

## Wildlife Spotted

We are keen to know about the wildlife living around our rivers, as a general rule the healthier the river, the more variety and abundance of wildlife can be found. Some of these species you may only see signs of, others you might see on a regular basis. Try to get photos if you can!



Otter

The **otter** is a rare but widespread species. It is listed as a near-threatened and they require clean rivers with an abundance of prey such as fish and eels. They are an important top predator in our rivers.

**Recognise it:** Otters are shy species, so you are very unlikely to see one in the wild. You might find spraints - these are made up of fish bones, scales, fur, feathers and insect fragments. All contents are bound by a black mucus, which dries to pale grey.

The **dipper** can often be found bobbing up and down on or next to our rivers in the South West. It feeds on aquatic invertebrates by walking straight into and completely under the water!

**Recognise it:** Short-tailed chocolate brown bird with a distinct white chest.



Dipper



Water vole

**Water voles** are declining in numbers due to habitat loss and predation by the American Mink.

**Recognise it:** Similar to a brown rat, but with a rounded nose, small ears and a furry tail. Look out for signs such as burrows in the riverbank, often with a nibbled 'lawn' of grass around the entrance, piles of grass nibbled to a 45° angle, and 'latrines' of rounded, cigar-shaped droppings.

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Kingfisher

**Kingfishers** are often seen sitting on low branches next to rivers watching for their next meal to swim by. Watch out for a glimmer of orange as they dive and dart along the riverbank.

**Recognise it:** Easily recognised by their pronounced blue and orange colouring. If you are quite you may hear there distinctive 'meep' call!

**Wagtails** are recovering from a decline in the 70s and 80s, you can often see them hunting for insects along our rivers.

**Recognise it:** With a long tail which 'waggles' up and down. The three species are distinctive in colouring. Yellow wagtails are ground nesting and much more likely to be spotted running along the ground chasing insects than the other two species.



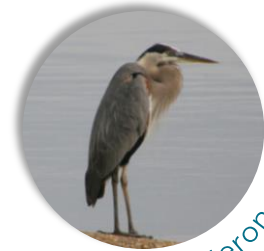
Yellow wagtail



Grey wagtail



Pied wagtail



Heron

**Hérons** with their long necks out-stretched or tucked into their chest, can be spotted on the banks or wading through the water searching for fish.

**Recognise it:** Herons are hard to miss with their long legs, long beak and grey plumage.

**Dragonflies and damselflies** are easily spotted with their long abdomens and vibrant colours, there are about 50 species of damselfly and dragonfly in the UK.

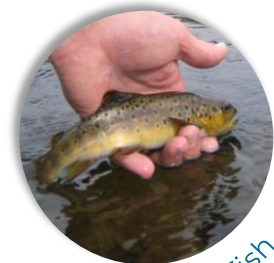
**Recognise it:** In general, dragonflies rest with their wings open, whereas damselflies close their wings. For ID tips see the [British Dragonfly Society](#) website.



Dragonflies and damselflies

**Fish** are a fantastic sign that our rivers are doing well – particularly if found in the headwaters as this suggests there are few barriers to their upstream migration.

**Recognise it:** Look out for fish of all sizes camouflaging themselves within the riverbed.



Fish