European Community Directive
on the Conservation of Natural Habitats
and of Wild Fauna and Flora
(92/43/EEC)

Fourth Report by the United Kingdom
under Article 17

on the implementation of the Directive
from January 2013 to December 2018

Conservation status assessment for the species:

S1358 - Polecak (*Mustela putorius*)

UNITED KINGDOM
IMPORTANT NOTE - PLEASE READ

- The information in this document represents the UK Report on the conservation status of this species, submitted to the European Commission as part of the 2019 UK Reporting under Article 17 of the EU Habitats Directive.
- It is based on supporting information provided by the geographically-relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, which is documented separately.
- The 2019 Article 17 UK Approach document provides details on how this supporting information contributed to the UK Report and the fields that were completed for each parameter.
- The reporting fields and options used are aligned to those set out in the European Commission guidance.
- Maps showing the distribution and range of the species are included (where available).
- Explanatory notes (where provided) are included at the end. These provide additional audit trail information to that included within the UK assessments. Further underpinning explanatory notes are available in the related country-level reports.
- Some of the reporting fields have been left blank because either: (i) there was insufficient information to complete the field; (ii) completion of the field was not obligatory; and/or (iii) the field was not relevant to this species (section 12 Natura 2000 coverage for Annex II species).
- The UK-level reporting information for all habitats and species is also available in spreadsheet format.

Visit the JNCC website, https://jncc.gov.uk/article17, for further information on UK Article 17 reporting.
## Report on the main results of the surveillance under Article 11 for Annex II, IV and V species (Annex B)

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<tr>
<td>a) regulations regarding access to property</td>
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<td>b) temporary or local prohibition of the taking of specimens in the wild and exploitation</td>
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<td>c) regulation of the periods and/or methods of taking specimens</td>
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<td>d) application of hunting and fishing rules which take account of the conservation of such populations</td>
</tr>
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</table>
3.3 Hunting bag or quantity taken in the wild for Mammals and Acipenseridae (Fish)

3.4. Hunting bag or quantity taken in the wild Method used

3.5. Additional information

Although the polecat’s initial recovery was driven by a reduction in trapping pressure in the early 20th century (Langley & Yalden, 1977), there are still pressures from trapping and secondary rodenticide poisoning. Records from traps set for other species were received for both the 2004-2006 and 2014-2015 surveys (Birks, 2008; Croose, 2016).

4. Biogeographical and marine regions

4.1 Biogeographical or marine region where the species occurs

Atlantic (ATL)

England

Scotland
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Wales


5. Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1 Surface area (km²)</th>
<th>109229</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>5.2 Short-term trend Period</td>
<td>2013-2018</td>
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<td>a) Minimum</td>
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<td>5.8 Long-term trend Magnitude</td>
<td>a) Minimum</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.9 Long-term trend Method used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 Favourable reference range</td>
<td>a) Area (km²)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Operator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Population

6.1 Year or period

| a) Unit | 1995-2016 |

6.2 Population size (in reporting unit)

| b) Minimum | 67945 |
| c) Maximum | 99483 |
| d) Best single value | 83600 |

6.3 Type of estimate

| 95% confidence interval |

6.4 Additional population size (using population unit other than reporting unit)

| a) Unit |
| b) Minimum |
| c) Maximum |
| d) Best single value |

6.5 Type of estimate

6.6 Population size Method used

Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

6.7 Short-term trend Period

2004-2016

6.8 Short-term trend Direction

Increasing (+)
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6.9 Short-term trend Magnitude

| a) Minimum | b) Maximum | c) Confidence interval |

6.10 Short-term trend Method used
Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

6.11 Long-term trend Period

6.12 Long-term trend Direction

6.13 Long-term trend Magnitude

| a) Minimum | b) Maximum | c) Confidence interval |

6.14 Long-term trend Method used

6.15 Favourable reference population (using the unit in 6.2 or 6.4)

| a) Population size | b) Operator | c) Unknown | d) Method |

6.16 Change and reason for change in population size
Genuine change
Improved knowledge/more accurate data
Use of different method
The change is mainly due to: Genuine change

6.17 Additional information
Estimates of population size for England and Wales have been taken from Mathews et al., (2018) and are considered to be more robust than the estimates used in 2013. The estimate from Scotland is based on previous estimates (Birks 2008, Birks et al 1999). Although there has been a change in methodology, the current upper confidence limit for the population estimate represents a significant increase in population size which appears to reflect a genuine increase. The current population is considered to be approximately equal to the FRP.

7. Habitat for the species

83600 with unit number of individuals (i)

The FRP has changed since 2013. The new value is considered to be large enough to support a viable population and no less than the population estimate when the Habitats Directive came into force in the UK. For further information see the 2019 Article 17 UK Approach document.

The FRP has been changed to the new best estimate of population size calculated in Mathews et al. (2018), plus an additional Scottish population estimate based on Birks (2008) and Birks et al. (1999). The previous FRP was thought to be an underestimate of the population currently and when the Habitats Directive came into force in the UK.

Genuine change
Use of different method
The change is mainly due to: Genuine change
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7.1 Sufficiency of area and quality of occupied habitat

a) Are area and quality of occupied habitat sufficient (for long-term survival)? Yes

b) Is there a sufficiently large area of unoccupied habitat of suitable quality (for long-term survival)?

Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

7.2 Sufficiency of area and quality of occupied habitat Method used

Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

7.3 Short-term trend Period

2004-2015

7.4 Short-term trend Direction

Stable (0)

7.5 Short-term trend Method used

Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

7.6 Long-term trend Period

2004-2015

7.7 Long-term trend Direction

Stable (0)

7.8 Long-term trend Method used

Based mainly on extrapolation from a limited amount of data

7.9 Additional information

The habitable area has been taken from Mathews et. al., (2018), which, given the generalist nature of this species, defined the area of suitable habitat as the total range size minus the area of urban and garden habitats.

8. Main pressures and threats

8.1 Characterisation of pressures/threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversion from one type of agricultural land use to another (excluding drainage and burning) (A02)</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (hedges, stone walls, rushes, open ditches, springs, solitary trees, etc.) (A05)</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of plant protection chemicals in agriculture (A21)</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads, paths, railroads and related infrastructure (e.g. bridges, viaducts, tunnels) (E01)</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion from other land uses to housing, settlement or recreational areas (excluding drainage and modification of coastline, estuary and coastal conditions) (F01)</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal shooting/killing (G10)</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning of animals (excluding lead poisoning) (G13)</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other invasive alien species (other then species of Union concern) (I02)</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Threat

<table>
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<th>Threat</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
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Conversion from other land uses to housing, settlement or recreational areas (excluding drainage and modification of coastline, estuary and coastal conditions) (F01)

Illegal shooting/killing (G10) H
Poisoning of animals (excluding lead poisoning) (G13) H
Other invasive alien species (other than species of Union concern) (I02) M

10. Future prospects

10.1 Future prospects of parameters
a) Range Good
b) Population Good
c) Habitat of the species Good

10.2 Additional information
Future trend in Range is Positive - increasing <=1% (one percent or less) per year on average; Future trend in Population is Positive - increasing <=1% (one percent or less) per year on average; and Future trend in Habitat for the species is Overall stable. For further information on how future trends inform the Future Prospects conclusion see the 2019 Article 17 UK Approach document.

11. Conclusions

11.1. Range Favourable (FV)
11.2. Population Favourable (FV)
11.3. Habitat for the species Favourable (FV)
11.4. Future prospects Favourable (FV)
11.5 Overall assessment of Conservation Status Favourable (FV)
11.6 Overall trend in Conservation Status Improving (+)
**11.7 Change and reasons for change in conservation status and conservation status trend**

a) Overall assessment of conservation status

No change

The change is mainly due to:

b) Overall trend in conservation status

No change

The change is mainly due to:

**11.8 Additional information**

Conclusion on Range reached because: (i) the short-term trend direction in Range surface area is increasing; and (ii) the current Range surface area is approximately equal to the Favourable Reference Range.

Conclusion on Population reached because: (i) the short-term trend direction in Population size is increasing; and (ii) the current Population size is approximately equal to the Favourable Reference Population.

Conclusion on Habitat for the species reached because: (i) the area of occupied habitat is sufficiently large and (ii) the habitat quality is suitable for the long-term survival of the species; and (iii) the short-term trend in area and quality of habitat is stable.

Conclusion on Future prospects reached because: (i) the Future prospects for Range are good; (ii) the Future prospects for Population good; and (iii) the Future prospects for Habitat for the species are good.

Overall assessment of Conservation Status is Favourable because all of the conclusions are Favourable.

Overall trend in Conservation Status is based on the combination of the short-term trends for Range – increasing, Population – increasing, and Habitat for the species – stable.

Overall assessment of conservation status is the same as in 2013.

Overall trend in conservation status was not reported for this species in 2013. However, from the information available the overall trend would have been increasing in 2013 and so there has been no change since the last reporting round.

**12. Natura 2000 (pSCIs, SCIs and SACs) coverage for Annex II species**

12.1 Population size inside the pSCIs, SCIs and SACs network (on the biogeographical/marine level including all sites where the species is present)

12.2 Type of estimate

a) Unit
b) Minimum
c) Maximum
d) Best single value
13. Complementary information

13.1 Justification of % thresholds for trends
13.2 Trans-boundary assessment
13.3 Other relevant Information
Figure 1: UK distribution map for S1358 - Polecat (*Mustela putorius*). Coastline boundary derived from the Oil and Gas Authority's OGA and Lloyd's Register SNS Regional Geological Maps (Open Source). Open Government Licence v3 (OGL). Contains data © 2017 Oil and Gas Authority.

The 10km grid square distribution map is based on available species records within the current reporting period. For further details see the 2019 Article 17 UK Approach document.
Figure 2: UK range map for S1358 - Polecat (*Mustela putorius*). Coastline boundary derived from the Oil and Gas Authority’s OGA and Lloyd’s Register SNS Regional Geological Maps (Open Source). Open Government Licence v3 (OGL). Contains data © 2017 Oil and Gas Authority.

The range map has been produced by The Mammal Society applying a range mapping tool as outlined in Matthews et al. (2018), to the 10km grid square distribution map presented in Figure 1. The alpha value for this species was 20km. For further details see the 2019 Article 17 UK Approach document.