

AN OVERVIEW OF 2012





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This summary version of our Annual Report outlines our achievements in 2012. It also gives a financial synopsis and summarises our future plans. If you would like to read the VWT's audited financial statements for 2012 they are presented in our full VWT 'Annual Report and Financial Statements' available from our website: [www.vwt.org.uk](http://www.vwt.org.uk).

*Photo:* A lesser horseshoe bat in flight © Frank Greenaway

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# 1. Message from the Chairman

Over the last twelve months or so, The Vincent Wildlife Trust has been clarifying its conservation strategy for the next ten years.

Our three conservation priorities are:

- Innovative conservation of small mustelids (pine martens, polecats, stoats, weasels)
- Innovative conservation of woodland bats, and
- Innovative work on a small number of other poorly understood mammals.

We recognise that working with others will be key to delivering our strategy. The Trust's recent collaborative projects, many of which are highlighted in this report, have been extremely successful and we hope to build on these productive, cooperative partnerships in the coming years.

Many of our native mammals are struggling to cope with a range of threats, but often we can

make a real difference even with limited resources. Both species of horseshoe bat are doing well, in part, we think, due to our efforts over the last three decades, and the discovery of a pine marten body in Wales in 2012 gives us great hope for this charismatic little animal. The Trust is extremely grateful to the wide range of funders and partners that have chosen to work with us - their support is crucial.

Finally, my thanks as always go to the great team of staff, volunteers and trustees that work for and with the Trust. Without their loyalty and commitment, we simply wouldn't have achieved so much.

Tom Tew  
Chairman



## 2. One man's vision - almost 40 years on

In 1975, The Honourable Vincent Weir, a keen amateur naturalist, a businessman and a philanthropist decided to combine these three passions. Using his own funds he set up The Vincent Wildlife Trust, a charity dedicated to applying specialist research and practical solutions to species conservation - and to mammals in particular. The rest is history.

Whilst the Trust has supported general wildlife conservation over the years, at the heart of the Trust's conservation activities has always been the rare and 'difficult to study' mammals, and this is very much the core work of the VWT today. We conserve a range of endangered mammals both through research and practical management. We manage nature reserves, undertake pioneering research and provide expert advice to others through practical demonstration.

The Trust focuses on the rarer bat species, especially the horseshoe bats, together with the small mustelids - including the pine marten, polecat, stoat and weasel.

In support of our work on bats, the Trust has acquired some 40 bat roosts in both Britain and Ireland. These are managed for the protection of the bats and they also give volunteers the chance to get actively involved in bat monitoring and conservation.



### 3. 2012 - a year of action, achievement, accomplishment

In 2012, the Trust's species work focused largely on the horseshoe bats and the mustelids, notably the pine marten. Involvement on a smaller scale with other species included the red squirrel and dormouse in Wales and the pygmy shrew in Ireland.

Our work over the past year has been summarised in the following sections:

i. Our work with Bats

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ii. Our work with Mustelids

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iii. VWT in mainland Europe

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iv. Citizen Science Projects

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v. Volunteering and Education

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vi. VWT in the News

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*Photo:* Pine marten © Colin Smith



## i. Our work with Bats

In 2012, the VWT's bat work focused largely on specific bat species projects and the ongoing management and monitoring of the Trust's bat roosts.

### *Research and Surveys*

- Radio-tracking greater horseshoe bats

An intensive ten-day radio-tracking project was held in May to further the Trust's knowledge and understanding of how the landscape is used by greater horseshoe bats.

Tiny radio-transmitters were attached to bats from a maternity colony at one of the Trust's bat roosts in Devon. The bats were then tracked using telemetry techniques with the aim of gaining a clearer picture of woodland use, flight paths and night roosts. This information will help with landscape conservation measures for bats.

- Impact of Street Lighting on Biodiversity project

This project is a partnership with Exeter University. The aim is to study the effects that street lighting might have on bats and amphibians. As part of this project, a VWT staff member is looking at the impact of street lighting on horseshoe bats. Using bat echolocation recorders, the horseshoe bat activity levels around key roosts and under varying light conditions are being assessed. The year's work has generated 600,000 individual recordings and preliminary results do appear to show that artificial lighting has a negative impact on bat activity.



### *Bat roost management*

- **Bat counts confirm record numbers**

Staff and volunteers completed 40 winter hibernation counts and 102 summer emergence counts at VWT roosts. Fourteen roosts had record counts since VWT took on the management of these sites. In addition, 16 bat-box surveys were carried out at other locations where access agreements are in place.

