

Look Closer 

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SPECIAL REPORT by Vincent Wildlife Trust

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY... YOU MIGHT SEE A **PINE MARTEN!**

ONCE threatened with extinction in England and Wales, the pine marten is on the up, up and up! Vincent Wildlife Trust has been working to help bring this native mammal back to both countries and boost the numbers of these amazing animals.

WHAT IS A PINE MARTEN?

It is not related to the house martin (which is a bird and is spelled differently!) and neither does it only live in pine woods! The pine marten is a mammal that likes climbing trees, and often makes its den high up in tree holes or old squirrel dreys. It eats anything – from mice and voles to fruit. It is a cousin of the badger, otter and polecat, to name a few of the animals in a family known as mustelids. It is much smaller than a badger – more the size of a family cat.

HERE'S THE **BAD** NEWS...

Pine martens once lived happily across much of Britain, but then people spoilt it all. The martens were hunted for their rich brown fur, to make coats. Imagine how many pine martens were needed to make one fur coat! They were also killed by Victorian gamekeepers, who wanted to protect their valuable game birds from a hungry marten. Loss of woodland habitat, their home, was another nail in the pine marten's coffin. Very sadly, during the last century, pine martens had pretty much vanished from the woodlands of England and Wales.



...AND THE **GOOD** NEWS

The pine marten is back! This is thanks to a law that protects this and many other rare species, and to an organisation called Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT). After years of scientific research, VWT decided the time was right to return the pine marten to England and Wales (luckily the pine marten is doing very well in Scotland, so no help needed there). But how did we do it?



TRANSLOCATION

Over three years, conservationists at VWT transported just over 50 pine martens from Scotland, where there is a strong marten population, to Wales, where they were heading for extinction, in a conservation method called translocation. Today, these animals have settled around the release area in mid-Wales, and young, known as kits, have been born every year since the first arrivals in 2015.

Staff at VWT and local volunteers keep a close eye on the pine martens using trail cameras, and guess what? We have received trail camera evidence of a pine marten kit that has been born this spring. This is fantastic news. It's another sign that this new pine marten population is breeding successfully. There may be many more kits in the forests of Wales, but they and their mums keep well-hidden and are mostly active at night.



WHAT ABOUT ENGLAND?

Following the success of the project in Wales, there is a new translocation project to return the pine marten to the ancient Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. The first few pine martens were brought to the forest last autumn and are being watched over by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. We are now waiting anxiously to see if any young have been born this year – our fingers are crossed!

If you see a pine marten in Wales, please let VWT know at www.vwt.org.uk. You can also find out more about the pine marten on VWT's website.



Robert Cruickshanks

Robert Cruickshanks

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SPECIAL REPORT



GLOSSARY

Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) – A charity that cares for and protects mammals in the UK and Ireland

native – Originally from the area

mammal – A warm-blooded animal that breathes air, has a backbone and typically grows hair or fur. Female mammals feed their young with milk

squirrel dreys – The homes squirrels build in trees to protect them from harsh weather and for raising their young

mustelids – A group of about 55 species of mammals that includes weasels, otters, ferrets and badgers. Most have long tube-shaped bodies, short legs and thick necks

gamekeepers – The people employed to breed and protect game birds

game birds – Birds such as grouse, pheasants and partridges that are shot for sport or food

translocation – A conservation method that moves animals to another location

kits – The name given to pine marten young

trail cameras – Cameras used to photograph animals in difficult-to-reach areas. The camera is often triggered by a sensor that detects movement

1. Match the **facts** about pine martens.

Same size as a ...

Belong to the same family as a...

Lives in...

Eats almost...

A baby pine marten is called a...

anything

trees

pet cat

kit

badger

2a. Find **three reasons** why pine martens became extinct in most areas of the UK.

2b. When did this happen?

3. What is **translocation**?

4. Match the correct **country** to the **statement**

A healthy population of pine martens without intervention

A translocation project that saw pine martens arrive in 2015

A new project to reintroduce pine martens last autumn

England

Scotland

Wales

5. What **evidence** is there that pine martens are now doing well in Wales?

6. Look at this **sentence** from the section with the subheading 'Translocation'. Why has the journalist written this as a question ending with 'and guess what?'

"Staff at VWT and local volunteers keep a close eye on the pine martens using trail cameras, and guess what?"

7. Why is it difficult to spot a kit?

8. In the section with the subheading 'What about England?', why does the writer say people are 'waiting anxiously'?

9. Tick the questions you can answer by reading this news report.

What do pine martens eat?	
How many pine martens are there currently in Britain?	
Which organisation is working to boost the number of pine martens in England and Wales?	
What is a baby pine marten called?	
Which forest in England are the pine martens being translocated to?	
Are pine martens nocturnal animals?	
How heavy is a pine marten?	

10. Here is a list of our native mammals that have become extinct in all, or most, parts of the UK.

Extinct UK animal **When they became extinct**

Wild cats 150 years ago

Wolves 400 years ago

Beavers 500 years ago

Brown bears 1,000 years ago

Many people would like to also bring these animals back into the wild in the UK.

Do you agree? Explain your opinion.

