

ANNUAL REVIEW

A SUMMARY OF 2013



Contents

This summary version of our Annual Report outlines our achievements in 2013. It also gives a financial synopsis and summarises our future plans.

If you would like to read the VWT's audited financial statements for 2013 they are presented in our full VWT 'Annual Report and Financial Statements' available from our website: www.vwt.org.uk.

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





Message from the Chairman

It is satisfying to report to you the progress that The Vincent Wildlife Trust has made in the last five years. Since the appointment of our CEO in 2007, and the adoption of a broader conservation strategy in 2010 we have:

- re-balanced the ratio of our work between nature reserves and research/survey work from 90:10 to 35:65
- increased our restricted project income by 70% through an increase from one externally funded project to eighteen
- improved our profile so that we now lead on the national pine marten strategy and are the authority on horseshoe bats in the UK and Ireland
- improved our resilience by increasing trustee numbers from three to five, and staff numbers from nine to thirteen.

[< Back to main menu](#)

These significant steps for the Trust have been part of our planned organic growth and we are in a good position to take forward our conservation and research plans for the mammal species we feel most need our help. We could not have got where we have on our own and I offer sincere thanks to all our funders, partners, individuals, staff and trustees who have helped us along the way.

Finally, in February 2014, we were profoundly saddened by the death of our friend, founder and primary benefactor, the Honourable Vincent Weir. Never has the prefix 'Honourable' been more apt for this most kindly, honest and generous man. We will pay lasting tribute to Vincent in other places but in this Annual Review I must note the simple truth that without Vincent's vision and support to us, and indeed to many other nature conservation causes, we would not be here, and nor would much of Britain's wildlife. We will miss him.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read 'Tom Tew'.

Tom Tew, Chairman

Trustees' Report

The Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) is a charity applying specialist research and practical solutions to the conservation of mammals. For nearly 40 years the Trust has made major contributions to the conservation of otter, dormouse, water vole, pine marten, polecat and the bats.

The late Honourable John Vincent Weir founded The Vincent Wildlife Trust in 1975, to focus on those species in most need of help. Whilst the Trust has supported general wildlife conservation over the years, the main conservation activities of the Trust have centred around rare and 'difficult to study' mammals, now the core work of the VWT.

Our mission

To 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.

Our charitable aims

- (i) Promote the conservation of rare mammals through a greater understanding of their ecology.
- (ii) Conserve mammals through the practical management of strategically important sites.
- (iii) Advise on the needs of mammals within habitats and landscapes, working with others.
- (iv) Undertake and publish innovative applied studies on endangered mammal species.





The Trust's activities in 2013 generated direct public benefit in three main ways, delivered as an integral part of our research and nature reserve programmes and projects:

- (i) Volunteer involvement
- (ii) Education and advocacy
- (iii) Profile and publicity

Volunteer involvement - A total of 402 volunteers were involved in the Trust's work in 2013 contributing over 4,000 hours, which equates to some £31,500. The majority of volunteering related to the Trust's three main projects this year: some 290 members of the general public carried out a range of mammal survey work (2012: 150). In addition, around 95 volunteers (2012: 80) were involved in bat roost monitoring. The Trust provided 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.

Education and advocacy - The Trust's educational work took on many forms: from dealing with public enquiries (over 500 in 2013) to providing information and carrying out more formal learning at workshops and field days for both professional ecologists and amateur naturalists. In 2013, new educational materials included a new Conservation Strategy brochure, a summary annual review for the general public and educational materials for a Science Open Day aimed at primary school children in Ireland. In addition, a supplement produced by VWT on Lesser Horseshoe Bats in Ireland was included in the Irish Naturalists Journal. Some 38 walks and talks, including site visits, were given to many local groups, students and conference audiences.

Profile and publicity - In 2013, our main focus was on building awareness of pine martens and we promoted this in Scotland, Wales and England. We continued to use social media to extend our reach to a wider audience (over 3,500 followers). Staff attended 49 key events and conferences which ranged from professional courses attracting both academics and professionals, to public events focused on the natural environment.