- **Management work continues to improve conditions for bats**

Maintenance, safety and improvement works were carried out at almost all of the Trust's bat roosts in 2012, including structural enhancements, roof and access repairs and the replacement of a 30-year old incubator at one of our larger maternity roosts. One significant achievement in Dorset was the completion of a new roost site for greater horseshoe bats, a project part funded by Natural England.

- **Roost designated as SSSI**

The Trust's High Marks Barn in Devon was designated by Natural England as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, cited for its greater horseshoe bat colony. This is the second largest colony in the UK with some 800 individuals in the summer.

### *Bat work in Ireland*

- **Bats and farming**

A VWT-led initiative has progressed which encourages more farmers in Ireland to be supportive of lesser horseshoe bat conservation.

- **Ministerial contact in Ireland**

The Trust made personal contact with the Irish Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (see photo top left) and hosted a visit by delegates to VWT bat roosts in Ireland.



## ii. Our work with Mustelids

During 2012, the VWT's work with mustelids focused on the pine marten. Of particular importance was the pine marten survey of Scotland aimed at finding evidence of the current distribution of this species across Scotland. Other mustelid work included designing novel ways of surveying stoats and weasels.

- **Scotland Pine Marten Expansion Zone Survey**

Funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Trust coordinated a four-week summer survey to track the expansion of the pine marten population in Scotland. A report on this survey has now been published by SNH. The report details areas of

expansion and provides a useful source of information in relation to potential pine marten recovery in northern England.

- **Genetics paper published**

A VWT pine marten genetics paper was published in the journal 'Conservation Genetics'.



**Read the Pine Marten Expansion Zone Survey report published by SNH.**

*Photo:* Pine marten © Edward Delaney



**Find out more about VWT's work in 'Conservation Genetics'.**



- VWT leads on national strategy for pine marten restoration

The VWT organised a pine marten strategy group meeting to progress future conservation policy for this species. Ten stakeholders were present representing the key statutory and non-governmental organisations with an interest in pine marten conservation.

- National polecat survey

Plans for a national polecat survey in 2014 are progressing, including a design for a non-invasive technique for establishing polecat presence.

- Radio-tracking pine martens in Ireland

The Trust assisted with a radio-tracking workshop and subsequent tracking of pine martens in County Mayo.

- New pine marten project in Wales

Funding was secured from The Co-operative for a new project in Wales to further investigate the presence of pine martens in Wales. One of the key study areas will be Cwm Rheidol, where we have received a number of possible marten sightings.



*Find our more about the 'People and Pine Martens in Wales' project on our website.*

*Photo: Polecat © Jane Parsons*



### iii. VWT in mainland Europe

- Nietoperek - Europe's largest bat hibernation roost

The Trust was involved in leading a bat and marten census in Nietoperek, Poland. The Second World War underground fortifications at Nietoperek in north-west Poland is the largest bat hibernation site in northern Europe, with almost 40,000 bats present over the winter. Every January a systematic count is made of the bats using the tunnels.

Together with colleagues from Poland, Germany and the Low Countries, the Trust is involved in organising and leading this census. This year, for the first time, recording the presence of martens in the system was added to the bat census work. Nine dedicated marten surveyors, including two from the VWT, collected scats and recorded marten signs in the tunnels.

As part of this work, the Trust is involved with a PhD student project at the Waterford Institute of Technology. The project will include field surveys and use of molecular techniques to determine the level of marten activity in the Nietoperek tunnels and to see what impact the martens are having on the local bat population.

The project will also explore methods for mitigating the effects of marten predation on the bats. To aid data collection for this project, the Trust has organised spring and later summer surveys for martens in the area. Teams of volunteers from the UK, Poland and Ireland have surveyed for martens in the woodlands around the fortified bunkers that lead into the tunnels.

*Photo:* Lesser horseshoe bat © Frank Greenaway



- VWT represented on board of BatLife Europe

The Trust is a partner organisation in BatLife Europe, an international NGO seeking to enhance the protection and conservation of bats across the continent.

One of the first tasks of the new organisation was to carry out an assessment of the capacity of its member organisations and to start a process of twinning NGOs so they can offer support to one another. The VWT is represented on the board of trustees of BatLife Europe.

