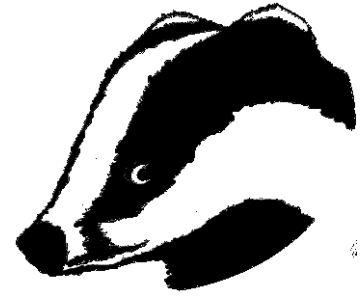


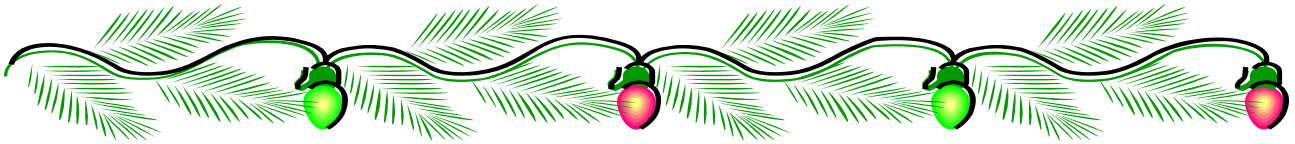
Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers in Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter 87 December 2011



Picture by Richard Costin, featuring in the Badger Trust 2012 calender – see page 2

**The Committee of the Binfield Badger Group
wishes all its members a Happy Christmas**



Group news and dates for meetings in 2012

Our next public meeting is on **17th May 2012 – Put a note in your diary now before you forget!** We have not yet booked a guest speaker, but have a read of the report by Annelise on the last meeting and I am sure the next meeting will be as good. Doors open at 7pm and the meeting will start at 7:30pm. This will be at the Memorial Hall in Binfield and everyone is welcome to attend. Remember there is no entrance fee.

On the front page is one of the 12 great pictures in the 2012 Badger Trust calendar. We have a couple left from the batch we bought for the October meeting sales stand. Please email Alistair (address on the back page) if you would like one. They cost just £5 plus 92p postage, or they can be collected.

A big thank you to the following that came along to the copse maintenance session on 13 November, set up by Alistair M^cKinnon. We did the annual tidy up of any brambles that were taking over pathways, a final cut of both “lawns”, clearing up the pond and pollarding trees. Fortunately it was a fantastically sunny and warm autumn day and other than a few scratches from brambles, everyone appeared to have an enjoyable afternoon of fresh air.

David Hammant, Jane Gifford, Mike Coon, Annelise Hill, Sue & Brian Manston, John & Pat Fennell, Judith Darnell, Penny Lovejoy, Karen & Katie M^cKinnon and Adrian Pearce

Our meeting in October

Annelise

During our October Public meeting “Our Changing Wildlife” was the subject of a very interesting, informative, visually stimulating and entertaining talk by Chris Ward on 20th October 2011 at the Binfield Memorial Hall. This was an illustrated talk where Chris tried to cover topics such as which British species are increasing or decreasing and why? How have populations changed over the last 150 years? What of the future? It was presented via a unique and relaxed approach.

Around 45 people enjoyed this 90 minute talk where there was a lot of audience participation and plenty of opportunities to ask and have questions answered. During the evening, refreshments were also served and a raffle was drawn.

To date Chris has presented hundreds of talks to hundreds of clubs. Most of his talks feature a variety of landscape or habitat images and wildlife pictures usually with emphasis on birds. Chris got into photography after growing up in a small town outside the city of Nottingham. This allowed Chris to understand the hustle and bustle of city life, coupled with the natural beauty of the countryside.

These vastly differing scenes permitted Chris to hone his skills in both architectural and landscape photography. He also specialises in wedding photography and children’s portraits, although rarely featuring badgers! If you would like to know more about Chris’s work or see some of his stunning photographs you can visit his website

www.cwardphotography.co.uk

New members can now apply online – no more snail-mail

Karen

Welcome to new members:

Donna Mischfski, David Hammant, Dee Taggart, Kelly Jones, Mark and Gabi Wigston, Doug & Anna Mackenzie-Dodds, Susan Balchin, Marion McCallum, Jane McDougall, Julie, Alistair & Natasha Scott, Pumpkin Turner and Alishea Woodhead.



