

Pine Marten

Martes martes

Mammal · Here all year · does not hibernate



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A slender, agile mustelid about the size of a domestic cat, rich chocolate-brown with a large creamy-yellow throat patch that is unique to each animal, prominent rounded ears and a long bushy tail. Pine martens were persecuted almost to extinction in Scotland and have been recovering and spreading south; they are present in the forests of Dumfries and Galloway but remain elusive.

BEHAVIOUR

Martens are superb climbers, denning in tree cavities and hunting through the canopy as readily as on the ground. They are true omnivores — small mammals, birds, eggs, insects and, in late summer, a great deal of fruit, which turns their droppings blue-black with bilberry. Research has found that where martens return, grey squirrels decline sharply while red squirrels do not, apparently because greys are more vulnerable on the ground.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Mustelids (Mustelidae)
SIZE	Body 60–70 cm including tail · about the size of a cat
UK STATUS	Fully protected; recovering after near-extinction in Britain

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