Through its trustee, the VWT has helped Batlife to progress a three-year programme of work for bats in Europe.

*Photo:* Bechstein's bat roosting  
© Henry Schofield

- Eurobats

The VWT is represented on the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Eurobats Agreement. This Agreement is part of the UN Convention on Migratory Species. The Trust is leading a working group assessing the progress being made in Europe on designing artificial bat roosts.

- Bat research

The VWT worked in partnership with Bristol University and Copenhagen University on bat DNA analysis. The Trust also cooperated on the collection of *Basilia nana* puparia from Bat boxes at a VWT Bechstein's bat site for the University of Greifswald in Belgium.



## iv. Citizen Science Projects

In 2012, the Trust had two mammal projects active in Wales. These projects involved a mix of research and survey work together with community involvement and work with local schools.

### 'Mammals in a Sustainable Environment' project (MISE)

**Where:** Western coastal counties of Wales

**Funder:** European Regional Development Fund (under the Ireland Wales Programme 2007-2013)

Mammal surveys and events held during 2012 included tree planting to enhance red squirrel habitat, dormouse box checking, stoat and weasel hair-tube surveys and coastal otter surveys. Survey material

collected was passed on to the Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland for DNA testing. The results provided useful information towards determining future mammal conservation strategies.



*Find out more about the **MISE project** and how you can get involved on their website.*



## 'Our Beacon for Bats' project (OB4B)

**Where:** Upper Usk Valley, Wales

**Funders:** Brecon Beacons Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency Wales (now Natural Resources Wales)

- This year, volunteers continued surveying for lesser horseshoe bats to build up a 'Bat Map' of the valley. This map is now starting to take shape.
- A prototype temporary bat night roost was developed and is now being tested. If successful more will be built and the design made available to others.
- A survey of World War Two pill boxes identified a number being used by lesser horseshoe bats.
- Woodland and hedgerow tree planting schemes have been agreed with several local landowners as part of the project's bat habitat enhancement work.
- Lesser horseshoe bats were included in the Brecon Beacons National Park 'Dark Skies' campaign.



Learn more about the **OB4B project** and how you can take part on our website.



## v. Volunteering and Education

### Volunteering with VWT

The MISE and OB4B projects together resulted in some 150 members of the general public carrying out a range of mammal survey work in 2012. In addition, around 80 volunteers are involved in bat roost monitoring. The Trust provides a number of training opportunities for volunteers and members of the public, both formal and informal, to raise awareness of mammal species ecology and to equip volunteers with the necessary fieldwork skills for mammal surveys.

### Conservation Education

The Trust's educational work takes on many forms: from dealing with public enquiries (over 500 dealt with in 2012) to carrying out more formal learning at workshops for both

professional ecologists and keen amateur naturalists. In 2012, new or revised educational materials included project leaflets in English and Welsh, the creation of a website for our work in Ireland, a VWT Facebook page and Trust electronic newsletters.

The Trust was invited by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) to run a workshop in Ireland for lesser horseshoe bats, and the MISE project attracted some 100 delegates to a dormouse workers conference led by VWT staff.

As a specialist organisation, the Trust provides detailed information for a range of audiences from householders to consultant ecologists.



## vi. VWT in the news

In 2012, we had media coverage at a national level on 28 known occasions as well as 20 known occasions in regional or local media.

The VWT's on-line presence continues to grow and social media has enabled the Trust to extend its reach further, particularly to a younger audience.

Staff attended 48 major events, ranging from professional conservation conferences attracting both academics and professionals, to gatherings of the non-governmental sector and statutory nature conservation bodies. These activities provided valuable opportunities to engage new audiences and to present a bespoke message to readers, listeners and conference audiences.

### VWT in the media...





## 4. What is next for VWT?

The Trust's priorities for the next ten years are detailed in our Conservation Strategy. The chart below highlights some of those priorities.