Many of these new members joined via the web site. To help people we have enhanced the membership page on the web site www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk so that the whole application process can be done quickly and securely online. In the past you would have to fill out the form and then post it with a cheque. Members can still do this, but you can now fill out the page, click Submit to send it automatically to me, then click on a button which takes you to the secure PayPal payment site. Even if you don't have a PayPal account you can use the site to pay by card.

As always you can stick with the old way of paper, cheque and post to our address on the back page.

An Expedition into darkest Surrey

John

We had been invited by the West Surrey Badger Group (WSBG) to give them a talk about our sett. WSBG were particularly interested to learn about our hides on the Binfield sett as they were planning to erect one of their own. John, ever eager to get Alistair's little CCTV technological marvel shown to a wider audience, asked him to step into the limelight and demonstrate the system to them. The picture on the right is from the CCTV, more of which can be viewed on our web site.



Neither of us knew the venue but with implicit trust in SatNav, we got on the road. SatNav did its job well and brought us to the front door of a rather quaint church hall located in the darkest reaches of the Surrey countryside. There were no street lights in the vicinity. It was pitch black and with a clear sky and low light pollution we spent some time in the car park identifying constellations and viewing stars in a greater abundance than either of us had seen in a while.

This was to be only the second time that we had attempted to show a live feed of the badgers on our sett at a public event, the first being at our AGM in May this year. It was also the first outing for our new digital projector*. We had warned WSBG that as the hall was in such a remote location there was a possibility that a live feed may not have been possible due to low 3G signal levels. Alistair had brought some previously recorded badger activity to show as a fall back mode in this event. However, the system did work, albeit with a few drop outs and following a cue (from Karen back home) we had Binfield badgers on parade in Surrey.

Having given the talk there followed a question and answer session and we were then thanked for giving the presentation.

*The purchase of the digital projector was aided by a generous grant from **Binfield Parish Council** and for which we are extremely grateful. It will launch us into the digital age. My trusty slide projector has been looked upon as something of a museum piece by children at recent talks!



Excerpt from a letter Pauline sent to the Western Daily Press:

So "A badger cull is the only way forward" says the NFU! It really makes sense to kill badgers in order to get a 16% reduction after 9 years! So what are they doing about the 84 % which is not attributed to badgers, bearing in mind that this is the very much larger proportion of the problem. If less cattle were infected this would obviously affect the number of badgers contracting the disease. The government is taking the 'sensible approach' by allowing the shooting of free running badgers at night. This is an action that the Deer Trust does not allow due to the danger of wounding rather than killing the animal and a bullet failing to hit the target from a high velocity gun required would travel for 2 miles if it misses its target - a danger to human and animal life.

Sadly people have become apathetic as we have had this argument raging for so long. The government is hell bent on this crazy idea and it will happen unless we change their minds. Letters yet again will make our M.P.'s realise that we aren't letting this go. Please keep up the pressure - our badgers still need us. For more information visit www.badgerprotectionleague.com

Release Site News**Secret World Newsletter**

[Ed – please have a look at the Secret World Web site to find out about the fantastic work that Pauline and her family and friends do. This picture and many more can be seen on the site. If you have any pennies left after Christmas, don't waste them in the sales on bargains you don't need, send them to Pauline]

By the time you read this item all of our larger mammals will have been released, which is the ultimate goal of rescue and rehabilitation

I would love to say that everything went to plan and all releases went without hitch, but anything is possible with wildlife the clue is in the "wild!" An example of this was the release of a group of badger cubs. Our intention was to use an abandoned badger sett. Straw bales were placed around the old entrances which had become blocked with



debris built up over the years. Ply was placed over the bales forming a temporary roof. The intentions were that the badgers would over a period of days reopen the entrances and then take up residence within the old sett. The badgers took to the sett enthusiastically, in fact so much so that they proceeded to go into immediate "dig mode" and they excavated so much material so quickly they blocked themselves in!



