuing to improve the habitat and ensure the river remains mink free.

Position Overview

Citizen Zoo is seeking dedicated volunteers to join our Water Vole Task Force. As a member of this team, you will play a crucial role in the ongoing water vole and American mink surveys on the Hogsmill River. Your responsibilities will encompass various tasks aimed at ensuring the success of these conservation efforts, from maintaining equipment to conducting checks and resolving technical issues.

Responsibilities

Maintenance and Repairs:

- Carry out maintenance repairs on existing clay mink rafts and Smart rafts, ensuring they remain functional and effective.
- Collaborate with the team to identify and address any structural or operational issues with the rafts.

Raft Checks:

- Conduct bi-monthly checks on all existing Smart rafts to verify their functionality and condition.
- Report any findings promptly to the designated team leads, recording observations accurately.

Camera Trap Management:

- Respond to reported issues with camera traps, addressing technical issues and ensuring proper functioning.
- Adjust camera settings, including the field of view, resolution, and other parameters as needed.
- Troubleshoot and resolve technical glitches to ensure consistent and high-quality image capture.

Supply Management:

- Perform regular stock takes for both raft and camera supplies, keeping accurate records of inventory levels.
- Notify the relevant personnel when supplies are running low and assist in restocking as required.

Assistance with Monitoring:

- Collaborate with fellow volunteers and staff to address water vole and mink monitoring issues effectively.
- Share insights and observations that contribute to the improvement of monitoring methodologies.

Independent Work:

- Ability to work independently and responsibly without direct staff supervision.
- Manage tasks efficiently, adhering to established schedules and priorities.

Qualifications and Skills

- Passion for wildlife conservation and a genuine interest in the protection of water voles and the ecosystem they inhabit.
- Basic technical proficiency to manage and troubleshoot camera traps and other monitoring equipment (although training can be provided).
- Strong attention to detail to accurately record observations and inventory levels.
- Effective communication skills for reporting findings and collaborating with other team members.
- Self-motivated and able to work autonomously while adhering to project goals and guidelines.

Commitment

- The level of commitment will depend on the number of volunteers we have. However, we would expect volunteers to commit to a regular schedule for tasks, with a minimum time commitment of 1-2 hours per month (although this could vary from month to month).
- The position may require fieldwork, often near or in the water, so a degree of physical fitness and comfort with outdoor activities is essential.

By joining the Water Vole Task Force, you will contribute significantly to the conservation of water voles and the protection of their habitat. Your efforts will make a positive impact on local biodiversity and help preserve a vital part of our natural heritage.

To Apply

If this sounds of interest, please get in touch with Digby at digby@citizenzoo.org with the subject line "Water Vole Task Force" to register your interest. Please note, there is no formal application for this role, but we will assume you have read and understood the requirements of the role. We look forward to welcoming passionate individuals to our team!