

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group

Thursday January 4<sup>th</sup> 2018

Lizzie Croose: Return of the Native – Pine Marten Recovery in England and Wales

The pine marten is one of our six species of native mustelid, larger than weasels and stoats and smaller than badgers. Sadly they were threatened with extinction in this country a hundred years ago because of loss of habitat, persecution and trapping for fur. In the 1930s they began to recover in Scotland but there were no signs of recovery in England and Wales.

Lizzie Croose works for the Vincent Wildlife Trust, which is a charity founded in 1975 for mammal research, surveys, monitoring and conservation. She gave a fascinating talk on their recent work on the re-introduction of pine martens to mid-Wales. Initially there had to be a huge amount of careful groundwork: surveys of prey availability, building den boxes, liaising with the local community and disease risk analysis. Over a period of 3 years, 51 pine martens were trapped in Scotland and released in a suitable site in Wales, with radio collars fitted for monitoring. The good news is that most of them appear to have settled in well and at least 9 females have bred in the last 2 years. Now other sites are being considered for further re-introductions.

Like all wild animals pine martens have their supporters and detractors, but it is interesting to note a recently discovered point in their favour – they appear to be the enemy of the non-native grey squirrel. Research from Ireland has shown that where pine martens are spreading, grey squirrels have declined and as a result, red squirrels have returned.

There is an interesting video from the Shropshire Pine Marten project here: <https://www.facebook.com/stuedmundo/videos/10155637565405971/>

Also see photos below.

