

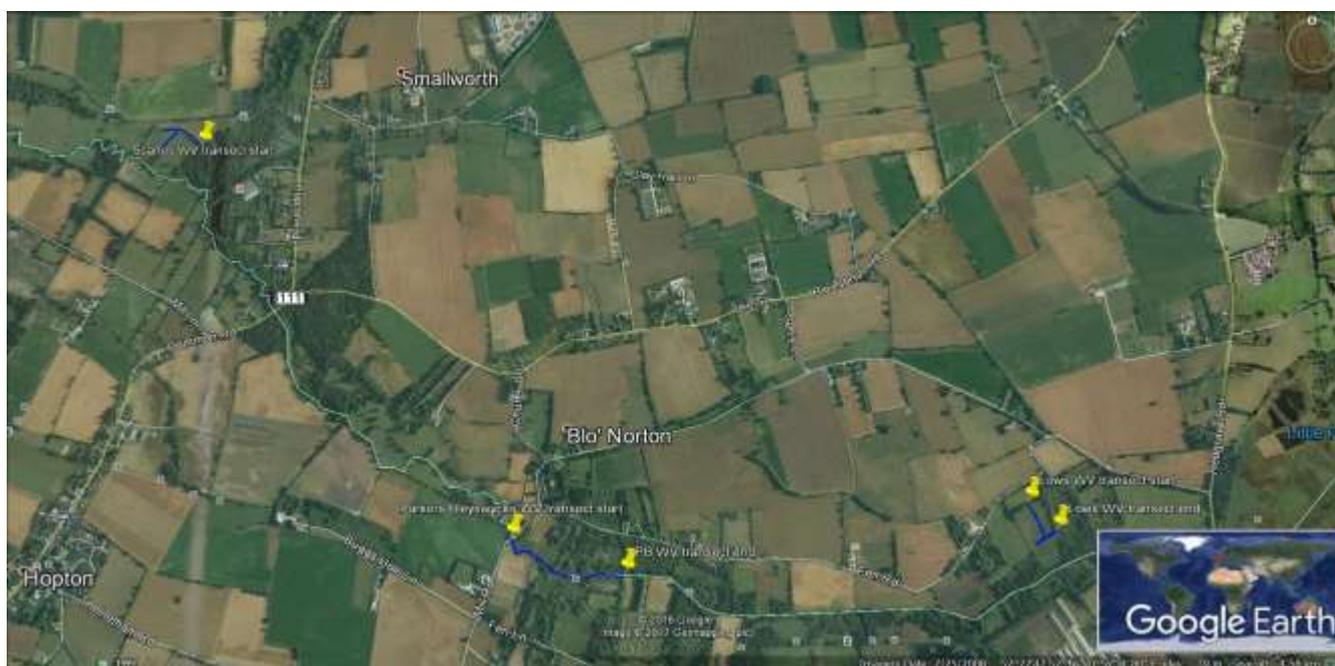
LOHP Water Vole survey 2017 – Summary results

Introduction

The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) established a National Water Vole Monitoring Programme (NWVMP) in 2015, adopting the method developed by the late Rob Strachan (Strachan *et al.* 2011). The sites surveyed included 144 sites previously surveyed by the Vincent Wildlife Trust in 1989/90 and 1996-98, together with 44 additional sites (PTES 2015). PTES aims to further increase the number of sites surveyed annually.

Following high occupancy rates noted in 1989/90, water vole presence dropped sharply during the 1990s. The results of the 2015 survey indicated that the dramatic decline in occupancy rates may have halted, but it will take a few years and better representation of survey sites to obtain reliable trend data in occupancy rates of water voles.

The map below shows the three LOHP sites registered for the survey.



Summary results for Parkers Piece/Bleyswycks Bank, and Scarfe Meadows

On 21 May 2017, water vole surveys were carried out on Parkers Piece/Bleyswycks Bank and Scarfe Meadows. The survey group comprised Arthur Rivett, Helen Smith, Laura Cox, Reg Langston, Rowena Langston, John McCormack, Graham Moates, Jo-Anne Pitt and Peter Hughes (photography).

Field signs (approx. no.)	Parkers/Bleyswycks	Scarfe Meadows
Transect length	500m	300m
Trampled latrines	8	0
Untrampled latrines	21	2
Feeding signs	55	29
Burrows/nests	112/1	1
Sightings	1	1

Comments on the approach: The method requires pre-breeding surveys during May, along one bank only, to ensure standardisation across sites. However, in some locations this may be inappropriate where there is risk of disturbance to breeding birds. Also, as the LOHP Mammal Group found when carrying out the survey on 21

May 2017, vegetation growth can slow the process and make it more challenging to find signs of water vole activity. These factors need to be considered on a site-by-site basis, along with availability of surveyors.

Parkers Piece & Bleyswycks Bank: The “scaloping” method was applied. Every 2m surveyors accessed the river bank and checked for signs to 0.5m in each direction, combined with surveyors viewing the same bank from the river. This was an intensive method and it took approximately 3hrs to complete the 500m transect.

Scarfe Meadows: Surveyors aimed to check all the way along the bank, but there were no surveyors in the water owing to safety concerns, although some surveyors walked along the opposite banks to view as much of the surveyed bank as possible. It is likely that not being able to observe from the water-course constrained the survey and so results probably under-represent water vole activity on this site, in terms of burrows and latrines in particular.

We need to find out more about the data analysis for the national survey and to decide whether there are any modifications which we wish to make to meet the needs of both the NNVMP and LOHP.

Rowena Langston

PTES (2015) *National Water Vole Monitoring Programme 2015 Report*. PTES, London.

Strachan, R. , Moorhouse, T. , Gelling, M. , 2011 *Water Vole Conservation Handbook*. WildCRU, University of Oxford