



Autumn Greetings!

Dear Friend

The Vincent Wildlife Trust has gone through a few changes over the last three years and we thought it was now time to bring you up to speed with these changes and update you on our recent activities. Our plan is to send out a six-monthly 'e-zine' to keep you informed about our work. Please let us know if you do not wish to receive this e-zine and we will remove your name from our email list.

The end of 2007 saw the retirement of Vincent Weir, our founder and previous Chairman, leaving the day-to-day running of the Trust to me under the guidance of the Trustees. Vincent gave so much to the Trust and was a constant presence in all aspects of our work. We are truly indebted to him for being the driving force behind the VWT and its successes in mammal conservation.

The last three years have been challenging financially and in this time of recession we have had to cut our cloth. We are, however, very positive about the future and have developed a strategic plan. We have had successes with fundraising and we are developing new projects. We have been showing off our horseshoe bat roosts and helping others to adopt similar design principles, as well as leading on work relating to the pine marten and polecat. Updates on some of this work are outlined below, but feel free to contact any of our staff for further information at any time.

You have been sent this e-zine as we believe you to be an advocate for and supporter of our work. Partnership and working with others is a key theme in our new plan so we look forward to building on the relationship we have with you. Although we do not have, and do not plan to have, a VWT membership scheme, we very much hope that our 'Friends' will feel able to contribute in some way to the development of our work and make suggestions accordingly - these will be very welcome. On that note, if there is anything you wish to be included in our next e-zine (due around April 2011), please email the editor Hilary Macmillan, or myself (details listed below).

Many thanks

Natalie

[Natalie Buttriss](#)

November 2010

- Tracking down the Irish stoat
- Prospects for pine martens
- Bats in Poland
- Funding success for a greater horseshoe bat colony
- Happy birthday to four old ladies!
Bechstein's bats in Dorset
- Lesser horseshoe bats in North Wales
- Refuge for a dormouse

2010 highlights.....



Success in tracking down the Irish stoat



Photo by Carrie Crowley

It's official! Forty volunteers in County Galway, in the west of Ireland, have shown it is possible to locate the elusive Irish stoat by placing baited hair tubes along hedgerows. Between June and September, 390 tubes were placed in hedgerows in the hope that a stoat would enter, nibble at the rabbit bait and, by doing so, would leave a few hairs behind to prove its presence.

Out of 100 hair samples genetically tested to date, stoats have been detected on 19 occasions, along with a few wood mice - and a rat. 130 more hair tubes were deployed in October and more detailed analysis is underway on the stoat hairs to see what additional information can be obtained.

More details [here](#).

[Kate McAney](#)

Prospects for pine martens

The Trust's two-year 'Prospects for Pine Martens' project has been in full swing this year, as we continue to scour England and Wales trying to track down this rare mammal. The highlight of this year has been the discovery of a scat from a female pine marten, confirmed by DNA analysis, on top of a den box in the Cheviot Hills in Northumberland.

[Neil Jordan](#)

The 'Great North Pine Marten Pursuit'

The 'GNPMP' was 15 days of scat surveys, checking and erecting den boxes and experimenting with camera traps, all with the help of nearly 80 volunteers.

To find out more information on the project and what we have been up to this year, please read the blog and e-zines on our [pine marten](#) website or contact [Lizzie Croose](#).



Great North Run!

In September, Neil Jordan took to the streets of the North East and successfully completed the 30th Great North Run, raising a total of £600. This money will be used to construct and erect pine marten den boxes in target areas -an extremely valuable addition to our conservation efforts for the species. Thank you to everyone who generously sponsored Neil, and if any of you would like to send a belated donation you can do so [here](#).



Pine Marten Virtual Strategy Group

A virtual strategy group for pine martens is being coordinated by the VWT and consists of various representatives from statutory and private bodies, as well as Non-Governmental Organisations. This follows a meeting in May to discuss the future of the pine marten in the UK now that it is a Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. The group will help to progress a strategy for England and Wales whilst linking to experiences in Scotland and Ireland. Neil Jordan, our Pine Marten Project Manager, is leading on the development of the strategy.