A rather worrying phone call from the people monitoring and feeding the badgers resulted in an emergency unblocking of the entrance which was stuffed solid with spoil and straw, these cubs do have a few things to learn! I attended the site the following day and removed the straw bales as they were now redundant, all cubs were well and truly dug in below ground. When we returned two weeks later to take down the soft release fencing I was able to observe that the badgers had opened up four entrances within the sett, their tell-tale mounds of spoil immediately visible within the woodland setting perfect!

We have been very fortunate this year with many people coming forward and offering us potential release sites and to everyone who contacted us a big "thank you". If you feel that you may be able to offer the use of your land for the release of rehabilitated wildlife please contact me, we are especially looking for the following sites:

- Fox: Soft release sites, this involves us erecting an enclosure in which the fox cubs are contained prior to release.
- Otter: Land adjacent to good streams and rivers (All counties including Wales)
- Deer: Soft release sites, this involves erecting a release pen. Particularly in areas containing Red Deer would be useful.
- Badger: Nationwide sites are required.

Andy Parr
Wildlife Release Manager
Secret World Wildlife Rescue
Tel: 07717 651514
andy@secretworld.org

THE HORRIFIC DOGS BRED TO KILL BADGERS

By Express reporter Stuart Winter

On November 6 the Sunday Express reported on a vicious new breed of powerful hunting dog used by gangs to fight badgers in the countryside.

Powerful "bull-lurchers", a cross between the illegal pitbull terrier and a lurcher, are being unleashed on badgers in terrifying combat which invariably ends with the creature being ripped to pieces. Baiters are staging the late night fights in a new twist on their outlawed "sport" because of the success of conservationists to protect badger setts. The gruesome contests are often filmed so the baiters have a trophy of the sadistic actions. Traditionally, baiters would send small dogs underground to locate badgers, which would then be dug up and confronted by packs of terriers.



In a shocking new departure, the baiters now stalk foraging badgers in the darkness with bright spot lamps before releasing the bull-lurchers.



Even the bravest badger is no match for a pair of hunting dogs, which are built for both speed and ferocity, and working in unison. The appalling levels of violence has prompted the launch of Operation Meles, an initiative between the RSPCA, police, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Badger Trust and other animal welfare groups. They are working together to gather evidence of baiting, which includes targeting “hot spots”, to track down offenders and prosecute them. The public is also urged to report badger baiting.

Baiters have been using social networking sites to communicate and have begun changing tactics because of the success of animal welfare groups in protecting setts, particularly in South Yorkshire which is a notorious centre of badger crime.

RSPCA Chief Superintendent Barry Fryer said last night: “Unlike dog fighting and cock fighting, which are predominantly based around gambling, badger-baiting is more about the pride these people have in the gameness of their dogs. They boast about the scars and injuries their dogs receive. We have seen horrendous footage of two dogs ripping a badger apart. It is never a fair fight.”

The Sunday Express has teamed up with the RSPCA to support the society’s Leaps and Bounds Appeal to raise funds for an animal hospital and run it for the first year. Details of RSPCA appeal at 0300 123 8001 and www.leapsandboundsappeal.org.uk
www.express.co.uk

Christmas Word Search

Sandie

S R Q G S E I D Y B P D S I X
F A O S S M L V E G G I G Z N
G U M U T E R E Y O L G G S I
V C O T I O T O B H E G E Z J
L M G F S L A I W E S I C E K
Q C N L E I E T E G A N T X S
D I C S I R R O L D E G O L U
B W R E A T H H N E W F E K H
N A T I V I T Y C H S G P O S
S Y E N O H C E V U N N L I N
G F Z P F U Y U R A A L I S O
U N R E G D A B B I Y S X T W
L S A N T A H J H S T C Y R V
S E I R R E B K C A L B U A F
Z V P K T T E S R B G X H W D

No cheating – answers on page 9



31st October 2011 MP peddles a piece of folk lore in badger cull debate

The Badger Trust is astonished that a Member of Parliament should claim in a debate that a farmer in his constituency “saw what he thought were 30 to 40 badgers, full of TB, staggering around and unable to stand up” under a yard light.

For Mr James Gray (Con, N. Wiltshire) to introduce such a ludicrous, unsubstantiated piece of hearsay is a misuse of his position as well as perpetuating the grossly misleading piece of folk lore that farmers can “tell” when a wild animal has TB, even in semi darkness.

