

The  
**Vincent Wildlife**  
Trust



## The Vincent Wildlife Trust

Specialising in mammal research and  
conservation in Britain and Ireland

# About The Vincent Wildlife Trust

## Who we are

The Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) has been at the forefront of wildlife conservation for over 40 years. We work to safeguard the future of British and Irish mammals, with a focus on species that are elusive and difficult to study.

The VWT's work currently centres on the rarer bats and members of the weasel family (mustelids). The Trust is expert in a number of species of concern, notably the two horseshoe bats and the pine marten.

## What we do

Our specific niche is as an organisation that undertakes surveys to identify the current status of mammal species under threat, carries out pioneering conservation-led research, publishes the details of this work and offers expert advice to others through practical demonstration. Our innovative research has helped provide solutions to conservation issues locally and internationally.

We are involved in both landscape-scale delivery of conservation actions and with more local, smaller-scale initiatives. We link in with national and European initiatives, forums and partnerships as appropriate.

Survey and monitoring, research, education, training and advocacy together represent the work of the VWT.



## Our work with Bats

The VWT works with a range of British bat species including Bechstein's bat, barbastelle and the two horseshoe bats.

### Horseshoe bats

There are two species of horseshoe bat in Britain – the greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe. The VWT has been active in horseshoe bat conservation in Britain and Ireland since the 1980s, focusing in particular on the protection and enhancement of their roosts.

Training workshops based around the Trust's reserves are run to inform others about appropriate mitigation measures for horseshoe bats.

The Trust has carried out a number of major studies on the roosting and foraging ecology of the horseshoe bats. More recently, the Trust has been examining how landscape connectivity, habitat suitability and land management influence the distribution and movement of the greater horseshoe bat.

### Bechstein's bat

The Bechstein's bat is one of the rarest British bats. The VWT carried out the first radio-telemetry studies on the species in Britain during the mid-1990s, to determine its habitat preferences. The study colony, in a Dorset woodland, is also the subject of a long-term ringing study to establish its colony size, breeding success and colony dynamics.

Today, the Trust is investigating the genetic structure and population size of this species in Britain, using a combination of molecular and landscape ecology tools.

### Barbastelle

The barbastelle is widely spread across southern Britain, but its colonies are sparsely distributed in the landscape.

The VWT has undertaken research to study the distribution of the barbastelle and its roosting preferences. The Trust is currently conducting a ringing programme to gather data on longevity and population structure of this species. The Trust also gives advice on conservation measures for the barbastelle and trains voluntary bat workers to survey for this species.



## VWT Reserves

In the 1980s, the VWT established a number of reserves for otters on the Somerset Levels, together with the purchase of a major roost for greater horseshoe bats in Devon. From the early 1990s, further bat roosts were acquired and today the Trust manages some 40 roost sites in Britain and Ireland.

In the south-west of England the Trust's reserves include one of the largest greater horseshoe bat roosts in western Europe, and together the VWT's reserves support a substantial proportion of the British greater horseshoe bat population. Additionally, in Wales, we manage a roost site that is home to the largest known lesser horseshoe bat maternity colony in western Europe, and in Ireland the Trust's reserves collectively provide a home to 20% of the Irish lesser horseshoe bat population.

**Photographs:** (far left) Greater horseshoe bat © Frank Greenaway, (middle left) Bechstein's bat © Henry Schofield, (middle right) Barbastelle © Hugh Clark / Bat Conservation Trust, (above) Pencil Mill, one of the 40 bat roosts.



## Our work with Mustelids

### Pine marten

Once common and widespread across Britain, the pine marten has suffered one of the most dramatic declines of any UK mammal. The VWT undertook the first survey of the pine marten in Britain in 1983, providing evidence that subsequently helped to achieve legal protection for the species. Since then, the VWT has continued to investigate pine marten distribution and status in England and Wales, document their range expansion in Scotland and develop field techniques for monitoring pine martens.

Following extensive research, it became clear that the pine marten was on the verge of extinction in England and Wales. In collaboration with other conservation bodies, the Trust developed a long-term Pine Marten Conservation Strategy, and in 2014, launched its Pine Marten Recovery Project to help restore the pine marten to England and Wales.

**Photographs:** (below) Pine marten © Iain Leach, (right) Polecat © Jane Parsons, (far right) Weasel © Frank Greenaway.



### Polecat

The polecat is currently recolonising many areas of lowland Britain from which it was trapped to extinction in the late 1900s.

A lack of information on the status, distribution and behaviour of polecats prompted the VWT to initiate a number of studies on the species. These included looking at the relationship between wild polecats and feral ferrets. The Trust has completed three national polecat distribution surveys to monitor the range expansion of polecats and is currently researching potential threats to polecat recovery.

### Stoats & weasels

Stoats and weasels are widespread across Britain, but are under-studied and poorly understood. There is a need to develop an effective survey methodology to monitor these two species.

The VWT has developed hair-tubes to detect stoats in areas of Wales and has successfully trialled the use of hair-tubes on Irish stoats. The Trust is further exploring detection methods for these species.

## How you can help

You can support The Vincent Wildlife Trust in the following ways:

- **Report a sighting** and encourage others to do the same. If you have seen a pine marten in England or Wales please get in touch.
- **Become a friend** of the VWT to receive newsletters and other updates on the Trust's work.
- **Donate** to the VWT to help continue our work on those species that need our help, including bats, polecat and pine marten.

Visit [www.vwt.org.uk](http://www.vwt.org.uk) for more details.

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**Cover photographs:** (clockwise from top left) Polecat © Anne-Marie Kalus, Lesser horseshoe bat © Frank Greenaway, Stoat © Helen Haden, Pine marten © A. Achterberg.