

# Missing polecat decides there's no place like home



by Betty Anderson

FIVE nights out on the wild, mean streets of Wilmslow were enough for Falmart, the polecat who strayed from domestic bliss in Lacey Green. The pet has returned home safe after escaping from devoted owner and wildlife expert Martin Turner, 44, who went out on a hunt every night while he was away for fear he would die of hunger or cold, or worse, be eaten by a fox. His return led to a joyful reunion not just for Martin but for all the pet ferrets and menagerie of animals who share space at his home in Cranford Road.

Martin, who is pictured above with his pet, said although polecats were tough, wild mammals Falmart was "soft" because he had nursed him since a baby after plucking him out of the River Bollin in distress.

Ever since he has lived as a family pet alongside ferrets, hedgehogs and other mammals and long forgotten his origins in the wild.

After Falmart's sudden disappearance Martin went out under the cover of darkness each night leaving ferret droppings and rags from his bedding at the base of trees in the hope the scent would be carried on the wind and remind the creature of home, sweet, home.

He even walked the streets rattling his favourite toy, a ball with a bell inside.

In the end it was a phone call from a family in nearby Wilmslow Park and the Wilmslow

Express, which carried the story of the missing polecat, that led to his return. "Within ten minutes of the paper being delivered I had a call that he had been spotted. I was told the security lights went on and he was seen walking past the window, there was no mistake it was a polecat alright."

"He came straight into the basket and when we got home he was greeted by the ferrets. He slept all night, which is unusual for him because they are highly strung wild animals and it is not in their nature to sleep for long periods. He was exhausted. I am over the moon to have him back." Martin feared for his safety because his domesticated ways would have made him vulnerable to predators in the wild. He has also been neutered which means some of the aggressive, survival instinct has been lost.

"I never thought I would see him again but never stopped trying to find him, never stopped looking. I am very fond of him," said Martin.

But he warned families not to consider keeping a polecat as a pet.

"He's a one off," he said. They are wild animals related to the weasel family and are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act. It is illegal to trap them.