

1.3 Status in Gwynedd^e

The current status and distribution of the population in Gwynedd is unknown. Since 1989 there have been ten "high confidence" sightings from the Caernarfon Watsonian Vice County according to the VWT scoring system, typically reported by experienced naturalists². A map of this information shows a number of sightings from areas of Gwynedd outside the SNP boundary, including the Llŷn Peninsula and the northern coastal strip.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING THIS SPECIES IN GWYNEDD^f

- One reason for their decline has been persecution by gamekeepers, as the pine marten is a predatory species.
- Habitat fragmentation has led to a lack of suitable habitat - areas of woodland, forest and open uplands, often in areas where cliffs and crags are found.
- Many of the larger blocks of forest which do remain are upland plantations where prey diversity and biomass are low and suitable den sites are very scarce.
- Rocky uplands which offer an alternative refuge are heavily grazed and prey -poor, which limits population productivity.
- Within woodland there is a lack of veteran trees with cavities suitable to form well -insulated den sites.
- Pine martens may be accidentally trapped as part of general predator control carried out by farmers and game keepers and intended for foxes and crows.
- A large and possibly increasing fox population may affect the pine marten. Foxes may predate, and also displace, pine martens, and they also compete for the same food source.
- Pine martens are occasionally found dead on roads and this may be a significant cause of mortality.

3. ASSOCIATED GWYNEDD SAPS/HAPS

Upland oakwoods, Upland mixed ashwoods, Scrub woodlands

Polecat

4. CURRENT ACTION IN GWYNEDD

4.1 Site and habitat protection

- Pine martens may occur in terrestrial or coastal areas of Gwynedd identified as potential Wildlife Sites, or designated as LNR, SSSI, NNR, candidate SAC or SPA, however no details are available.

^e Within this document the term "Gwynedd" refers to areas outside the Snowdonia National Park area, except where specified otherwise

^f See also associated HAPs for more general factors affecting this species' habitats

4.2 Management and programmes of action

- The Vincent Wildlife Trust is running a nest box scheme in the Vale of Ffestiniog.
- Grant Schemes for woodland management (e.g. Woodland Grant Scheme) and agri-environmental management (e.g. Tir Gofal) may contribute towards maintaining and enhancing habitat suitable for the pine marten.
- Through its strategy document "Woodlands for Wales" the National Assembly for Wales is committed to changes in forestry practice that should benefit pine martens.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

- Ongoing national survey programme by the Vincent Wildlife Trust who also maintain a database of reported pine marten sightings.
- Reports of sightings have previously been collected from members of the public by Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd and by Gwynedd Council at agricultural shows and other events.

5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Encourage natural growth and expansion of the current indigenous population.
2. Improve public awareness of pine martens and encourage tolerance amongst gamekeepers and farmers.

6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Code	Action	Partner(s) ⁹
Policy and legislation		
1	Use planning conditions to ensure developments in sensitive locations are compatible with conservation of pine marten TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC , relevant partners
Species / habitat management and protection		
2	In conjunction with landowners and managers, set up safe breeding havens in selected areas of suitable habitat, possibly including artificial marten den boxes and monitor usage. TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set	VWT , CC , FC , GC
Advisory		
3	Provide advice on exclusion of pine martens from game and poultry pens to gamekeepers, farmers and poultry keepers. TARGET/TIMESCALE: on an ad hoc basis, Ongoing	GC , BASC , CCW , DEPC , GCT , FWAG Cymru
4	Provide advice and training on pine marten conservation issues to wardens, forestry workers, CC officers and others involved in management of potential pine marten habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	VWT , CCW , GC

⁹ Lead partner for this action is indicated by bold typeface, see section 7.2 for explanation of abbreviations

Survey, research and monitoring		
5	Assist with the development of pine marten survey techniques where appropriate and feasible TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	VWT, CEH, GC, UWB
Communications and publicity		
6	Encourage the recording of pine marten sightings by land owners and managers, to be passed to VWT for collation, through publishing regular articles in relevant publications (e.g. those of farming unions, BASC, GCT, NWWT) TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, VWT
7	Encourage the recording of pine marten sightings by the general public, to be passed to VWT for collation, through submission of occasional press releases to local newspapers. TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, NWWT
8	Raise awareness among gamekeepers, farmers, poultry keepers and others who practise predator control of the legal protection afforded to this species, and of the need to minimise the risk of catching pine martens, through publishing articles in relevant publications and giving talks to relevant groups (e.g. publications and local meetings of farming unions) TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, BASC, CCW, DEPC, GCT, FWAG Cymru

7. PARTNERS & OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 Overall Lead Partner for SAP

Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT)

7.2 Key partners

British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

Coed Cymru (CC)

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Welsh Assembly Government) (DEPC)

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru (FWAG Cymru)

Forestry Commission (FC)

Game Conservancy Trust (GCT)

Gwynedd Council (GC)

North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)

University of Wales Bangor (UWB)

7.3 Opportunities

Volunteers, students, farming unions, landowners and managers, gamekeepers, poultry keepers

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Principal author: Andrew Simpkin

Consultation: John Messenger (VWT), Chris Hall (Afon Dwyrdd Otter Project), Peter Jones (FC), Jill Jackson (GC), Chris Wynne (NWWT), Robert Greig (Anglesey Otter Project), John Birks (VWT)

Photograph: D Balharry.

9. ABBREVIATIONS

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan, HAP: Habitat Action Plan, JNCC: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan, LNR: Local Nature Reserve, NNR: National Nature Reserve, SAC: Special Area of Conservation, SAP: Species Action Plan, SPA: Special Protection Area, SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest

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¹ Birks, J.D.S. and Macmillan, H.J. 2001. *The Vincent Wildlife Trust - Review of 1997 - 2000*. The Vincent Wildlife Trust.

² Birks, J, Braithwaite, T and Messenger, J. 2002. *The pine marten in Wales - our greatest enigma?* Natur Cymru, Winter 2002.