



FAQs

What is a pine marten?

The pine marten is related to the badger, otter, mink and Irish stoat, which are all members of the weasel family or Family Mustelidae. Mustelids are small to medium-sized carnivores and most have long slender bodies, short limbs and long tails. The pine marten is a tree-dwelling mustelid and has sharp, well-developed claws for climbing trees and a long tail to help it balance as it travels along branches.

Is the pine marten native to Ireland?

Yes, because it has been present on the island for at least 6,000 years. It is believed to have been used as a source of fur by humans during the Neolithic period.

Where in Ireland do pine martens live?

Pine martens are now widely distributed throughout Ireland and are present in every county.

The population has been expanding its range and distribution since the 1980s and is now common in the midlands, west, east, north and southwest of Ireland. Pine martens are less widely distributed in Mid-Ulster and parts of the south, particularly Cork and Limerick.

In which habitats does the pine marten live?

The pine marten is a woodland specialist and has excellent climbing skills that allow it to live in forested habitats. To avoid predators, it prefers to use sites above ground, such as tree cavities, in which to rest and rear their young (known as kits), but where these are unavailable, it will use rock crevices, burrows, building, nests, dreys and log piles. In Ireland, the main and largest habitat available to the pine marten is commercially managed coniferous plantations.

What do pine martens eat?

Although pine martens are carnivores, they have a varied diet and will eat what is plentiful locally and easily accessible. This may include small mammals, fruit and berries, birds, eggs, insects and carrion.

Do pine martens eat squirrels?

Pine martens and red squirrels have evolved together throughout their Eurasian range in a natural predator/prey relationship, though studies in Britain and Ireland highlight a low occurrence of red squirrel in pine marten diet. Recent research in Ireland by Emma Sheehy and colleagues has suggested that where pine martens are naturally recovering their former range, grey squirrel numbers are decreasing, allowing recolonisation of woodland by red squirrels (see paper [here](#)). A follow up study in Scotland by Sheehy and the University of Aberdeen supported the findings of the Irish study, suggesting that pine martens have the potential to suppress grey squirrels where they co-occur, but not red squirrels, which appeared to benefit from pine marten presence (see paper [here](#)). Though compelling, the mechanism behind this relationship remains unclear, and further research is required to understand the dynamic between the three species.

Is the pine marten protected by law?

Yes. As a result of its historical decline during the last century, the species is protected under both national and international legislation: EU Habitats Directive [92/43/EEC] Annex V; Wildlife Act, 1976; Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000; Wildlife (N.I.) Order of 1985.

What should I do if I see a pine marten?

If you see a pine marten, you can record the details on this website under *Record a Sighting* and it will then be forwarded to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. You can also report it directly to the data centre using www.biodiversityireland.ie

What do I do if a pine marten comes into my garden?

Pine martens are naturally curious animals and do visit gardens in search of an easy meal, such as food left out for family pets and for wildlife, food stored in sheds or discarded in rubbish bins. They will, however, move away if no food is readily available. It is possible to secure the lids of wheelie bins

to deter pine that martens and other wildlife. More information on Binstraps can be found from the Householders section of the pinemarten.ie website.

Does the pine marten pose a risk to my children?

No. There have not been any recorded incidents of pine martens attacking children. The usual precautions parents take to protect small children when playing outside are perfectly adequate in relation to any possible encounter with a pine marten. Visit the child safety section of www.hse.ie for further information.

Do pine martens kill poultry and game fowl?

Yes they will, if it is possible to gain entry to where the birds are housed. Hen houses are generally marten-proof when constructed of new timber, but tend to deteriorate over time, particularly around the base. Martens usually gain access to pens in three ways, by climbing up fencing into a release pen, by squeezing through holes in fencing or by jumping into a pen from overhanging tree branches. Information on preventing pine marten predation on domestic poultry and penned game birds is available from the Gun Clubs and Poultry Keepers section of the pinemarten.ie website.

Do pine martens enter houses?

Yes. As a result of the scarcity of natural den sites, pine martens may use both inhabited and uninhabited buildings as den sites. Information on how to prevent pine martens taking up residence in your home is available from the Householder section of the pinemarten.ie website.