



The Vincent Wildlife Trust's
Prospects for Pine Martens
e-zine



August 2009

Prospects for Pine Martens!

'Prospects for Pine Martens,' is an ambitious project which aims to assess and publicise the status of pine martens. Funded by Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Wales, the project explores the options for conservation with decision-makers, trials and establishes methodologies for data collection, and ultimately provides current data on the distribution, status and genetics of pine martens. This two-year project is the first time that the VWT has had a member of staff working full-time on pine martens.



Although the 'Prospects for Pine Martens' project covers the whole of England and Wales, the work will be mainly focused in areas with high numbers of sightings (built up over some 14 years). The Lake District in particular has been selected as a focus point due to its high number of sightings, and our Pine Marten Project Manager has relocated there to establish intensive monitoring sites in the region. The focus here will be on DNA collection through hair-tubes and the collection of photographic evidence from camera-traps.

Other important hotspot areas for pine martens include Northumberland, North Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and much of Wales, particularly Snowdonia, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. Such an extensive area will require a collaborative search effort, and so we're hoping to build on existing partnerships already in place as well as engage new local individuals and community groups keen to work with us and each other to track down pine marten evidence. Hopefully you'll hear more about this in the next newsletter or on our new website, and we hope that those not yet involved will be inspired to join us in our quest!

Introducing our Pine Marten Project Manager...

The VWT has recently welcomed **Neil Jordan** on board as our new Pine Marten Project Manager. Neil worked in the Kalahari Desert for four years, where he managed a research project on meerkats and the desert reserve on which they live. He also conducted an MSc on meerkats at the University of Stellenbosch, before moving on to Uganda to do his PhD on banded mongoose scent communication through the University of Cambridge.

Neil is clearly looking forward to the new challenge of searching for pine martens, "I'm absolutely thrilled to have been trusted with this important job. We have a fantastic opportunity over the next two years to track down and learn something about the elusive pine marten, and I can't wait to get going with it".



**The Vincent Wildlife Trust - specialising in mammal research and conservation
in Britain and Ireland**

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Setting up a hair tube

Intensive monitoring...

Intensive monitoring sites will be set up across the Lake District, including Grizedale Forest, Ennerdale and Thirlmere. Detection and monitoring equipment being set up includes hair tubes and remote camera systems, both baited using food, vocal or olfactory lures to attract martens. This monitoring is being undertaken in collaboration with local partners from the Forestry Commission Wildlife Team, United Utilities, Lake District National Park Authority, The National Trust and The Wild Ennerdale Partnership.

New Pine Marten Website!

The VWT has just launched a new website dedicated to pine martens – www.pinemarten.info.

Here, you can keep up-to-date with the progress of the 'Prospects for Pine Martens' project and other pine marten-related news. Neil will be 'blogging' regularly, as well as sending out future e-zines.

There are also details on how to get involved with the project, with opportunities for participating in surveys and monitoring work.

Ancient DNA Project – Welsh pine marten unique!

The VWT, in collaboration with the Waterford Institute of Technology and the National Museum of Wales, has been looking at ancient DNA from skulls and bones of pine martens held in museum and private collections.

DNA testing has shown that historically Welsh pine martens were genetically distinct from pine martens living in Ireland and Scotland. Results from the specimens collected from Wales, the most recent being from the Conwy Valley in 1948, have shown that their DNA pattern (haplotype) is significantly different to animals from Scotland and Ireland, where the species is more common.



Stuffed pine marten

This discovery is of major importance, coming at a time when the 'reintroduction' of the species to England and Wales is being considered by others.

The VWT now needs to test more material to find out more about the genetics of pine martens. We are keen to hear from anyone who has seen a stuffed pine marten, or a skin, skull or bones, in Wales or England, in a local museum or even on the wall of a pub.

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Pine marten Scat Survey Project Update

The VWT, in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology, is currently in the second-year of a two-year pine marten scat survey of England and Wales (also funded by Natural England and Countryside Council for Wales).

Pine marten surveys are carried out with the help of volunteer surveyors who walk forest tracks and collect any scats that could be from a pine marten. Scats are then DNA tested to confirm their origin. DNA typing of marten scats is essential because pine marten scats are notoriously difficult to identify morphologically.



Collecting scats on a scat survey

A huge ***thank you*** to everyone who has helped us with the scat surveys so far – we couldn't do it without you!

Upcoming scat surveys in August are as follows:

- 8th August, Hamsterley Forest, Durham
- 15th August, North York Moors
- 22nd August, Dyfi forest, Snowdonia
- 30th August, Derwent Valley, Derbyshire

For further details on any of these surveys, contact Lizzie Croose: elizabethcroose@vwt.org.uk or 01531 636441.

Contact us...

To find out more about the project or how you can help us with pine marten work, please visit www.pinemarten.info or contact Neil directly: neiljordan@vwt.org.uk or 07799847740.



The Vincent Wildlife Trust's 'Prospects for Pine Martens' Project is kindly funded by Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Wales.



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