TEACHER ANSWERS

AIM OF THE NEWS COMPREHENSIONS: News reports are unique non-fiction texts. Being real, they naturally engage students, and with the range of topics that are covered, help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world outside the classroom. The reports are ideal for short, focused comprehension or discussion activities. Along with the opportunity to find fascinating facts and appreciate the opinions of those involved, there is plenty to be inferred and deduced to understand in more depth what is being reported. Like authors, journalists play with language, so news 'stories' are rich nuggets of text to investigate and provide the opportunity for literacy programmes.

TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE: The teacher answers are intended to provide a quick reference guide. Suggestions are given for the 'Expected response' or starting point that pupils could give. The 'Development' then gives more in-depth ideas that students can work towards as they develop their reading comprehension skills.

For a list of the reading skills used, please email schools@firstnews.co.uk.

1. Match the facts about pine martens.

READING SKILL: Find and explain information (NC2a)

Same size as a ... pet cat

Belong to the same family as a... badger

Lives in... trees

Eats almost... anything

A baby pine marten is called a... kit

2a. Find three reasons why pine martens became extinct in most areas of the UK.

READING SKILL: Infer information and justify with evidence from the text (NC 2c and 8)

Expected response

1. They were hunted and killed for their fur.

2. They were killed by gamekeepers.

3. The woodlands where they lived were destroyed.

Developed response

1. There was a fashion to make coats from their fur. A huge number of wild pine martens were killed to make these coats.

2. Pine martens will eat game birds. The gamekeepers saw them as pests and killed them to stop them causing problems for their customers who wanted to shoot birds.

3. Over the past century the woodlands in England and Wales where the pine marten lived have been destroyed to be used for developments such as housing, roads, industrial areas etc.

2b. When did this happen?

READING SKILL: Find and explain information (NC2a)

Expected response

- During the last century

3. What is translocation?

READING SKILL: Understand vocabulary in context (NC2a)

Expected response

- Translocation is when something is relocated to a different place.

Developed response

- In this story, conservation translocation is moving pine martens from Scotland to Wales and England, to enable pine martens to begin to live in woodlands there again.

4. Match the correct country to the statement

READING SKILL: Find and explain information (NC2a)

A healthy population of pine martens without intervention	England
A translocation project that saw pine martens arrive in 2015	Scotland
A new project to reintroduce pine martens last autumn	Wales

5. What evidence is there that pine martens are now doing well in Wales?

READING SKILL: Infer information and justify with evidence from the text (NC 2c and 8)

Expected response

- The pine marten young have been spotted.

Developed response

- The pine marten is surviving in the wild, and each year kits (baby pine martens) are being born and the population is increasing.

6. Look at this sentence from the section with the subheading 'Translocation'. Why has the journalist written this as a question ending with 'and guess what?'

"Staff at VWT and local volunteers keep a close eye on the pine martens using trail cameras, and guess what?"

Reading skill: Recognise the effects of language choices (NC 1e and 1f)

Expected response

- The question makes the reader want to know the answer – what has been spotted on the trail cameras?

Developed response

- The writer uses this technique to engage the reader by making them want to read on to find the answer to the question.

7. Why is it difficult to spot a kit?

READING SKILL: Infer information and justify with evidence from the text (NC 2c and 8)

Expected response

- Direct copy from text: "Their mums keep them well-hidden and are mostly active at night."

Developed response

- Own interpretation: their mums keep their young safe by keeping them well-hidden.
- Own interpretation: the mums and kits are mainly active in the woods at night time, and as most humans go for walks during the day, they would be unlikely to see them.

8. In the section with the subheading 'What about England?' why does the writer say people are 'waiting anxiously'?

READING SKILL: Recognise the effects of language choices (NC 1e and 1f)

Expected response

- They are anxious and hoping the kits (baby pine martens) will have been born in England this year. They are hoping they will be spotted soon.

Developed response

- If young have been born, this will show that the project is working and proving successful.
- This will mean the pine martens are beginning to survive in the wild and populations are being re-established in England.

9. Tick the questions you can answer by reading this news report.

READING SKILL: Find and explain information (NC2a)

What do pine martens eat?	✓
How many pine martens are there currently in Britain?	
Which organisation is working to boost the numbers of pine martens in England and Wales?	✓
What is a baby pine marten called?	✓
Which forest in England are the pine martens being translocated to?	✓
Are pine martens nocturnal animals?	✓
How heavy is a pine marten?	

10) Here is a list of our native mammals that have become extinct in all, or most, parts of the UK.

Extinct UK animal When they became extinct

Wild cats	150 years ago
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Brown bears	1,000 years ago

Many people would like to also bring these animals back into the wild in the UK.

Do you agree? Explain your opinion.

READING SKILL – Develop opinions and provide justifications for viewpoints

(NC 6, 7 & 8)

Personal responses, such as:

- I think it's a great idea. I'd love to be able to go for walks and spot wolves and bears.
- I'm not sure it's a good idea, as bears and wolves could cause problems for farmers.

Developed, reasoned responses, such as:

- We need to make sure there is the habitat and woodland needed before we introduce these animals back into the UK, as this was one of the main reasons that they became extinct.