An overview of 2013

Our work with Mustelids

Objective : To collect and analyse material evidence of pine martens in Wales and parts of England and enhance conditions for pine marten recovery

- Interviews were completed for 47 reported possible marten sightings from members of the public, of which eleven were allocated a high score. Contact has been made with people checking den boxes in England.
- As part of the People and Pine Martens in Wales project funded by The Co-operative, some 50 new den boxes were erected (target 20) as well as a Public Opinion Survey completed.
- A comparable habitat model was developed looking at differences in ideal pine marten habitat between Ireland, Wales and England.
- A database of useful contacts in Wales has been set up, including gamekeepers and shooting clubs, and additional camera traps were erected in areas where there have been possible pine marten sightings.
- In Scotland, a survey was carried out in southern Scotland, funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, to determine the distribution of the pine marten in this area, and a public leaflet was compiled: 'Living with Pine Martens'.
- In Ireland, a leaflet aimed at poultry and game keepers was produced and funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Photo: VWT's Dr Kate McAney launches the new pine marten leaflet with Dr Ferdia Marnell (NPWS) and Minister Deenihan.





Objective : To lead on other small mustelid conservation plans

- Field trials for the use of hair-tubes to monitor stoats and weasels continued in south-west Wales, as part of the Mammals in a Sustainable Environment project funded by EU Interreg funding. A Mustelid Identification Guide was produced as part of this project.
- In Ireland, relations with the National University of Ireland Galway continued with MSc students carrying out Irish stoat field monitoring trials and a PhD studentship was secured to support an Irish stoat study, part funded by the Trust.
- Polecat work stepped up a gear this year with preparations for a ten-year cycle UK survey which will start in 2014. This included the securing of an agreement with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) to store road-kill carcasses for future research studies.

Our work with Bats

Objective : To be viewed as the no.1 NGO expert on horseshoe bats

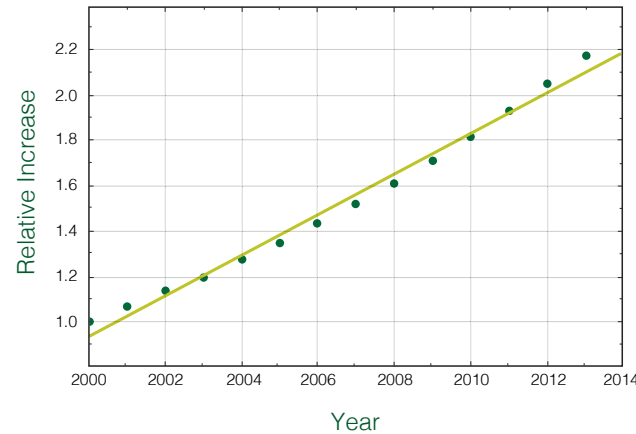
- Presentations were given at conferences in relation to the Our Beacon for Bats project and the project was included as a case study in internal briefings to Natural Resources Wales staff. We were also asked to input into the development of a greater horseshoe bat project in Devon.
- We volunteered to author the sections on horseshoe bats in Natural England's updated Bat Mitigation Handbook and provided a horseshoe bat training workshop for an Ecological Consultancy.
- On a wider Europe front we are leading an artificial roosts technical working group for Eurobats, an inter-governmental organisation under the United Nation's Convention on Migratory Species.



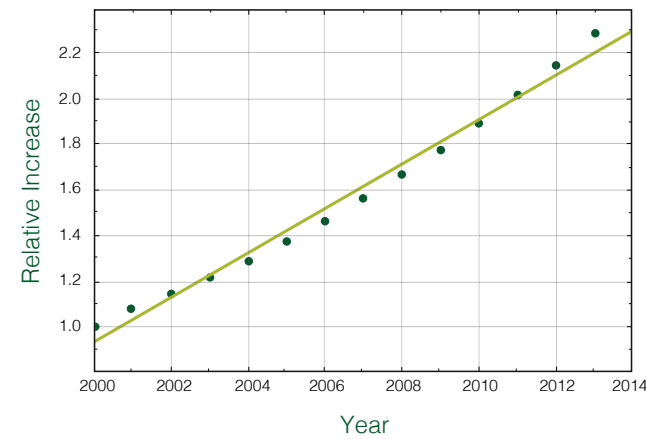
Objective : To increase the population of horseshoe bats in VWT priority areas

- Following last summer's poor weather and a prolonged and cold spring in 2013, there was expectation of an adverse effect on the numbers of bats in Trust managed roosts. However, the overall picture was very patchy and whilst some colonies did show a decline, in others there were record counts (see graphs below). The trend analysis for both greater and lesser horseshoe bat reserves continues to show a sustained increase over time.

