

Water vole reintroduction: Phase 2



Photo: Mike Dunks

In these difficult and very worrying times it is nice to provide some positive news to cheer all those who have found local wildlife such inspiration in recent weeks.

Early June saw a further 160 water voles introduced by the Box Moor Trust in Hemel Hempstead and Bourne End. This is part of a project to bring this nationally endangered species back to the area for the first time in 40 years.

The first phase last September concentrated on the Bulbourne in Boxmoor and Gadespring Cressbeds. Although there was a higher than expected degree of predation by herons, a number of pairs of voles bred and there are now several promising signs of their presence throughout Boxmoor. Phase 2 is aimed further afield in Apsley and Bourne End so that new genes will be introduced that will aid the chances of a spread towards Berkhamsted and along the Gade to Water End. By encouraging a wide and flourishing population it is hoped that these iconic little mammals, featured in the famous book *Wind in the Willows*, can establish a sustainable base in the Bulbourne and Gade valleys.

The voles in this phase are mainly being introduced into 5 local fishing lakes with the co-operation of fishery owners and managers. Voles have also been put in the Gade near B&Q and in the canal at Bourne End. Thanks to a Boxmoor and District Angling Club member, the photo on the right is the first image of one of the water voles released at Durrants Lake in Apsley.



Many residents will not have seen a water vole so could easily think they are rats. The voles have short, furry tails half the length of their body, smaller ears, deep brown fur all over, a rounded rather than pointed face and a dumpy look. So, if you are lucky enough to live near a water course please do not think these harmless creatures need the attention of a pest control officer.

The main reason that water voles have disappeared is predation by non-native mink since 1970. A lot of work has taken place recently in liaison with Water Vole

Conservation Officer Martin Ketcher of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to monitor and control mink and there have been no recent reports, which is good news. If you see a mink locally can you please report its location to the Trust by emailing admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk. Also, we would like reports of any water voles seen in the canal or local rivers and streams.

Summer Newsletter

Elections ahead in October – new Trustees needed

To work on behalf of all residents in Hemel Hempstead and Bovingdon and ensure **YOUR Trust flourishes for everyone’s benefit.**

Do you care passionately about the vital contribution that the local landscape makes to the community’s quality of life? Do you want to do your bit for the wellbeing of others such as provide opportunities for sport, exercise, environmental education or grant giving? Have you a skill or experience that will be of benefit to a Board managing a large range of activities? If any or all of these appeal to you then we would love to hear from you.

Over the coming weeks, we will be seeking candidates to stand for election to one of 6 vacant positions on the Trust Board. Being a Trustee is a responsible task with time commitments, but it can also be very rewarding. The information pack, available from the Trust office will emphasise that ensuring good governance, seeking financial stability and setting strategic direction are among the key responsibilities of Trustees. Nevertheless, being a Trustee can give you the opportunity to help make our community special in many ways and the role can be hugely rewarding.

The Trust welcomes prospective applications from all backgrounds and we’re actively hoping that our future elected Board represents the wide diversity of our local community. Together we aim to ensure a sustainable financial future, to adapt to the growing local challenges and make lives better for our 100,000 local beneficiaries.

Our Trustees support and shape the work and strategic direction of the Box Moor Trust and if elected as a Trustee you could make a significant difference to an important local charity and a cause that matters to you.

The closing date for applications is 14th September 2020.

For more details, please visit www.boxmoortrust.org.uk/election/ or email admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk for an information pack

We have some big boots to fill

New Trustees Needed

To represent residents of all parts of Hemel Hempstead and Bovingdon

Closing date for election candidates
14th Sept 2020



The Box Moor Trust

Find out more at: www.boxmoortrust.org.uk
Protecting special local...

Ensure your Trust flourishes for...

Charity No. 206142





Tawny

Photos: Elaine Rushton



Jane



Steve



Vicky

Business as usual for estate team

While our Education & Community team have been on furlough and our admin staff have been working remotely from their homes during the pandemic, management of the land and livestock has continued unabated for our hard-working estate team.

A busy lambing season in spring has been followed by the usual summer workload of mowing, hay silage making, weaning lambs, woodland work, fence building, etc. This has been compounded by an unprecedented litter problem in many areas of the estate, in particular Blackbirds Moor. In order to keep on top of this daunting workload we were pleased to welcome two new seasonal rangers, Jane Ahearn and Tawny James (see pics), who have joined the team for the next few months. If you see them on your daily exercise or dog walk, please say 'Hi'.

Some of our wonderful volunteers have been helping out with a range of tasks throughout, and many more are back with us now that Tuesday morning work parties have been reinstated. Our photos show volunteers Steve and Vicky, cutting back overgrown vegetation and clearing water channels at Gadespring.



Autumn Festival cancelled

We are sorry to announce that, due to the continued uncertainty regarding public events and in the interests of safety, we have had to make the decision not to go ahead with this year's Autumn Festival. We are sure many of you will be disappointed, as are we, but we look forward to seeing you all at an even bigger and better festival in 2021.



A swift success...

The image below is of a swift leaving one of the nest boxes we produced in partnership with Lockers Park School and Selco. This box was only installed last year and it is really unusual for them to be occupied by swifts so quickly but this design courtesy of 'Bristol Swifts' seems to be popular. Apparently, this swift arrived with the usual migration on 6th May and promptly evicted a couple of house sparrows. The box is near Lockers Park School.



Photo: Steve Gilden

This project was about bringing Hemel's swifts back from the brink. One swift doesn't make a summer but it only takes 2 or 3 of our boxes to be occupied and we could see a 25% increase in local numbers.

Fingers crossed! More boxes were due to be put up in April but the lockdown stopped that. Hopefully we can complete the installations for next May.



Photo: Elaine Rushton

Kestrel

This kestrel was photographed recently on the moors along London Road, one of a group of three youngsters seen together. Once a common sight hovering over meadows and motorway verges, kestrels have been in decline in recent years. The reasons for this are complex; as with all these population changes there is rarely one single cause but not least among them is our overuse of rodenticides. A pair has hunted locally for 2 years now and it is gratifying to see that they have bred successfully.

Litter and Covid-19

Covid-19 has created many problems for the Trust, including litter - as never before. It's a nationwide problem. Blackbirds Moor has been a very obvious honeypot. Staff and many volunteers are putting in a terrific effort on everyone's behalf. Councillor William Allen, too, has stimulated a new group of volunteers who, on a very informal and friendly basis, are visiting Blackbirds Moor and encouraging all of our visitors to clear up their own litter - and preferably take it home.

Thank you to everyone participating!

