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## River Mole Mink Eradication - River Anglers Please Read

Leatherhead and District Angling Society (LDAS) have joined forces with the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) and various angling clubs and societies along the length of the River Mole to curb the number of mink that inhabit the river.

As many members will know mink are an invasive species that have grown in numbers following being deliberately released into the wild from a number of mink farms in the late 1960's. Once released and left to breed they have the potential to devastate the indigenous wildlife predated on birds, fish, rodents, reptiles and other small mammals. It is a sad fact that the complete loss of the River Mole water vole population can be directly attributed to the rising population of mink.

A conservative estimate by the government's Environment Agency places the number of mink along the Mole's watercourse at over nine thousand. Indeed many anglers report seeing them with their young in early summer (from June onwards) although the species are active throughout the year.

The Waterlife Recovery Trust are committed to humanely reducing the number of mink on a wide geographical scale. Established in 2022 the WRT is a registered charity whose origins can be traced back to the National Water Vole Database Project and the East Anglian Mink and Water Vole Group.

In working with the WRT, Leatherhead has agreed to co-ordinate with a number of other Clubs to make a concerted attempt at controlling mink numbers along the Mole. To this end a number of traps have been set including at our Mickleham and Fetcham waters. These have been designed to be placed at known predation spots and away from popular dog-walking, rambling and fishing locations. Should any anglers accidentally stumble across them the Committee asks that you leave them well alone. Mink can be feisty at the best of times and one caught in a trap will hiss and spit and inflict a serious bite should anyone be foolish enough to place fingers next to the cage. They need to be disposed of by trained and licenced wildlife specialists. Appropriate arrangements have been put in place with the WRT to deal with any animal caught in our traps quickly and efficiently.

Should any member like to learn more, further details of the work of the WRT can be found at [www.waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk](http://www.waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk)

The good news is that many fisheries are reporting an increase in species diversity following a dedicated program of mink eradication. Indeed, water voles have made a welcome return to the River Colne in Essex. LDAS hope to be able to report similar success in future years.

Paul Fidgeon  
LDAS Committee Member and Project Lead