Firstly the farmer only “thought” the 30 to 40 badgers were “full of TB”. There is no live test for bovine TB in badgers, so the farmer could have had no grounds for his assumption. The farmer was not even sure what the animals he had seen were, nor how many there were. “In fact it is extremely unlikely that 30 badgers would be seen together”, says David Williams, Chairman of the Badger Trust.

Windy assertions of this kind can have no part in a serious parliamentary discussion of what purports to be a “science-based” policy to eradicate bovine TB, but could lead only to a guesswork-led muddle.

4th November 2011 Caroline Spelman lets badger consultation cat out of the bag

Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman told a Commons Select Committee (1) that the “difficult Government decision . . . of how to eradicate bovine TB was taken through a very detailed process engaging all the stakeholders as much as possible in making that decision *in order to minimise the potential for public adverse reaction*”. But there was a further purpose, revealed when she said: of the “different parties” involved “; they are likely to go out and engage with the public themselves and help to explain why it is such a difficult decision”.

The Badger Trust has been one of those parties and regards the decision not as difficult but as perversely pandering to the pressure of a stubborn and ill-informed cattle industry.

David Williams, Chairman of the Badger Trust, said: “The Badger Trust is a stakeholder and has responded to consultations in good faith to inform the decision-making process, but not to have its “potential for adverse reaction” minimised nor to act as a messenger for government”.

Ms Spelman also said “the reaction to that [badger culling] decision was significantly less than other decisions we have made in relation to forests.” Mr Williams commented that the comparison was entirely false: “Decisions about the control of bovine tuberculosis involve sophisticated science whereas the Coalition Government’s sell-off policy on forests was based on creating commercial opportunities and saving public expenditure.

“Unfortunately the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties foolishly committed themselves to killing badgers without thinking through the complexities and dangerous consequences. Such recklessness may be fine in opposition, but now they are reaping a poisonous harvest and are having to save face by cynically manipulating the public and pushing the costs on to the farmers involved.



“The Coalition should forget badgers, rigorously enforce and supervise better cattle controls and deal with farmers who break the rules”.

(1) <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=9259>

15th November 2011 NFU and Badger Trust work on joint TB vaccination project

The NFU and the Badger Trust have agreed to work together on an initial project to vaccinate badgers on two farms owned by members of the NFU.

NFU chief farm policy adviser John Royle and Badger Trust Director Simon Boulter have agreed a joint project in which the badgers on two farms owned by NFU members will be vaccinated. In addition, the Badger Trust has identified five other landowners around the UK wishing to vaccinate badgers and is working independently with them as part of the initial trial project.

Vaccination on all seven farms started in October after surveys were carried out to identify active badger setts and licences have been granted by Natural England. The vaccination project will run until the end of November 2011 and resume in May 2012.

It is hoped that the two programmes, although small in scale, will help to identify whether the injectable vaccination of badgers is practical and cost effective. The NFU and the Badger Trust will continue to encourage research and development into an orally-delivered badger vaccine.

Speaking for the NFU, chief farm policy adviser, John Royle said: “We are pleased that the NFU and the Badger Trust have successfully liaised to facilitate this joint project, sharing equipment and resources as necessary, despite having differing views on the degree to which badgers are implicated in the transmission of bovine Tuberculosis.”

Simon Boulter, speaking for the Badger Trust, said: “We hope that with the use of volunteers to help with the work of surveying, trap-setting and pre-baiting, we can successfully implement an effective badger vaccination programme.”

Notes to editors:

1. During the summer of 2011, the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) ran four courses to enable people to be trained as lay vaccinators, qualified to inject badgers with the BCG vaccine. Two members of the NFU and five members of groups affiliated to the Badger Trust attended and passed enabling them to obtain the necessary certificate of competence.