....2010 highlights.....2010 highlights...

Bats and martens in Poland

VWT staff assisted with the 2010 bat census at the [Nietoperek](#) Bat Reserve in western Poland. The site is home to up to 38,000 hibernating bats but is also frequented by martens, which prey on the bats. Camera traps were set up in the underground tunnels to try and record the level of marten activity over the winter but the cameras were vandalised and their memory cards stolen, and so no data was collected this year. [Henry Schofield](#)

A cluster of barbastelles at Nietoperek



Neil Jordan (VWT) and Johnny Birks (Swift Ecology) preparing to enter the system with colleagues from Poland



Nature Reserves Manager, Colin Morris, engages pupils with his batty talk!



Greater Horseshoe Bat Roost gets funding boost

Following a successful 2010 grant application to the Countryside Council for Wales, roof repairs have now been undertaken at the greater horseshoe bat roost we manage near Cardiff. These repairs have provided a more stable internal environment within the main roosting area - and the bats seem to appreciate this! During the annual monitoring period in July, a record number of adult bats (102) were recorded using the roost - compare this with a total of 30 present when the Trust took on the management of this rare colony of bats in 2004.

[David Jermyn](#)

Happy birthday to four old ladies!

...At least four of the Bechstein's bats at a site we monitor in Dorset are over 10 years old; all were ringed in 2000 and have just celebrated their 10th birthdays. In theory, some of these animals may be great, great, great, great-grandmothers; not bad for such a small animal. We do not know the age to which the males reach because once they're weaned we rarely see them again; it's thought they move away to alternative woodlands.

Bats of this age are not only very rare, they are also very important; they will have gained a wealth of knowledge of how, where and when to forage successfully and probably know of dozens of roost sites that enable them to survive periods of inclement weather, and perhaps more importantly severe winters. Between them, these four animals have had no fewer than 26 babies and many have come back to breed. Most Bechstein's bats seem to reach five or six years of age, then fail to return. It is assumed they have passed away but may be simply roosting in alternative sites. Testament to this was one bat that was not seen for ten years, so we never give up hope that some bats will eventually return.

[Colin Morris](#)

....2010 highlights.....2010 highlights...

Workshops on lesser horseshoe bats and using VWT reserves to demonstrate good practice

This year, the VWT ran workshops on the adaptation of buildings for lesser horseshoe bats for staff of the National Trust, Countryside Council for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government. These day long courses included a morning of theory sessions followed by guided visits to some of our reserves in the Usk Valley. These sites were also visited by members of the BCT's team working on the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in Wales.



Radio-tracking programme

Over the summer of 2010, radio-tracking studies were undertaken at four of the VWT's reserves as part of our 'Habitats for Horseshoe Bats' programme. Trust staff were joined by local volunteers and tracked bats for ten nights to identify feeding areas and alternative roosting sites. Two students from Croatia joined us in Ireland to learn the field techniques needed to carry out their own tracking studies at home.

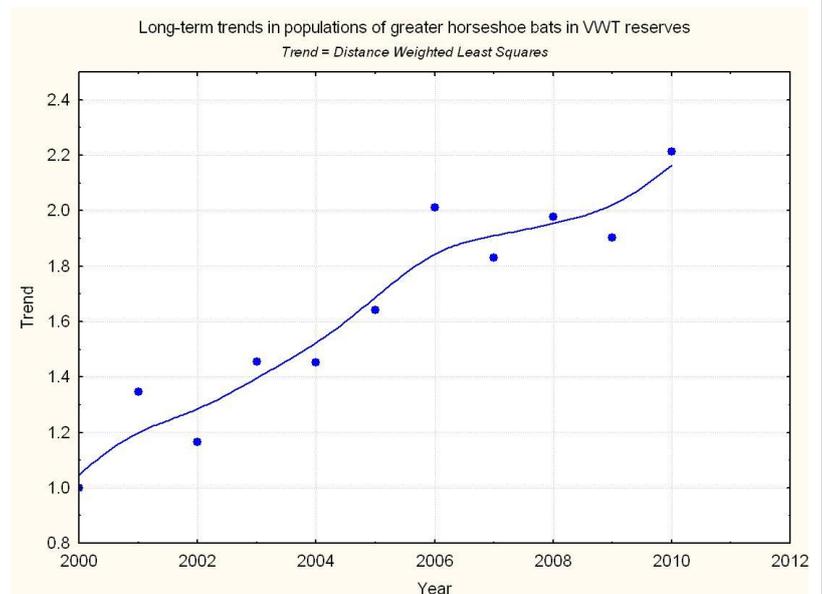
[Henry Schofield](#)



