



Photo: Josie (Project Officer) and Cat (Project Manager) demonstrating how to radio track pine martens.

## Project Pine Marten

**In partnership with Forestry England, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Forest Research, and the Woodland Trust. Supported by Forest Holidays, NatureScot and Forestry & Land Scotland.**

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is extremely grateful for the support you have given Project Pine Marten in the Forest of Dean. Although a recovering native mammal, pine martens have been slow to return to England. With your support, we have been able to give the species a helping hand in establishing in the south-west.

### **New arrivals – an update**

Our tracking and monitoring with camera traps suggests that much of the main Forest of Dean is occupied by martens released in 2019 as well as their offspring. It was therefore expected that the 2021 releases would spread out much further afield. And spread they have!



Of the 17 martens released this autumn, around a third have remained in the Forest of Dean and immediate surroundings, likely filling in any empty territories. The remaining martens have either ventured across the Wye into Wales, headed northwards following the Wye and one marten has even bypassed Gloucester and settled in the Stroud Valleys. This really shows how well connected some of the habitat we have here in Gloucestershire is. It also highlights the role that rivers, and linear features (comprising scrubland, grassland, woodland and hedgerows) play in helping the movement of martens from one area to another.

We will continue tracking these martens into spring, focussing as best we can on the females in the hope that we will have kits born again around February-March. Breeding is one of the keys to a successful establishment of martens in the area. We want to ensure martens continue to breed, increasing their numbers and genetic diversity in the forest, so although it is great to see fluffy babies on camera, it is also vital for the projects long-term success. With less martens being radio tracked, our camera traps now become even more important in monitoring uncollared females to look for signs of breeding and potentially kits coming along to visit cameras with Mum!

### **Camera trap loan scheme**

Our camera trap loan scheme continues to give us new information and volunteers have picked up three more of the released martens or their kits in new locations in the last 6-week cycle of camera trapping, which is excellent. Not all cameras are visited by pine martens, but this is also useful information, so a big thank you to volunteers who persisted in the absence of martens and the presence of many grey squirrels and jays, we even had some guest appearances from a stoat!

The next group of volunteers will be setting up their cameras soon. If you have not yet registered an interest in taking part and are keen to do so (or you would like to have a camera again), please get in touch with Cat and she will add you to the camera waiting list.

### **Scat surveys**

Thanks again to those who repeated their scat surveys this November, including our new volunteers who did their first surveys. It was a tricky time of year to survey for scats due to leaves and poor weather (plus many new transect routes) so thank you for your persistence. The main aim of these surveys was to check and change any routes in time for March surveys and to collect as many scat samples as possible to look at marten diet in the new year. If you are not already on our scat survey list and would like to get involved, please drop Cat an email. We hope to run some refresher training days in early spring so don't worry if you have no experience.

For more information on the pine marten project, visit  
[www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/project-pine-marten](http://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/project-pine-marten)



Some of the pine marten images that volunteers or our team have picked up on camera traps throughout 2021.