

SURVEY OF BRECKNOCK 2009

Sponsored by Environment Wales

Carried out by Brecknock Wildlife Trust

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A once common and widespread species the water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) has suffered one of the most rapid and serious declines of any British wild mammal during the twentieth century.
- The last live recorded sighting of a water vole in Brecknock was in 2001. It was thought a possibility that water voles remained in some of the more remote upland areas of the vice county.
- Following a successful funding bid to Environment Wales, Brecknock Wildlife Trust undertook to survey as many locations in the uplands as possible by training volunteers to carry out water vole surveys.
- A one day training session on looking for field signs of water voles was led by Dr Dan Forman of Swansea University at the Wildfowl & Wetlands centre, Llanelli. Twenty two volunteers attended the event.
- In total twelve upland sites were surveyed.
- On the majority of the sites the small mammal evidence found consisted mainly of latrines and other small mammal burrows and tunnels in vegetation which was mainly put down to the presence of field voles.
- Only on one site were water vole signs (latrines, burrows, runs & nibbled vegetation) found this was at Llyn Carw in the north of the vice county (not yet verified).
- Weather, volunteer availability and the remote upland locations were all limiting factors in surveying for voles.
- The difficulties of surveying in the uplands have meant that none of the locations have been studied thoroughly enough to define absence of water voles.
- To gain a better idea each location should be visited more than once particularly during the breeding season when water vole numbers are highest and there is plenty of activity.
- In conclusion therefore this survey does not establish the absence of water voles from the areas where no signs were found but merely the absence of signs.



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ed to establish with a degree of certainty the presence
the uplands. This work could possibly be more efficiently
carried out in conjunction with predictive modelling using available habitat data and
water vole ecological data to find the locations most likely to contain water voles
and then carrying out on the ground surveys.