



Case Study 2

Pine martens caught on camera



Bushnell (M) SWT C.nau1d1007.6mb↓ 13°C ☾

The return of the elusive carnivore the pine marten (*Martes martes*) to the central belt of Scotland captured on camera.

The challenge

It is many years since the last pine marten was seen in Cumbernauld. A Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteer, Tracy Lambert, took up the challenge to capture the first ever picture of this shy creature in the town.

The discovery of pine martens in Cumbernauld was an exciting revelation in what many see as a highly urban area. A national survey commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage identified the presence of pine marten from DNA analysis of scats (faeces) taken from woodland in Cumbernauld. But with a single DNA analysis result it was not known if the animal was resident or just passing through. Images were needed to establish if the pine martens are frequent visitors.

Historically pine martens were persecuted to the edge of extinction and people would have had to travel to the highlands to catch a glimpse of one in its natural environment. Changes to the law have stopped the persecution and pine martens have slowly recovered. They are expanding their range but no one expected to find them in Cumbernauld.

In central Scotland much of the pine martens natural ancient woodland habitat has been destroyed and what remains is highly fragmented. Recent efforts to expand and reconnect woodland habitat networks is believed to have contributed to the recovery. The return of this illusive animal shows how well managed woodlands can provide homes for wildlife to recover.

The challenge was how to get these pictures in a woodland without disturbing the animals or the people that visit. To achieve this the volunteer needed a technological solution.

Pine marten facts

- The second rarest carnivore in the UK
- Last seen in Cumbernauld in 1980
- Protected from persecution by law in 1988
- Amazing climbers adapted for a life in the woods
- Need well managed interconnected woodland

The solution

An automated motion sensitive camera was needed to carry out the survey both night and day. The a local volunteer applied to the People’s Postcode Lottery for a small grant to buy the equipment. With the help of the Scottish Wildlife Trust’s reserves manager the camera was set up in a secure location and baited to attract any pine martens in the area. After lots of hard work the camera started to pick up all kinds of woodland visitors. But 1000s of images had to be reviewed before the volunteer got the illusive snap they needed.



Children at Abronhill Primary school learning to identify pine marten track and scents.

The benefits

The first pine marten images were dark and blurry but made local and national headlines. The power of these images made people question their preconceptions of Cumbernauld.

Power of pictures on social media was harnessed and a single image of the pine marten reached over 1,100 people. Local wildlife from the camera has continued to be amongst the most popular posts with the Living Landscape Facebook page now reaching thousands of people. The posts associated with these images emphasise the importance of good quality, well connected woodland.

The story of the pine martens return has captured the imagination of young and old alike. It showcases the health and maturity of the town’s extensive woodland network. This story has been developed into an exciting programme for primary schools, engaging hundreds of young people with their natural environment. Amazement is the most common reaction from pupils, teachers and parents when the discover the pine marten and diversity of Cumbernauld's wildlife.

The cameras have had additional benefits, illuminating a huge range of wildlife in Cumbernauld’s woods. Over 20 different animal species have been recorded in one camera trap location alone. These images have allowed us to record elusive and nocturnal wildlife which helps shape woodland management and conservation.

The next challenge is to find out how many pine marten there are. A second camera has been set up to try and get shots of the marking on the pine martens chest, which can be used to identify individuals.

“I didn’t know what pine martens were and now I know a lot about them”

Connor P6, Abronhill Primary School

“What I would do to make (our school) better is to is build mini beast hotel and bird boxes

Ewan P5a, Cumbernauld Primary School

Iconic pine martens captured peoples imagination
Woodland species used to tell the story of habitat networks
School pine marten workshop has reached over 500 pupils
Over 20 species of animal recorded in Cumbernauld’s woodlands



© Terry Whittaker

Cumbernauld Living Landscape aims to enhance, restore and reconnect green areas of the town. Without them, neither wildlife nor people can flourish.

To find out more contact
 Ian Mackenzie
 imackenzie@swt.org.uk

CumbernauldLivingLandscape.org.uk

The Cumbernauld Living Landscape is supported by many community organisations and partnership led by:

