

Water voles are one of our oldest animals. They have a silky brown coat, a rounded nose, a furry tail and almost invisible ears which are tucked into their fur.

They eat bark, shoots and leaves.

They dig their burrows into the sides of river banks. They escape from other animals by diving into the river.

Water voles grow to just 14 – 22 cm long (excluding their tail) and the adults weigh between 200 – 350 g each. On average they live for one and a half years in the wild, but those in captivity can live up to two and a half years.

Water voles are protected by the UK government because their numbers are dropping. Animals including owls, pole cats, mink, foxes and hawks hunt



Water vole

By Peter Trimming from Croydon, England - Vole on Boot Hill, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36964742>



Water vole

By Rabensteiner - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2975379>

water voles and eat them. Dogs that are let off their leads on river banks are also a serious threat to water voles, and in some breeding areas fences have been put up to protect the water voles.

Questions:

Fill in the missing words:

1. Water voles are one of our oldest .....
2. They have a ..... tail.
3. Their ears are tucked into their .....
4. Water voles eat bark, ..... and leaves.

Try to answer these questions in sentences:

5. Where do they dig their burrows?

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6. On average how long do they live for in the wild?

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7. Name two animals that eat water voles.

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8. How can dog owners help protect water voles?

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9. Draw a picture of a water vole.

Answers:

1. Water voles are one of our oldest mammals.
2. They have a furry tail.
3. Their ears are tucked into their fur.
4. Water voles eat bark, shoots and leaves.
5. They dig their burrows into river banks.
6. On average water voles live for one and a half years in the wild.
7. The following animals eat water voles: owls, pole cats, mink, foxes and hawks. Two should be mentioned in answer to the question.
8. An answer that suggests that dog owners could help protect water voles by keeping their dogs on leads when they are near river banks.