Trend Analysis of Maximum Counts in the VWT
Greater Horseshoe Bat Reserves



Trend Analysis of Maximum Counts in the VWT
Lesser Horseshoe Bat Reserves



- The [Our Beacon for Bats project](#) successfully completed a final year. Achievements of this project included support from 99 volunteers (1,840 hours), the production of a BATMAP, the involvement of 30 landowners, the planting of 10,500 trees and improvements to five roosts.
- Another project in which the Trust has been involved, [Impact of Lighting on Biodiversity](#), is helping to develop understanding of the implications of artificial light on the horseshoe bats and other species. Working in partnership with Exeter University, a significant amount of data was collected and analysed.
- In Ireland, we submitted a response to the Department of Agriculture's consultation on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 to highlight the need for support from the farming sector for lesser horseshoe bat conservation measures.

We pay tribute to the tremendous support given by the late Rob Strachan to the [Our Beacon for Bats project](#). Rob gave so generously of his time and played a huge part in this project's success.



[Photo:](#) Rob Strachan (centre) discusses a hedgerow planting scheme for the [Our Beacon for Bats project](#).

Our work with other species

Objective : To establish long-term programmes for at least six priority species (identified in VWT's Conservation Strategy)

- We started a barbastelle box monitoring and ringing project, but unfortunately due to bad weather only two visits have been made at the study site in Worcestershire so far. On these occasions very few barbastelles have been found in the boxes and only two were ringed.
- Bechstein's bat annual monitoring in Dorset continues to be successful with over thirteen years of data now collected, and some 600 bats ringed with the help of 30 volunteers in 2013. Our data were also helpful for a Phd study on 'Cohort variation in life history traits of a rare woodland bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*)'.
- We have also secured a Phd studentship project with Exeter University for a Bechstein's genetics project which will be looking at determining population change in these rare woodland bats.
- The Mammals in a Sustainable Environment project has helped move the Trust's knowledge forward on non-invasive techniques for monitoring dormouse, harvest mouse and red squirrel. These monitoring activities involved some 134 volunteers and the collection of data which will inform conservation plans.



Public engagement, Volunteering & Staff

Objective : To ensure more of the public are aware of and involved in our work and to increase the skillset and knowledge of VWT staff and volunteers as well as external audiences

- Our work was included in media items on at least 48 occasions, of which 33 were national and six were found online. National coverage included an eight-page feature in the BBC Wildlife magazine and coverage in two BBC TV programmes.
- Our Twitter and Facebook accounts now have over 3,500 followers and new this year is the use of Vimeo to upload video clips.
- A strong presence was achieved at all relevant major conferences with nine presentations and three posters presented by VWT staff, some of which were to a pan-European audience.
- We published three peer-reviewed papers/ reports as well as ten new print items, with electronic versions provided online.
- Thirty-six talks were given by staff to various groups, with over a third of these given in Wales as part of the People and Pine Martens in Wales project.
- The number of volunteers involved in our work has nearly doubled since 2012, as awareness of the three main projects grows and fieldwork gathers momentum.
- Advice was provided to at least 220 professionals/ecologists requiring specialist information.
- Our target of two days of continual professional development per member of staff was well exceeded, with an average of 15 days per person recorded. A significant amount of time was invested in the training of volunteers, with nearly 30 training workshops or field days organised.

Plans for the future

The Trust follows a conservation strategy for the period up to 2023 which feeds into a business plan covering two calendar years (2013-2014). The main conservation priorities and outcomes planned for this period are as follows:

Objective	Expected Delivery Mechanism 2014
To progress a pine marten recovery strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>People and Pine Martens in Wales project</u> • <u>Pine Marten Recovery Project</u> - England and Wales • Pine marten awareness work - Scotland and Ireland
To organise and promote a UK-wide polecat survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collation and verification of sightings data • Carcass collection and storage partnership with CEH • Promotional activity with mammal groups and wider public
To develop methods for monitoring stoats and weasels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects to pilot different field methodology • PhD study on the Irish stoat



