

Polecats

Many of you will have seen a polecat briefly as it dashes across the road at dawn or dusk. They are sometimes mistaken for a stoat (much smaller) or even an otter (much bigger), but if you get any kind of decent view you will be able



to see the distinctive patterned face. They are not uncommon in Wales, and sightings are often posted to the Pembrokeshire Wildlife blog (see below) usually relating unfortunately to dead animals. However, a live animal was seen at St Ishmaels on 26th November. Last spring a freshly dead animal was found in good condition at Pickleridge and provided the opportunity for a number of people to have a good look at it.

In many parts of the UK the polecat was virtually exterminated by zealous keeping, but it is making a rapid return. In many places polecats have cross bred with escaped domestic ferrets and this is much discussion about which animals are “true” polecats and which are “polecat ferrets” – however the argument is a bit irrelevant as polecats and ferrets are to all intents and purposes the same species!

The status of polecats in West Wales is not well known – they are not often reported maybe because they are quite common and people don't bother. If you see a polecat, then please report it by email to Annie Haycock (rushmoor1@tiscali.co.uk) who is the Pembrokeshire Mammal recorder. If the animal is dead, try to take photos of the face and the colours of the fur on the back, paws and underparts and send these with your sighting.

Meanwhile, I'm still waiting to see a live one in Pembrokeshire!

Rosemary Royle