

Hallam Land Management, Barratt David Wilson, Davidson Developments

Lubbesthorpe, Blaby

WATER VOLE SURVEY REPORT - SUPPLEMENT

November 2011

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supplementary report has been produced by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. for a proposed new development at Lubbesthorpe, Blaby and provides the results of an updated water vole survey undertaken on pond P11 at the site in June 2011.
- 1.2 Water vole surveys were undertaken across the site in 2008, updated in 2010. These surveys found that P11 provided potential to support water vole, although found inconclusive evidence of water vole. At the time of these field surveys, evidence of possible old water vole feeding remains was observed, although no other evidence suggesting their presence was recorded. Surveys were undertaken in 2011 in response to comments from consultees as part of the planning process to more firmly establish the presence of water voles at this pond.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the earlier water vole report (Appendix 7G Riparian Species Report of the Lubbesthorpe Environmental Statement).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The updated water vole survey at pond P11 was undertaken during the recommended survey period on the 12th June 2011 using the standard methodology as recommended by Strachan (1998). This involved identification of field signs which might indicate a presence of water vole, including:

- **Faeces** – typically 8 - 12mm long and 4 - 5 mm wide, cylindrical in shape with blunt ends. Their colour is variable, although often green and they are generally odourless or with a faint musky smell
- **Latrines** - the majority of droppings are deposited at latrine sites often used to mark range boundaries, found close to nests / burrows and where water-voles leave and enter water. Established latrines can consist of a flattened mass of old droppings topped with fresh ones
- **Feeding stations** – water-voles bring pieces of cut vegetation to favoured feeding stations close to the water's edge, leaving remains in neat piles. The cut vegetation is typically 100mm long and is cut at a perfect 45° angle
- **Burrows** - burrows excavated by water-voles can be found in riverbanks and are typically wider than they are high, with a diameter of 4 - 8cm. The holes are generally closer to the waters edge than those made by other species. Burrows may also be found up to 5m from the water in suitably vegetated areas
- **Nests** – above ground nests are sometimes used as nurseries when breeding, where vegetation is dense
- **Lawns** – well-grazed patches on the edges of burrows, where vegetation has been chewed short
- **Footprints** – identifiable prints in soft margins of the watercourse
- **Runways** – low tunnels that are pushed through the vegetation often leading to burrows or feeding stations, usually within two metres of the water edge.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 During the survey access was gained to all banks and to the central island within the pond. The island supported a ledge around its edge with short (0.3m) but vertical banks with a well vegetated flat top.

3.2 Survey in 2011 noted that habitats suitable for supporting water vole were still present at pond P11 although some degradation through the continued growth of scrub along the western edge had occurred. No evidence indicating the presence of water vole was recorded in any location around the pond or around the central island, including potential burrows, above ground nests, feeding remains or latrines.

3.3 Two small mammal feeding remains were recorded on the ponds outer eastern and western margins. These were not consistent with the form that water vole feeding remains take being without the typical 45° angled cut. A possible small mammal nest was recorded on the eastern side of the central island, together with field signs of bank or field vole, in the form of further feeding remains and latrines.

3.4 The pond was well used by waterfowl with moorhen, mallard and tufted duck seen on the majority of visits to the pond, with signs of mud and vegetation compaction due to trampling by waterfowl and faeces around the margins. A Canada goose was noted breeding at the pond during 2011.

