

Report of the talk to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group:  
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020

### Lizzie Croose: The Changing Fortunes of Britain's Carnivores

Lizzie Croose, Senior Carnivore Conservation Officer of the Vincent Wildlife Trust, last gave a talk to the Malvern Group in 2018 on the reintroduction of pine martens into Wales, and it was fascinating to hear an update on how they are doing. Pine martens suffered badly from persecution in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries but they are now legally protected and recovering in numbers, especially in Scotland, Northern England and Wales. There are now about 80 pine martens in Wales and in the autumn of 2019, 18 martens were reintroduced to the Forest of Dean.

Lizzie also talked about other native mustelids: polecats, otters, stoats and weasels, all of which have suffered at the hands of man in the past. It was good to hear that the outlook for these species is more positive now than at any time in the last 200 years. Polecats are now widespread in Worcestershire and indeed over much of England. Otters are another success story; it is now estimated there are 11,000 across the country and present in nearly all our waterways. It is harder to record how many stoats and weasels there are, but it is thought they are also widespread. However there is one mammal which is not doing so well – there are possibly only 30 true wildcats left in Scotland now, and the main threat to their species is hybridisation with farm and feral cats.



Polecat. Photographed by Anne Newton