

**Essex Wildlife Trust**

**Waterlife Recovery Project Officer**



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Wildlife Trust





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We have an opportunity for a suitably qualified individual to join us at Essex Wildlife Trust in this externally funded role to lead on the removal of invasive mink and support water vole conservation in the Mardyke catchment and River Blackwater.

## About Essex Wildlife Trust

We are the County's leading nature conservation charity, committed to protecting wildlife and inspiring a lifelong love of nature and are one of the largest Wildlife Trusts in the UK.

This is the most important decade in the history of nature conservation and an exciting time to be joining us. If we are to tackle the climate crisis and the ecological crisis, we need the best people to rally around environmental protection.

Our values are [Impactful](#), [Collaborative](#), [United](#) and [Proactive](#).

## The Role

We are seeking a dynamic individual to lead efforts in removing invasive mink from the Mardyke catchment and River Blackwater, while conducting ecological surveys to evaluate the impact on water vole distribution. You will be responsible for setting up a network of monitoring rafts and live-capture traps equipped with advanced remote sensors to achieve these goals.

With increasing development pressures in the Thames catchment area, ensuring safe habitats for water voles to flourish is essential. This role will play a crucial part in combining habitat creation and invasive North American mink removal, key strategies in fostering the growth of these safe areas.

Working closely with the Wilder Rivers and Protected Species Manager and collaborating with a team of Waterlife Recovery Trust Project Officers, you will establish a trained network of staff and volunteers to support this critical conservation work. Your efforts will contribute to both county and regional water vole conservation strategies.

Based within the Conservation Directorate, you will collaborate with managers, staff, and volunteers across the organization. Our core values—Inspiring, Collaborative, United, Professional, and Sustainable—are at the heart of everything we do.

We are dedicated to evidence-based conservation and are developing innovative approaches to address the ongoing decline in water vole populations across England and the UK. In this role, you will support our University Research partners by utilizing DNA analysis, environmental DNA (eDNA) surveying, and cutting-edge smart sensing technologies, while helping to deliver the goals of the regional water vole recovery project in its southern-most area.



## Water Voles in Essex

Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) in Essex are an important part of the region's wetland ecosystems but have experienced significant population declines due to habitat loss, waterway development, and predation by invasive species, particularly North American mink. Once common across the county, water vole numbers in Essex have dramatically decreased, mirroring national trends across the UK.

Conservation efforts in Essex are focused on habitat restoration and the removal of invasive mink to support water vole recovery. Projects are aimed at enhancing riparian habitats, including riverbanks, ditches, and wetlands, to create safer environments for water voles to thrive. Collaborative initiatives between local conservation organisations, volunteers and research partners are vital to protecting these vulnerable animals and reversing their decline.

The county's conservation work includes the use of innovative techniques such as environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys and remote sensing technology to monitor populations and assess the success of recovery efforts. These strategies are part of broader efforts across England to protect and revive water vole populations, which are classified as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.





## Job Description

- Undertake any essential training in the use of specialist equipment such as remote sensing mink capture traps ('smart' traps), air weapons, databases or GIS tools etc.
- Coordinate the placement of monitoring rafts and smart traps along the Mardyke and ensure they are maintained and in good repair for the duration of the project.
- Be responsible for checking activated traps and humanely dispatching mink using an air weapon or releasing, unharmed, any non-target species that is accidentally trapped.
- Update the Waterlife Recovery Trust Mink Database with any captures.
- Coordinate collection of mink for storage in a network of freezers for transportation to Cambridge University as part of the Regional partnership project to analyse the DNA of the mink population in the UK.
- Undertake ecological surveys for water voles and collate and analyse the data to assess any positive or negative impacts from the removal of mink.
- Work closely with Conservation directorate colleagues to coordinate the work with the county and regional water vole recovery strategy and provide reports on progress to the Wilder Rivers and Protected Species Manager and funders.
- Volunteer Manager tasks include leading on volunteer recruitment, onboarding, recognition and day-to-day management of volunteers using a volunteer management system and ensuring mandatory training completion.
- Have the confidence and knowledge to support, train and advise a range staff and volunteers to support the work.
- Work to deliver and develop best practice in water vole conservation using new technologies or techniques as appropriate to inform future conservation efforts.
- Develop, manage and build on existing partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders, to identify common objectives and opportunities for joint working and adding value by providing key information and updates as appropriate.

- Work with regard to H&S legislation by generating and following activity and site risk assessments and considering issues of remote and lone working.
- Support and work with the EWT Communications Team to create and deliver inspiring and engaging social media, print, radio and TV content throughout the year.
- Work effectively with colleagues across the organisation and demonstrate the Trust's core values of being Impactful, Collaborative, United and Proactive.
- Promote and protect the Essex Wildlife Trust brand.
- Undertake any other reasonable duties assigned by the Line manager that are within the scope of the role.

## Additional Information

- The role is externally funded and is expected to last until 31 March 2030.
- The role may entail some evening and weekend working.
- The role requires an interest in working for a charity that is determined to protect wildlife for the future and for the people of Essex.
- The role requires the ability to drive, including a full driving licence and use of a vehicle, though pool vehicles may sometimes be available.
- The role is based at Great Wigborough, Essex, but requires regular travel across the county and beyond, with mileage paid for additional travel.

# Person Specification

- Hold a degree (or equivalent qualification) in Ecology/Nature Conservation or relevant experience in a similar field.
- Good knowledge of water vole ecology, conservation and a full understanding of the issues surrounding the impacts of mink on water vole decline.
- Previous experience of humane trapping is preferable however we will provide full training through the Waterlife Recovery Trust in the humane trapping and dispatch of invasive North American mink using live capture traps and air weapons.
- Experience of working in freshwater habitats and a good understanding of riparian ecology.
- Experience of ecological data gathering and collation.
- Knowledge of mapping, GIS and database entry (but training on specific systems will be given).
- A broad general knowledge of nature conservation legislation including protected sites and protected species legislation, licensing, and mitigation.
- A passion for wildlife and conservation and awareness of challenges facing conservation charities.
- A high level of computer literacy and competence using the Microsoft Office suite and other presentation software.
- A confident problem solver with a capacity for innovation and a willingness to take on responsibility, use initiative and be adaptive; and the ability to work both individually and in an internal and external team environment.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills with strong attention to detail and the ability to communicate and influence a range of audiences in person, on social media, via written pieces, on the radio and TV.
- Proactive and enthusiastic with a willingness to take personal responsibility to achieve goals.
- Open to sharing knowledge and with enthusiasm to support the learning and upskilling of staff and volunteers.
- UK driving licence and use of a vehicle (EWT pool vehicles are available for certain work related activities).
- Able to access sites and undertake site investigation, installation of monitoring rafts and maintenance of equipment.



## Terms

The position is a fixed-term role expected to last until 31 March 2030 as the position is externally funded.

The starting salary is £28,300 per annum and the hours of work are full-time, 37.5 hours per week Monday to Friday.

Annual leave entitlement starts at 26 days per annum increasing annually to 29 days plus Bank Holidays. We provide company sick pay increasing with length of service, an employee assistance programme, a combined 8% contribution pension scheme, staff social days, colleague nomination scheme and discounts in our Nature Discovery Centres.

## How to Apply

To apply for this opportunity, please submit an online application via our website by 9:00am on Monday 16 September 2024.

Thank you for your interest in this position and I look forward to receiving your application.

**Darren Tansley**, Wilder Rivers & Protected Species Manage