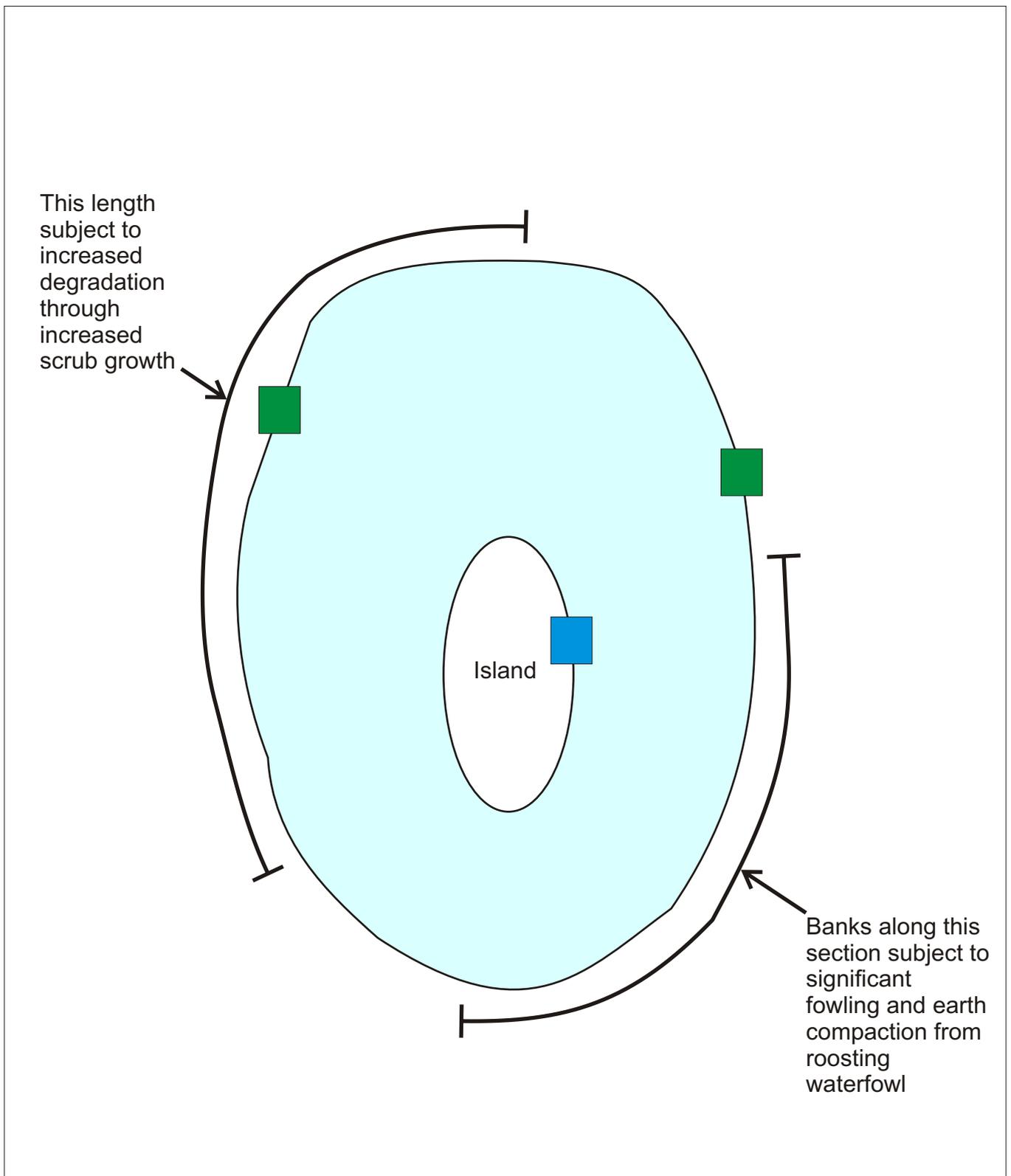
4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 P11 provides largely suitable habitat for water vole, although its relative isolation from other suitable decreases its value to this species. Adverse effects from the presence of waterfowl also reduce its value to water vole at this time.

4.2 Surveys undertaken in 2011 recorded no evidence of water vole at pond P11. Previous surveys recorded old feeding remains in 2008, but no other evidence. No evidence of water voles using the pond was noted in 2010. It is possible that historically a very small population of water vole was present at this pond which no longer survives, possibly due to its isolation from other suitable habitats.

4.3 Given the limited (and not recent) evidence recorded in 2008, with no other supporting evidence indicating water vole activity and the continued lack of evidence subsequently, it is considered that this species is not present at this waterbody. Water voles do not present a constraint to development at pond P11 at this time and no mitigation is required.

4.4 It is recommended that pond P11 is re-surveyed for the presence of water voles at the appropriate phase of development to confirm any changes in activity at this later time.



Small mammal feeding remains



Small mammal feeding remains, nest and latrine of bank or field vole origin

