



37

■ CITY visitor . . . Martin Turner with a polecat. Martin says they are finding homes in Manchester  
Picture: ANDREW YATES

**BY CHRIS OSUH**

**POLECATS** could soon be a regular sight in Manchester.

Wildlife expert Martin Turner, who dedicates his life to rehabilitating sick and endangered animals and releasing them back into the wild, believes they are following the example of the fox and finding new homes in the city.

Martin, from Wilmslow, is particularly fond of the polecat – the mammal from which ferrets evolved – and over two years he has rescued 10 injured polecats and then sent them back into their habitat to breed.

Last century the European polecat was virtually extinct and was given "partial protection" status. The carnivores found themselves under threat from gamekeepers, the disease myxomatosis and trends in the fur trade. But over the past two years, a growing number of polecats, although uncommon to the north west, has been sighted in Crewe,

# Foxy polecats hit city trail

Alderley Edge and Wilmslow – and they seem to be heading north towards Manchester.

Martin said: "Polecats and urban areas don't tend to mix but they can survive.

"Over the past couple of years I've been getting calls from people who thought they had found mink in their gardens but I could tell they were polecats. Five months ago I rescued a two-month-old polecat from drowning at Monks Heath. He had been out

hunting and playing with his family. He was in a bad way so I took him home to nurse him and planned to bring him back when he was independent at three months old.

"I didn't want him to bite or bond with me so I always wore a leather gauntlet when I was handling him. One day I forgot and when I went to feed him, instead of biting my hand, he licked it. It was then I knew he'd lost some of the traits of wild polecats and he'd be better off with me."