Objective	Expected Delivery Mechanism 2014
To maintain and enhance conditions for populations of horseshoe bats around VWT roosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roost maintenance and enhancements • Design of new structures/temporary roosts • Advising other roost owners • Understanding barriers to population expansion (<u>Impact of Street Lighting project</u>/road crossings)
To develop understanding of Bechstein's bats and factors influencing population changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracketts Coppice bat box and ringing programme • Bechstein's genetics project with Exeter University
To establish long-term programmes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbastelle • Dormouse • Harvest mouse • Red squirrel • Pygmy shrew (Ireland) • Leisler's bat (Ireland) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tinker's Hill barbastelle ringing project • <u>Mammals in a Sustainable Environment project</u> • University and other partnerships

Objective	Expected Delivery Mechanism 2014
To ensure more of the public are aware of and involved in our work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications, workshops and conferences • Media profile • Volunteer opportunities • Talks and public events
To increase the skillset and knowledge of VWT staff and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development plans • Volunteer training plans • Ecologist and professional training events





Financial Summary

Overview

2013 saw a 51% increase in total incoming resources to £795,012 (2012: £527,157). However, incoming resources in 2013 include a profit on disposal of fixed assets totalling £304,270 which related to the sale of Storridge and Canny Park Woods, Devon. Excluding this, the underlying incoming resources of the Trust have fallen by 7% which is largely brought about by the drop in external funding of projects from £161,433 in 2012 to £122,151 in 2013.

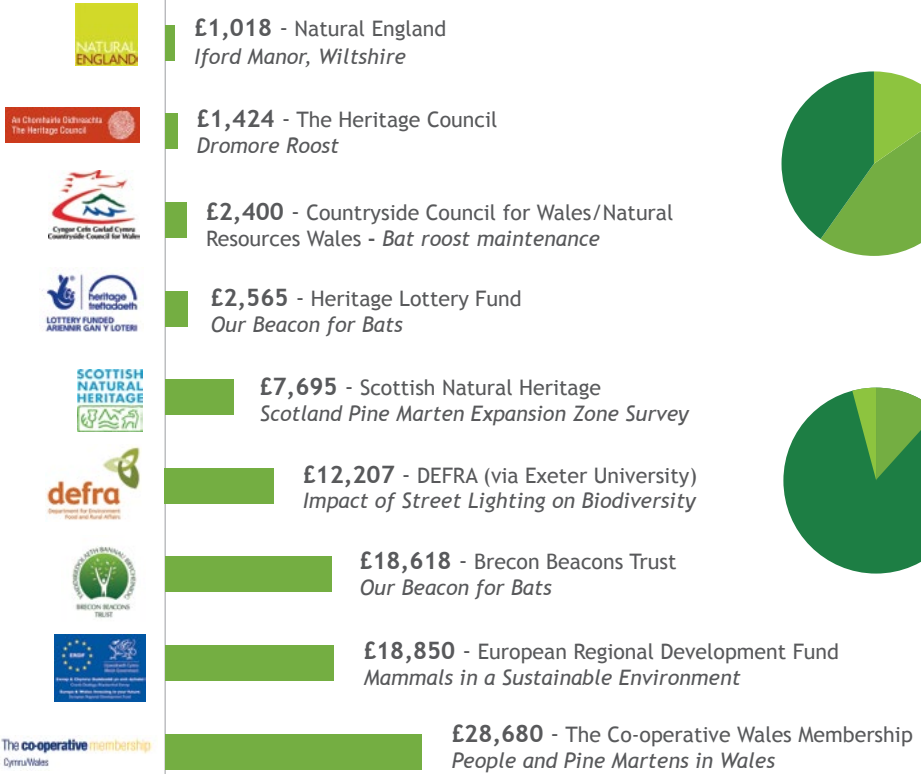
Expenditure rose to £726,313 (2012: £638,218). Of this, 84% of expenditure was attributable to charitable activities. Net incoming resources for the year, before taking into account any gains or losses on investment assets, were £68,699 (2012: net outgoing resources of £111,061).

The audited financial statements of the VWT for the year ended 31 December 2013 are contained in the Trust's full 'Annual Report and Financial Statements' available at www.vwt.org.uk/resources.