### Priority

**Collect and analyse material evidence of pine martens in Wales and England**

**Lead on other small mustelid conservation projects**

**Increase the population of horseshoe bats in VWT priority areas**

### Expected Delivery Mechanism/Outcomes

- Continuation of two-year 'People and Pine Martens in Wales' project
- Further develop pine marten awareness and carry out scat surveys in the North of England and Scottish borders
- Develop new stoat and weasel survey methods as part of MISE project
- Establish a 2014-2015 Polecat Distribution Survey
- Continue 'Our Beacon for Bats' project initiatives including the development of temporary night roosts
- Encourage other roost owners to take on VWT roost design and maintenance approach

*Photo:* Pine marten © Vernon Mackie



## Priority

**VWT to be viewed as the number one non-governmental organisation for expertise on horseshoe bats**

**Establish long-term programmes for at least six priority species**

**Ensure more of the public are aware of and involved in our work**

## Expected Delivery Mechanism/Outcomes

- Organise workshops and conferences and produce relevant publications
- Supply development advice and mitigation plans for horseshoe bats
- Lead on national plans for horseshoe bats
- Establish barbastelle research project
- MISE project developments on dormouse, harvest mouse and red squirrel
- Develop research projects and surveys in Ireland on pine marten, Irish stoat, pygmy shrew and Leisler's bat
- Further increase use of traditional and new media
- Further develop volunteer opportunities
- Continue organisation of talks, workshops and ensure a VWT presence at mammal related events



**Want to learn more about VWT's Conservation Strategy? Read the **full version**.**

**Photos:** Red squirrel © Elizabeth Croose,  
Irish stoat © Carrie Crowley

## 5. Our financial position

### Overview

In 2012, the underlying incoming resources of the Trust increased by 2% to £527,157.

The Trust's total net assets stand at £15,094,879.

**87% of expenditure was attributable to charitable activities - a total of £554,459.**

The audited financial statements of the VWT for the year ended 31 December 2012 are contained in the Trusts full 'Annual Report and Financial Statements' available at <http://www.vwt.org.uk/resources>.

Included here is a summary of the financial statements of the VWT for 2012. For a detailed explanation, please refer to the full 'Annual Report and Financial Statements'.

### Income and expenditure



#### Incoming resources

- Investment income - £336,072
- Voluntary income - £164,979
- Other incoming resources - £26,106



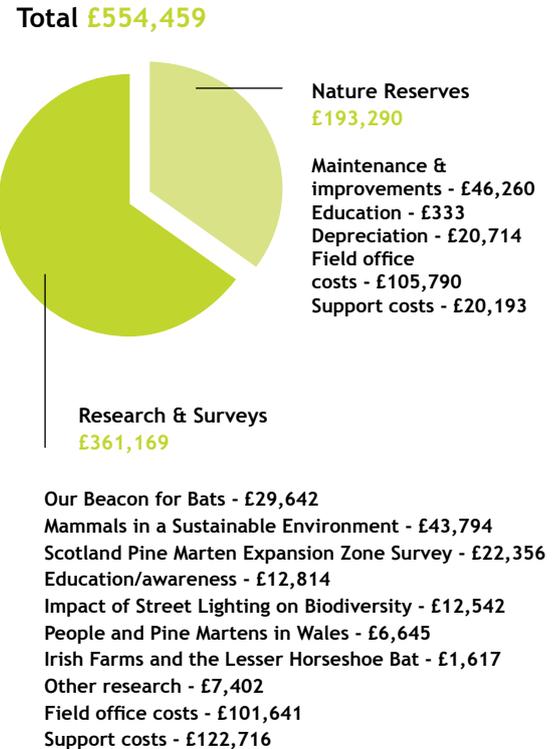
#### Resources expended

- Charitable activities - £554,459
- Investment management costs - £54,623
- Governance costs - £29,136

## Project Grants received



## Charitable activities





## Our thanks

The Vincent Wildlife Trust would like to thank the following funders, partners and friends who help make our work possible:

Bat Conservation Trust

Brecon Beacons Trust

Brecon Beacons National  
Park Authority

County Wildlife Trusts

Environment Wales

European Regional Development  
Fund under the Ireland Wales  
Programme 2007-2013

Forestry Commission  
(England & Scotland)

Heritage Lottery Fund

Natural Resources Wales

National Parks and Wildlife Service  
(Ireland)

Natural England

People's Trust for Endangered Species

Scottish Natural Heritage

Snowdonia National Park Authority

The Co-operative

The Heritage Council (Ireland)

The Mammal Society

University of Exeter

VWT volunteers

Waterford Institute of Technology (Ireland)

*We must also thank our extended team of external 'expert friends' who provide us with much additional wisdom and support.*

## Stay connected

Visit our website for Britain:  
[www.vwt.org.uk](http://www.vwt.org.uk)

and Ireland:  
<http://www.mammals-in-ireland.ie/>

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educational materials here:  
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