Norma Fressel from Croatia videos the setting up of radio-tracking tags to show to her colleagues back home

Horseshoe bat numbers in VWT reserves

The colonies in our reserves are counted annually and analysis of population trends undertaken. This year's counts of greater horseshoe bats show that the populations continue to grow, and have doubled since 2000. Numbers in our lesser horseshoe bat sites underwent a rapid increase during the middle years of the last decade but have stabilized in the past few years.



....2010 highlights.....a success story...

No sticks, only carrots! The art of gentle persuasion with Lesser horseshoe bats

The lesser horseshoe bat maternity roost at Capel Siloam chapel in North Wales appeared to be undergoing a decline in numbers, from over 100 to around 40 animals, but what was really happening turned out to be completely unexpected.



Monitoring had previously been undertaken by counting the bats as they emerged from the open loft hatch, before leaving the building through two open windows. In the summer of 2009, an infra-red video camera was used to record bats emerging from the loft hatch, whilst a count was undertaken outside the two window exit points. This showed that 138 bats were using the roost, but reviewing the video showed that only 47 had emerged from the loft hatch. So, where were the bats roosting? Eventually the roost site was located inside a low wooden plinth upon which the organ stood. A small access hatch had been left open and the bats had moved in. The puzzle was why most of the bats had abandoned the roof space in favour of this unusual location. Two possible explanations were identified: the roof was too drafty and the loft hatch was too small, causing a bottleneck.

There has always been the possibility that the ground floor of the chapel might have some human use in the future, and the presence of the bats under the organ would present us with a mitigation nightmare. The plan was, therefore, to improve the roof space so that the bats preferred this site and abandoned the organ plinth. A grant was obtained from the Welsh Assembly Government through the Countryside Council for Wales, to have a safe walkway created in the roof void (the ceiling was extremely fragile) to aid the construction of a large 'hot-box' in the roof apex. At the same time the loft hatch was enlarged to give the bats much better access. Everything was completed by the end of March 2010 and all that was left was to see what the bats thought of the work during the mid-summer monitoring.

The first observation on 1st June showed 177 bats emerging from the loft hatch and 47 emerging from under the plinth, giving a total count of 224. This was really exciting as not only had most bats relocated to the roof space but the overall count had increased spectacularly. The video recording showed the bats moving very freely in and out of the loft hatch in a way not possible before its enlargement. A second visit on 10th June gave a total count of 220 with only 11 of these emerging from under the organ. To get the result we wanted within months of completing the work was very satisfying and the overall increase in numbers was a real bonus.

[John Messenger](#)

Just some of the VWT's bat reserves



....2010 highlights.....latest news.....

News from the dormouse team

We are carrying out a series of small, simple trials of dormouse tubes, boxes, hibernation refuges and hair tubes. Although these studies are in their early stages, the 'dormouse team' is hoping that the fieldwork will produce interesting results. The team will then be able to refine and develop some of the more promising ideas. [Peter Chapman](#)



Make your Christmas shopping count!



This year, why not raise funds for the VWT whilst doing your Christmas shopping? Using Easy Fundraising, you can shop with popular online stores such as Amazon, Argos and WHSmiths, and at no extra cost raise funds for the VWT. Simply register online using this link- <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/Register/?char=22780>. Happy shopping!

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If you are unsure who to direct your enquiry to, please use enquiries@vwt.org.uk

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