



Vincent Wildlife Trust

Ten-Year Strategy

2020-2030

Introduction

For over 40 years, Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) has led the way in supporting the recovery of mammal species such as otter, water vole, horseshoe bats and, more recently, pine marten. VWT is respected internationally as a leader in developing and implementing innovative approaches that halt and reverse declines in threatened mammal species.

Our late founder, the Honourable Vincent Weir, endowed the Trust with the resources to continue his lifetime's work in mammal conservation and for the last ten years we have focused on building an ambitious, sustainable organisation without its founder. During this period, we have secured strategic partnerships that have enabled VWT to embark on new flagship projects, including the nationally important Pine Marten Recovery Project. Our work has focused on the needs of selected British and Irish mammals, including the weasel family and the rarer bats.

We are at a point where we are ready to increase our impact and take the Trust through its next development phase of expanding our key role in mammal conservation in Britain, Ireland and continental Europe.



The role of VWT

VWT is a specialist NGO and a key player in research-led conservation interventions for a range of mammal species. This is possible thanks to a firm financial base that is independent of membership income as well as a high degree of flexibility, both of which enable VWT to act quickly and to plan for the long term. This approach has allowed the Trust to focus on mammals with particular and often challenging conservation needs, with which other organisations are unwilling or unable to engage.

For example, acquiring and managing greater horseshoe bat maternity roosts and surrounding land in the 1980s and 1990s enabled VWT to protect 50% of the British population of this European Protected Species. Our bat reserves remain a unique resource as exemplars of roost management. Combined with research into their ecology and habitat needs, this has led to the population of these rare bats more than doubling in recent years.

While VWT is not a campaigning or lobbying organisation, our expertise, advice and impartial evidence provide support to a wide range of decision makers.

Photo: © Frank Greenaway



The world in which we work

We face a range of challenges to delivering effective conservation. Equally, we have opportunities to which we will need to respond.

- Funding for conservation delivery is increasingly hard to obtain. In addition to developing new income streams to support our own work, we need to find new ways of working with others to deliver conservation solutions.
- Political uncertainties, including the UK's changing relationship with the rest of Europe, makes planning ahead more challenging and may affect many aspects of our work — including fundraising and environmental legislation and protection.

Photo: © Andrew Harrington





- Increases in mammal populations may be a conservation success, but there is the potential for conflict to arise between wildlife and people, and among interest groups. We will, therefore, need effective means of mitigation. Population recovery will also have effects on other species in the ecosystem, such as predator impacts upon their prey.
- There are numerous threats to mammal populations, some of which – such as climate change effects – are likely to increase over the timescale of this strategy. Therefore, the species we prioritise for conservation will be kept under review.
- Crucial evidence gaps persist, especially in relation to population status, that prevent us taking effective action to conserve threatened mammal species.
- VWT is just one of a number of organisations seeking to promote mammal conservation in Britain, Ireland and continental Europe. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. To be effective, we need to promote partnership working, sharing best practice and actively seeking to reduce potential competition with other NGOs.

The species we are working to conserve

VWT classifies British, Irish and European terrestrial mammal species using our own assessment of their conservation need based on a number of factors, including their IUCN Red List Category, but also their local population status and an assessment of emerging threats or wildlife conflict. The species we work on may be categorised by the IUCN criteria as Threatened or Near Threatened, but we may also include more common species that are facing a new threat. From this process, VWT determines which species to focus on.

These VWT Priority species are then defined as:

1 VWT Principal Species

A range of actions is needed to make progress with population recovery. These Principal Species include: pine marten, polecat, wildcat, European mink, greater and lesser horseshoe bats, Bechstein's bat and barbastelle.

2 VWT Targeted Action Species

A specific targeted piece of work is required at this stage. These Targeted Action Species include: otter, Irish stoat, marbled polecat and Alcahoie bat.

3 VWT Watching Brief Species

Conservation needs are adequately addressed by others or currently no clear role has been identified for VWT. This will, however, be kept under annual review. These Watching Brief Species include: red squirrel and mountain hare.

The difference we want to make for threatened mammals

We want to deliver significant change to the fortunes of threatened mammals through a positive and bold conservation strategy. We are extending our reach to prioritise a greater range of species over a larger geographic area, and we are working increasingly at a landscape scale across Britain, Ireland and strategically targeted areas of continental Europe.