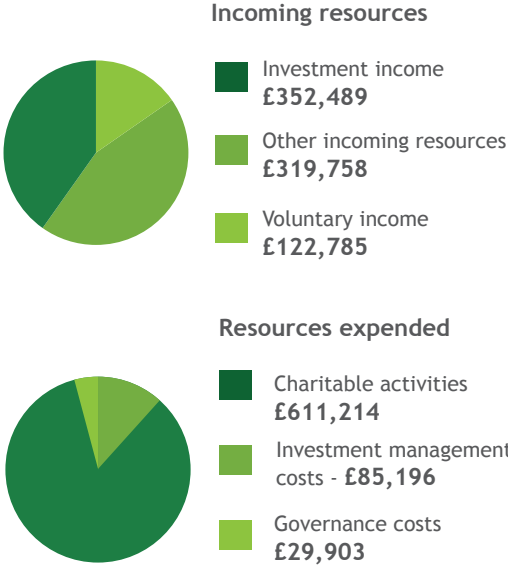
Included here is a summary of the financial statements of the VWT for 2013. For a detailed explanation, please refer to the full '[Annual Report and Financial Statements](#)'.

The statutory accounts have been delivered to the Registrar of Companies and contain such additional information as required by section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and Regulations made thereunder.

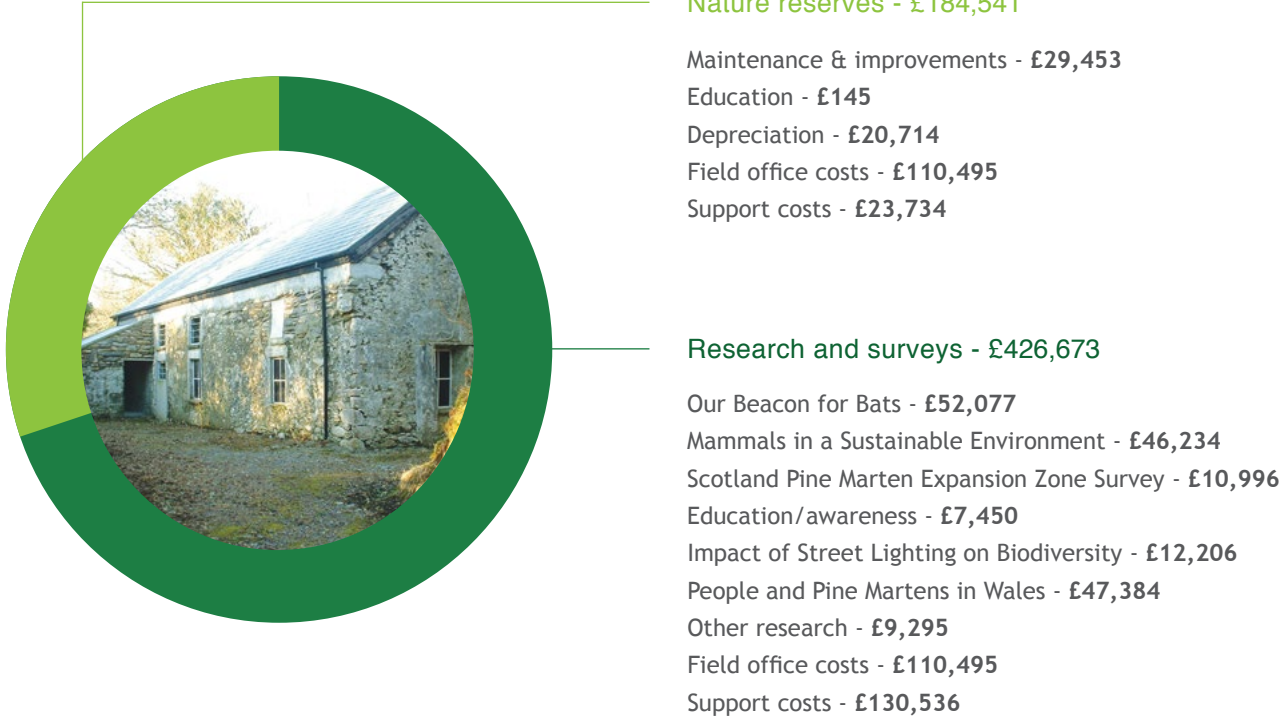
Project Grants



Income and expenditure



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.



Visit our website for Britain: www.vwt.org.uk and Ireland: www.mammals-in-ireland.ie/

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Front cover photos: Polecat © Anne Newton, Lesser horseshoe bat © Frank Greenaway, Pine marten © Vernon Mackie

Back cover photos: Irish stoat © Carrie Crowley (Crossing the Line Films) , Barbastelle © Frank Greenaway, Dormouse © John Robinson

