

Tales from the riverbank

A regular series of stories from the Great Ouse Valley Trust

Ratty Returns

Remember Ratty from *Wind in the Willows*? One of our Trustees was delighted to be introduced to him again this week by a man in St Ives who sees Ratty in his true guise just about every evening through the summer. Ratty is of course a Water Vole and we are happy to say he appears to be making a comeback along the Great Ouse Valley. Conditions have to be just right and Rob Adamson is lucky that his home, a narrowboat, is moored very close to some lush reedbeds, just off the main river. This is what happened.



Photograph by Rob Adamson

Rob pointed out a slight twitching in the stems, and a scrunching, munching noise, a bit like a pair of scissors snipping. A reed stem disappeared as it was pulled back out of sight. We waited as more rustling occurred and then – hey presto - a pair of beady eyes appeared and then a round, chestnut head and shoulders took a full look. What a treat!

See for yourself

This was mid-afternoon. Rob explained that the voles are more active in the evening when he often hears them squeaking to one another – probably debating who gets which reed! Sometimes they swim from one patch to another. They seem to prefer backwater channels which are less disturbed by boat wash. They have appeared in Rob's location in the last three years and numbers are increasing. So why not try and spot one for yourself? Choose a warm, still evening along a quiet, reedy backwater. If you can see some reeds neatly chopped off short you are in a good place. Listen intently. Be still and patient. You could be rewarded by a glimpse of one of the most enchanting mammals along the Great Ouse Valley. Thank you Rob.

We are lucky to have such opportunities. If you are interested in the activities of the Great Ouse Valley Trust to protect, conserve and enhance our beautiful surroundings you can follow us on Facebook and visit www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk