

Funding boost leads to water voles arriving on River Rea

Press release

A hundred water voles move into Shropshire.



A hundred water voles were released this week in Shropshire

Water voles are this week settling into a new home along the Rea Brook in Shropshire.

Once a common sight along the country's waterways, water voles have been in decline in the UK since the 1960s. But, this week, the Environment Agency has released more than 100 of them along the Rea Brook.

The project came after the Severn Rivers Trust secured nearly £34,000 in funding from Severn Trent for the Agency to carry out the work, and a farmer agreed to allow his land to be used for the release. The Agency worked with a consultancy specialising in water vole releases and breeding on the project, and a further release is due to take place next spring.

Water vole populations have declined due to habitat loss, pollution and the introduction of American mink and in Shropshire numbers have fallen since mink arrived in the 1980s.

Known to be ecosystem engineers, water voles' burrows are often used by small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. They also carve out riverbanks, creating small meanders and bare banks suitable for birds such as kingfishers and sand martins. The re-profiling of the farm is also likely to encourage wetland birds and plants.

Biodiversity officer at the Environment Agency, Caroline Savage, led the project. She said:

We're extremely grateful to the farmer for allowing us to introduce

the water voles on his land, and to Severn Trent and the Severn Rivers Trust for their support.

The re-introduction of water voles on the farm will not only bring back a once endangered species, but also help to regenerate other wildlife species in the area.

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