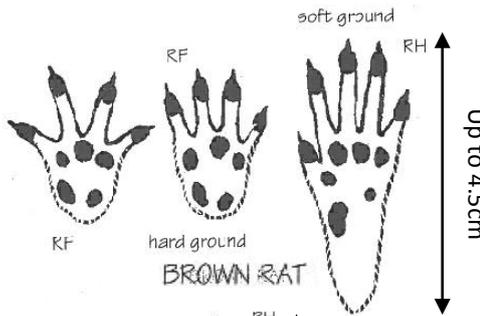
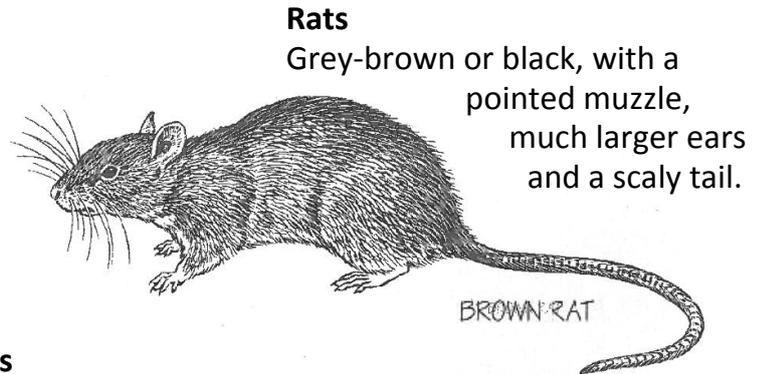
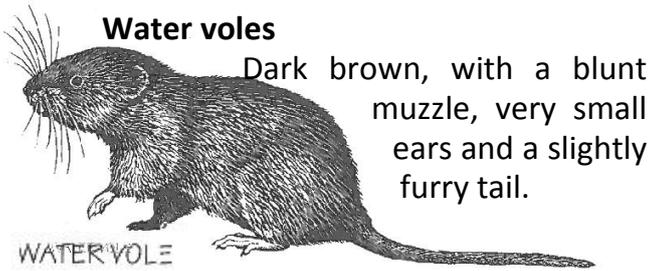
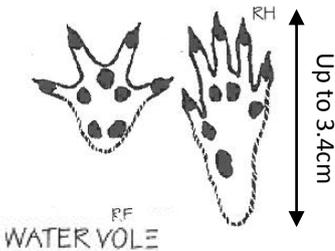


Identifying Water Voles



Rat footprints

- Toes of forefoot only splay when on soft ground
- Toes of hind foot not splayed
- Heavier than water vole, so generally leaves a deeper print
- Longer heel than water vole

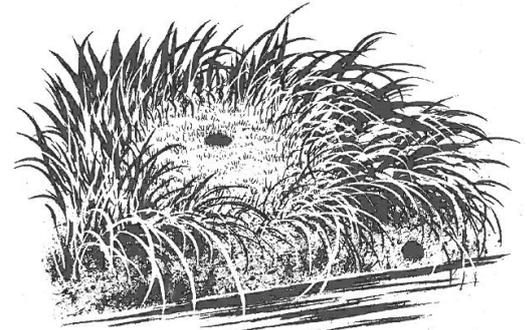
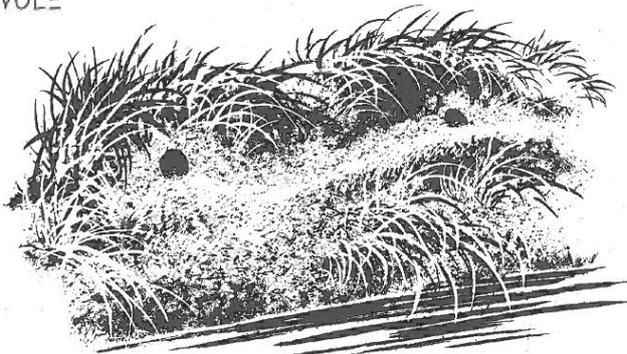


Water vole footprints

- Forefeet always leave star-shaped print
- Short heel on hind foot

Water vole burrows

- May have **lawn** of grazed vegetation in front of burrow
- Look for water vole droppings or latrines nearby



Rat burrows

- Burrows often linked by rat runs
- Excavated soil in front of burrow
- Look for rat droppings nearby