BADGER TRUST CONTACT

Jack Reedy

01564 783129

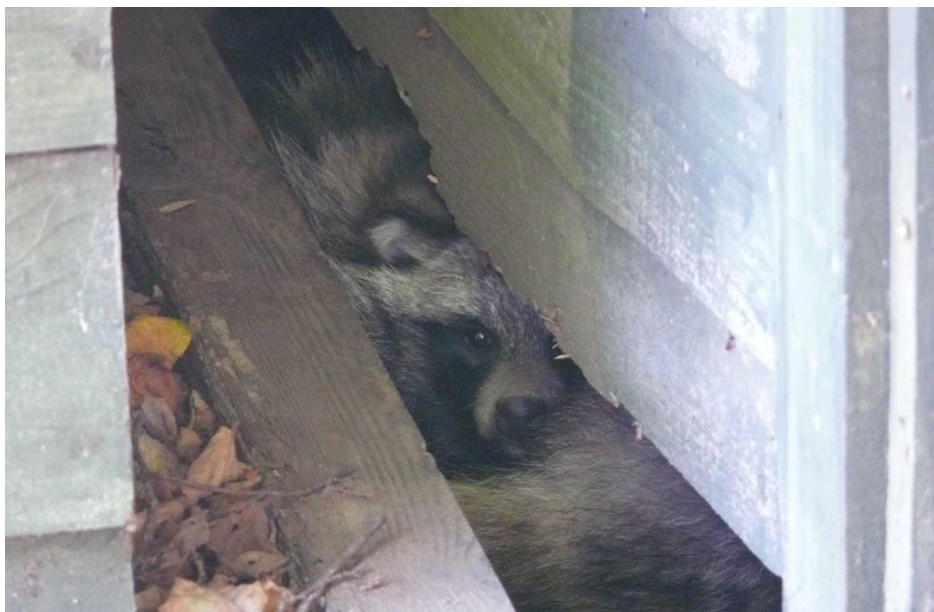
0775 173 1107



ANGELS	IVY
BADGER	MOUSE
BEETLES	NATIVITY
BINFIELD	NOEL
BLACKBERRIES	SANTA
CHRISTMAS	SETT
CUBS	SLUGS
DIGGING	SNOW
EGGS	STAR
FOX	STOAT
GLITTER	STRAW
HEDGEHOG	TINSEL
HOLLY	WEASEL
HONEY	WORMS
ICE	WREATH

“And Finally” – just like at the end of the evening news

A member of the public contacted us recently, nothing unusual about that as we get lots of calls about badger related issues such as developments, road accidents, garden damage etc. After a brief exchange of emails with Alistair it was decided a visit to the lady in Reading was required. Dave Lee kindly volunteered and found the following looking back at him from under a neighbour’s fence...



You can understand why the lady thought it was a badger, but it is a Raccoon Dog – well there were actually 2 of them in a den at the end of the neighbour’s garden. A recent item on the BBC covered the growing interest in exotics and the worry that they will gradually escape into our landscape with serious consequences for wildlife. Raccoon Dogs are native to East Asia but have been introduced into various parts of Europe for hunting and fur.



Chairmen: John Fennell and Alistair McKinnon**Secretary:** Pat Fennell, Binfield**Treasurer:** Sandie Evans, Twyford**Membership Secretary:**

Karen McKinnon

Binfield Badger Group

PO Box 3805, Bracknell, RG42 1HH

Postal Address:Binfield Badger Group
PO Box 3805,
Bracknell,
Berkshire
RG42 1HH**E-Mail:**badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk**Sett records and group email:**

Mike Coon, Maidenhead

Rescues, talks and surveys:

John Fennell, Binfield

Copse maintenance and Webmaster:

Alistair McKinnon, Binfield, Berkshire

Fundraising: Annelise Hill, Warfield.**Other Committee members:** Andrew Cattell, Twyford.**Your MP:** <http://www.writetothem.com/>**Badger Trust**, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.

Phone - 08458 287878 or 08458 BTRUST

Web - www.badger.org.uk**EMERGENCY NUMBERS:**RSPCA 24 hour emergency call out number

(cut out and keep)

0300 1234 999

Police emergency only

999

Thames Valley Police Wildlife Liaison

08458 505505

Leatherhead Wildlife Aid, Surrey

09061 800132

Aylesbury Wildlife Hospital Trust, Haddenham, Bucks

01844 292292

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO A FRIEND WHO MAY LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE GROUP - HELP THE BADGERS BY INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER.