

What is a water vole?

- Relatively large, semi-aquatic mammal
- Herbivore - eat 227 species of plant
- Eat over 80% body weight every day!
- Do not hibernate
- Produced first litters in Late March/early April
- Litter size – 5-6 young
- Very high winter mortality, losing 70% of autumn population
- Key stone species!



Credit: Tom Marshall





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A brief history of the water voles

- Once common, population crash in past century
- Initially caused by habitat loss then American mink (non-native species) escape from fur farms in 1950s
- UK's most threatened mammal
- Since 1970 over 90% of water voles have disappeared



Previous reintroduction

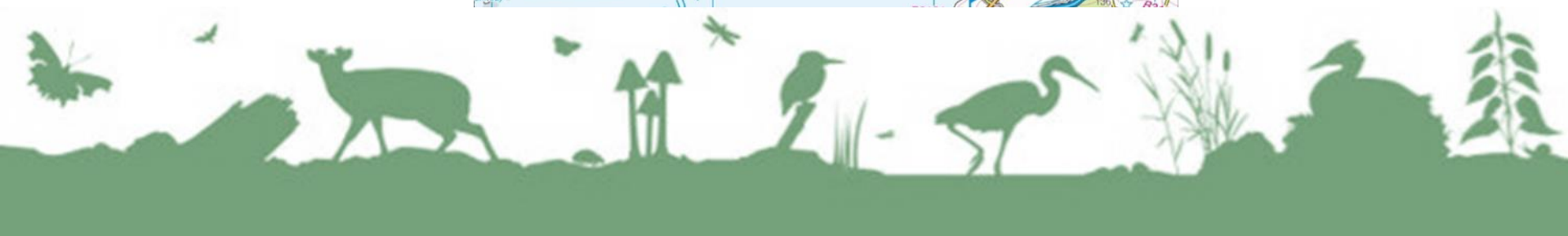
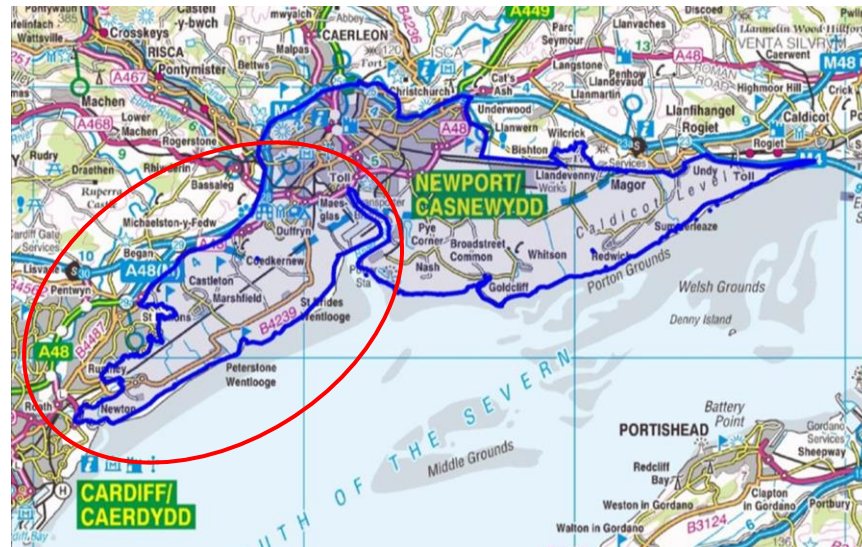
- GWT undertook a water vole in 2012
- 100 water voles onto our reserve at Magor Marsh
- We used a 'soft release strategy'
- In order for a soft release to work, voles must be placed in cages in either mixed pairs
- Monitoring





Future reintroduction

- Our water vole population has done a great job of expanding, however the river Usk appears to be a barrier
- We would love to see water voles on the other side of the Gwent Levels, from Newport to Cardiff





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To achieve this

- We will need landowners from the across the Levels to grant us permission to undertake surveys on the reens and ditches on their land.
- Mink control
- We are looking to form a volunteer/landowners group.
- Education and training
- Land management advice

