

Water Vole Survey on the River Asker from south of East Bridge Bridport, Dorset.

**What Three Words locations starting from baseline.bunks.custonian
Grid ref: SY470927 to commutes.domain.ranch Grid ref SY468926**

Sunday June 9th 2024 1.30pm

The Survey was carried out by Emma Bourne and Nicola Dennis at river level.

The weather was calm and sunny and the river level was of average height for the time of year. The usual range of the River Asker at East Bridge Bridport is between 0.14m and 0.32m although a height of 1.8m was recorded in July 2012.

It has exceeded the usual range 25 times since 01/01/2024 according to records supplied by <https://riverlevels.uk/river-asker-bridport-east-bridge-bridport#:~:text=The%20typical%20recent%20level%20of,days%20in%20the%20past%20year>. With a maximum height recorded at 1.11m on 02/05/2024

We were surprised at the amount of bank erosion, which is not visible from the top of the banks which has left large vertical areas denuded of vegetation.

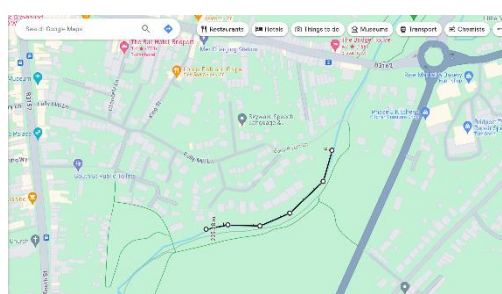
The visibility of water was poor due to suspended solids and an accumulation of filamentous algae. The bottom was not clearly visible so submerged burrow entrances were not recorded.

Water Vole activity appeared to be present in most areas except directly above and down stream of well used dog access points.

It was quite difficult to tell how recently the latrines had been used in some cases.

Latrines didn't appear to be only at the start and finish of possible territories so it was difficult to establish the number of voles present.

Breeding colonies have been witnessed in this area. Apparently breeding females have territories of 30-150m and fiercely defend them, while males have larger home ranges of 60-300m that overlap those of several females but we struggled to identify these territories. The approximate distance surveyed was 225.28 m 16 separate sites were identified in this length where we believed Water Vole activity was evident.





Photos 1&2 vegetation shows signs of typical 45° cut

Photo 3 trampled ground leading to a hole between the rocks

Photo 4 water vole latrine with ruler for scale.

This site had good vegetation level. Water level below 1 metre. Sheltered from fast flow of the weir. Upstream of well used dog entry site.



This site has good vegetation cover. Shallow water at bank level.

Photo 1 sedge nibbled over time.

Photo 2 vegetation shows signs of typical 45° cut

Photo 3 difficult to see but burrow under root system

Photo 4 latrine with ruler for scale

Photo 5 evidence of water vole larder – grasses cut at 45°

Photo 6 General position of burrow.

Deform.morphing.hospitals	SY470927	Photos 3	Watervole evidence unsure
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Not sure if this is a current site-
 Photo 1 shows vegetation nibbled but not at 45°
 Photo 2 shows suitable size burrow with lawn but no latrine.
 Photo 3 shows that this area of the river has more vegetation actually in the river on a shingle beach.

Soonest.neat.curls	SY470927	Photos 2	Watervole evidence unsure
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Photo 1 shows similar hole with lawn to previous site
 Photo 2 vegetation cut at 45° but unsure if had been washed downstream and deposited on the edge of the river.

Glove.stupidly.royally	SY469926	Photos 1	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 latrine showing trampled and solid poo.

Seagull.wizard.reset	SY469926	Photos 2	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 latrine with ruler for scale

Photo 2 site is directly opposite these palms

Rocked.surreal.bolsters	SY469926	Photos	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 bankside burrow with latrine

Photo 2 latrine sliding down the bank

Photo 3 position directly opposite white stairs

Photo 4 shows considerable bank erosion no vegetation for first 1 metre upwards from water level.



Fidgeting.comb.scooters	SY469926	Photos	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 scrabbling marks up the eroded bank

Photo 2 latrine right at the base of the bank near root system

Photo 3 burrow in behind exposed root system

Pleaser.dices.vitals	SY469926	Photos	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 latrine with ruler for scale

Photo 2 same latrine showing variation of colour to previous latrines upstream.

Photo 3 site directly opposite the gap between 2 trees.



Not taken	SY469926	Photos 2	Wolverine evidence present
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Photo 1 latrine on semi-submerged branch

Photo 2 site location directly opposite tree outside flats.

Intruders.finishers.horn	SY469926	Photos 2	Wolverine evidence present
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Pic 1 – obvious earth movement under stones but could be rats

Pic 2 – latrine with ruler for scale

This site is on the west bank as we walked down the river from north to south amongst the stone edging outside the flats.

Not taken	SY469926	Photos 4	Wolverine evidence present
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Photos 1&2 series of burrows with surrounding lawn.

Photo 3 larger store with ruler for scale of pieces cut.

Photo 4 site located opposite fence between properties in Folly Mill Gardens.

Beauty.says.solve	SY469926	Photos 3	Watervole evidence present
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Photo 1 Latrine with ruler for scale

Photo 2 abundant vegetation but not nibbled

Photo 3 Site located west bank Folly Mill Gardens

Subject.toasters.dancer	SY468926	Photos 3	Watervole evidence present
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Photo 1 Latrine and possible remains of food store

Photo 2 Latrine

Photo 3 site west bank below bungalow garden in Folly Mill Garden

Expand.hence.declines	SY468926	Photos	Watervole evidence present
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Photo1 Latrine with trodden poo

Photo 2 Clear path from water to burrow

Commutes.domain.ranch	SY468926	Photos 7	Wolverine evidence present
Breathy.snowmen.perfumed	SY468926	Photos 7	Wolverine evidence present



These two What Three Words sites have been combined in one section because between the two nearly every stone had a latrine. A distance of no more than 15 metres.

Photo 1 Latrine on mossy stone

Photo 2 Food larder

Photo 3 Vegetation cut at 45°

Photo 4 Trampled ground and possible food store

Photo 5 6&7 Latrines, some trampled and well used some almost solitary.

Photo 8 Burrow next to well worn area.

Photo 9 Latrine

Photo 10 shows area in this location that has lost 6 ft of bank over the winter leaving no vegetation on vertical bank.

Photo 11 Burrow and well worn area opposite 16 Folly Mill Gardens

Photo 12 Water level burrow showing cut vegetation in the entrance. Water vole has been seen carrying vegetation to this burrow and disappearing inside.

Photo 13 Looks like a slide in this well used area. Do Water Voles create mud slides?

Photo 14 Latrine opposite 15b Folly Mill Gardens which is as far as they survey covered. Down stream of 15b is still to surveyed and the West bank has not been surveyed fully.

For photographs of actual Water Voles taken within this area of the Asker River please visit <https://askernaturereserve.co.uk/fauna/vole/>