Droppings

Water vole: Odourless, dark green when fresh, rounded tips

Rat: Bad smell, blackish colour, pointed tips



Cut stems

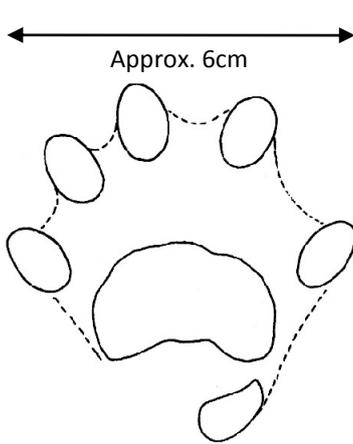
Vegetation eaten by water voles will show a characteristic 45° angle. They often sit in one place to eat, leaving behind a small pile of stems cut in this way.



Latrines

Water voles often leave droppings in the same place again and again, creating a latrine.

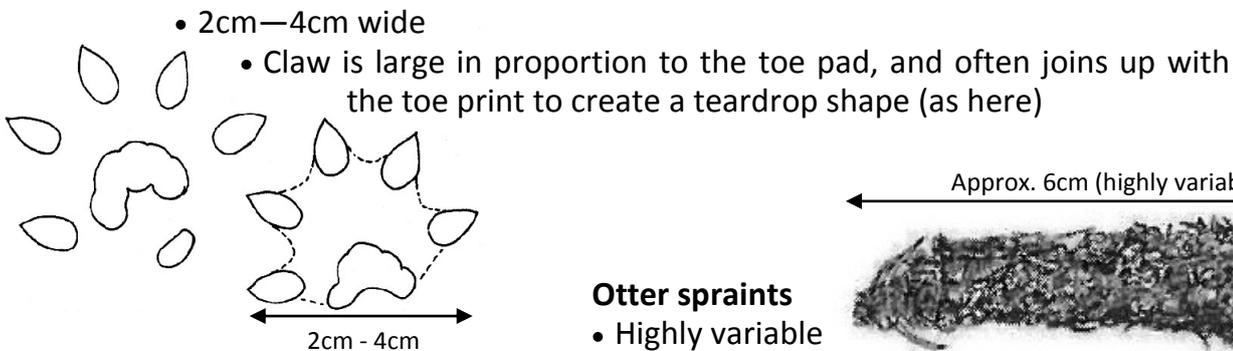




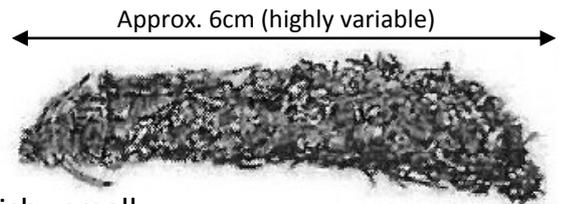
Otter footprints

- Large (about 6cm wide)
- Toes are oval, with webbed feet (webbing will only leave an impression if on soft ground)
- There are five toes, but frequently only four toes show in footprint
- Toes are tipped by short claws, which may not be visible in the footprint (not shown here). Where present, claw prints are proportionally far smaller than those of mink.
- Also look for the impression left by the otter's dragging tail

Mink footprints

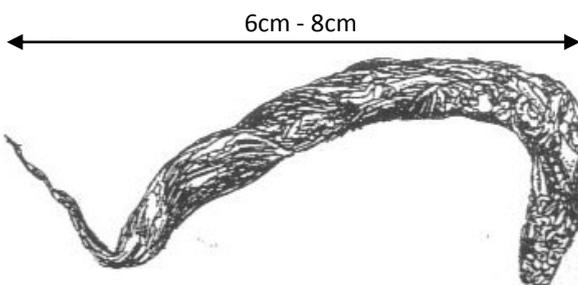


- 2cm—4cm wide
- Claw is large in proportion to the toe pad, and often joins up with the toe print to create a teardrop shape (as here)



Otter spraints

- Highly variable
- Sweet, musty, fishy smell
- Often contain fish bones
- Often left obviously smeared on a stone or log, where they act as territorial markers and gradually wash away



Mink scat

- Unpleasant smell
- Often contains fur, feathers and animal bones
- Around 1cm in diameter

Sightings

- Except at the coast, otters are shy and nocturnal and so are very rarely seen.
- They are much larger than a mink, and have a much more flattened head
- When swimming, only the head is visible, and the animal leaves a V-shaped wake.