Our **Vision** is that VWT is a catalyst for mammal conservation

Our **Mission** is to conserve threatened mammals by leading the way with scientifically sound conservation work



By 2030, VWT will have:

- developed, tested and implemented a number of cutting-edge techniques and effective conservation interventions, which integrate social science and ecology, for VWT priority mammal populations.
- improved methods of bat conservation at a landscape scale, including techniques for enhancing landscape permeability, roosting opportunities and habitat for VWT priority bats.
- strengthened the resilience of VWT priority bat populations at the local, regional and national level with a comprehensive network of bat reserves.
- managed the recovery of VWT Priority Species so that they are self-sustaining, with minimal conflict, where habitat and other conditions are suitable.
- addressed evidence gaps and data deficiency for VWT Priority Species so that conservation effort is better informed.



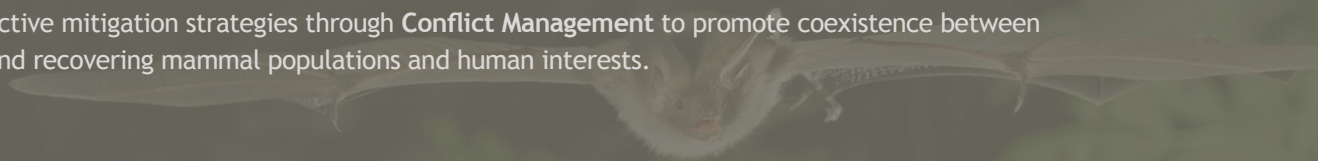
How we deliver our strategy

As an organisation, we will step up our role in providing conservation solutions for threatened mammals, acting as a catalyst for effective mammal conservation. To do this, we will need to grow our resources, influence and reach to shape a stronger and more resilient organisation.

Our conservation delivery

We will focus our efforts on action to mitigate current threats using a three-pronged approach to:

- address deficiencies in data and evidence through developing **Innovative Monitoring** solutions;
- identify actions to generate conservation solutions for effective **Population Restoration**;
- develop effective mitigation strategies through **Conflict Management** to promote coexistence between threatened and recovering mammal populations and human interests.



Partnerships and people

We will:

- scale up our connections with local communities where we are delivering our work through volunteering, community and stakeholder engagement, education and citizen science;
- maintain our research collaboration with universities and research institutes to ensure our conservation is evidence led;
- increase our impact and influence by sharing good practice and facilitating partners to deliver conservation action;
- continue to work with organisations who may have very different views from ours to find common ground;
- build NGO and university partnerships in Europe where our expertise can amplify conservation success.

The focus here will include skills sharing and building capacity, as well as species projects.

Staff skills

Our staff and the research students we support are crucial to our success. We will invest in our staff and students' training and development to improve our own effectiveness, and to expand and refresh our skills.

Geographic scope of our operations

We will work more at a landscape scale across Britain and Ireland and become more strategic in our operations in continental Europe. Our work in continental Europe will be targeted to have the greatest possible benefit, particularly in countries where NGO and university networks are limited.

Growing our resources

VWT's charitable activities rely on investment funds as a key source of income for core operations and running costs. Its investment policy also allows a limited amount of capital to be drawn down on occasion to pump prime urgent initiatives. However, VWT's investment income alone is not sufficient to support the majority of its conservation delivery and grant funding is vital for this. Delivering the strategy will require both a growth in and diversification of income streams to bring additional funding into the organisation.

Measuring our success

A detailed Ten-year Work Plan supports our strategy, with clearly defined outcomes and objectives so that we can measure and assess our organisational and conservation progress. This will help us to critically evaluate whether and how well our conservation interventions work. Where our work results in successful re-establishment of VWT Priority Species, we will set in place effective exit strategies and monitor and manage conflict. The Trust's strategic direction is overseen by the Board of Trustees, who will regularly review VWT's progress against the strategy.

Keeping on...

In 1974, a visionary young man decided to use his resources to fund wildlife conservation in Britain and Ireland. As part of his mission, Vincent Weir established VWT to safeguard threatened mammals. The Trust continues to work tirelessly to maintain the vision of its founder.

Over the next ten years, the Trust will build on its success, driving forward a diverse programme of conservation initiatives to deliver the most effective conservation strategy for mammal conservation.

These are challenging times for wildlife, and it is vital that we focus our resources wisely. In this strategy, we believe that VWT's long-held reputation for integrity, independence and innovation will shape its future and will enable it to deliver the conservation of threatened mammals in Britain, Ireland and continental Europe for as long as it is needed.







Contact us

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