



Vole Power!

**Water voles repopulate
the Kennall**



High on a hill above Redruth, by the narrow stream that forms the upper flow of the River Kennall just a few hundred metres from its source, sits a burrow entrance. About the size of a fist, this dark hole in the bank marks the highest point from their reintroduction site that the water vole population we have been restoring downstream from here has reached. It's incredible to think of these animals making their way so far uphill against the river from the area they were so carefully released into.

But what's even more remarkable than this upstream movement of these precariously endangered mammals, is the journey they have made downstream, hitching a ride on the river's flow, as it snakes its way from the Trelusback Foundation conservation site, all the way towards the sea.

It's only 18 months since we released our first batch of water voles at Trelusback in September 2022. Since then, these voles have successfully established themselves at their initial release site and survived two winters. We expect to lose around 70% of water voles each winter, making their survival all the more remarkable each year. Whether by accident or design, the voles have made the most of their aquatic abilities and ventured far from this initial site; expanding their territory and establishing burrows around the ponds that pool from point to point as the river takes its age-worn journey downwards through the valley below Trewithen Moor.

From here their journey gets more interesting as the river becomes a managed feature that flows with force down a series of channels dug out by the side of the road. This straightening of the river makes for a rapid flow that must be a wild ride for anything hitching a lift on it. But that was just a warm-up for what was to come. The next stage of the water voles' journey meant navigating the many rapids and cascades of the Kennall Vale Nature Reserve. Once clear of Kennall Vale, they have passed through the village of Ponsanooth and made it to the grassy banks beyond, not far from where the river becomes tidal near Devichoys Wood and the furthest downstream point where we have found their droppings. Beyond here is only Devoran, then it's Carrick Roads and out to sea at Falmouth Bay.

Water voles are a resilient bunch. They can travel long distances to expand their territory with remarkable efficiency, as proven by this 8km stretch of the Kennall they have navigated and repopulated. And with the news that just last week we found the first signs of breeding water voles for 2024 at the Trelusback Foundation conservation site, we have high hopes that these voles will further establish themselves along the banks of the river this year.

We will keep a close eye in the coming months, not just on our initial release site but on those outlying population sites too. And with still no sign of mink in the area, we hope these water voles are here to stay, back where they belong, burrowing, breeding and feeding on the banks of a Cornish river.



Osprey Project finds ground

Since our super successful crowdfunding campaign, we have been busy finding suitable places to install artificial nest platforms that will provide breeding opportunities in Cornwall for ospreys as the UK population continues its recovery.

Many landowners have been receptive to our proposals and we will be looking to install the first batch of up to 12 platforms later in the year. We had initially hoped that we would be able to do this earlier, in time for spring migration, however as many of you will know we have had a particularly wet winter here in Cornwall and the ground is very wet. To avoid soil damage we have agreed with our landowner partners to put this back until late early/mid-summer to give the ground a chance to dry out.

All platforms will be fitted with solar-powered 4/5G camera traps which will enable us to monitor them for visits by passing ospreys from autumn this year onwards. We are also considering using osprey decoys to see if this increases the visits to the nests. Decoys have been used previously in other places but it's not clear whether they make any difference in attracting ospreys, so we hope to test this by placing them near some platforms and not others to gauge any difference in visits captured by the camera traps.

A breeding population in the southwest could provide an important boost for the recovery of ospreys in the UK by creating links to the north, east and south. Going forward we see a great potential to continue the project and install more platforms so we will be trying to raise more funding to enable this. Our business and personal memberships are growing all the time and we will also be proactively seeking sponsorship for the project.

If you are a business that might be interested in sponsoring an osprey platform then please [get in touch](#) to discuss.

A huge thank you to everyone who has supported the project so far!

If you'd like to donate to either of our projects directly then you can do so via our website [here for water voles](#) [here for ospreys](#).



Garden gets wild!

We are very happy to announce a brand-new project! Over the next ten months, we will work with Ponsanooth Parish Council which has received a grant from Cornwall Council's Community Levelling Up Programme to establish a new

community wildlife garden in the village. This project is designed to be community-led, allowing local volunteers to lay the groundwork and take long-term guardianship of a vibrant community space that will provide not just a healthy environment for residents to enjoy, but also a boost to local biodiversity.

A first volunteer drop-in session is on Saturday 13 April at the Ponsanooth Wildlife Garden - next door to the preschool at Ponsanooth Playing Fields - TR3 7RQ.

If you live in the Ponsanooth area and would like to participate in a long-term community conservation project, [register your interest via the volunteer mailing list on our website.](#)

For more information on this project and how you can get involved please email hello@kernowconservation.org.

This project is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Cornwall Council has been chosen by Government as a Lead Authority for the fund and is responsible for monitoring the progress of projects funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.





Wild News

We have recently had a change in directorship with Alana Scott leaving her role, we thank Alana for all her work helping establish Kernow Conservation CIC.

And we are delighted to welcome Zac Lazarou back to the fold! A founding member of Kernow Conservation, Zac has been busy studying to be a wildlife documentarian for the last few years. Fresh from directing his short film 'The Undertakers' about the plight of African vultures, Zac brings experience, skills and a fresh pair of eyes to Kernow Conservation CIC.

Welcome to our latest Wild Kernow Gold Business Members!

Richfords, experts in fire, flood and water damage restoration has renewed and upgraded to Wild Kernow Gold Business Membership!

Rowe IT help the public sector improve their use of technology and has upgraded to Wild Kernow Gold Business Membership after offering generous support to our projects.

Elsewhere in Membership...

Wildlife artist Kathryn Wild has upgraded to Wild Kernow Silver Business Membership after generous ongoing donations from her fabulous water vole-themed work. Thank you, Kathryn!

Also upgrading to Silver is Plantlife Creative, where Lou has been providing us with incredible graphic design support. Thank you, Lou!

Sailflags, Lovat Parks, AMS have all renewed as Bronze Members.

And we're delighted to welcome Berrymans to Bronze Membership!

We thank you for your ongoing support!

[Find out about business memberships here!](#)

Thank you, Cornwall Butterfly and Moth Society!

A huge thank you to the Cornwall Butterfly and Moth Society for hosting our stall at their brilliant AGM last weekend! It was the first run out for our marvellous new roller banner, generously donated by Sailflags and designed by Lou at Plant Life Creative.



With thanks to our Wild Kernow Business Members



Our Wild Kernow 1% Funder



**Our Wild Kernow
Gold Members**

Richfords
Rowe IT



**Our Wild Kernow
Silver Members**

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Cornish Tin
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Cornwall
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With thanks to our Wild Kernow Members

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Heather Quick & Amanda and Trevor
Rajala
David Lea Kenney
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And more!

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