

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 131

December 2022



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

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Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

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GROUP NEWS



Barn Owls...and more – at our Public Meeting on Thursday, 27th October, Cathy McEwan, a volunteer for the Barn Owl Group of the West Berkshire Countryside Society, kindly came along to talk to us about their work to protect the welfare of these beautiful birds and their special habitat in the Pang and Kennet Valleys.

It was fascinating to hear about the lengths to which their volunteers go to ensure safe breeding places for the owls by installing nest boxes in suitable 'lofty' locations and subsequently undertaking regular checks of the boxes to record the success or otherwise of each brood. You certainly need a head for heights in the conservation of these iconic British owls!



Group Surveys - a huge thank you to everyone who has been out sett surveying in Berkshire this year - a fantastic effort with many hours generously given.

- Since January 2022, we have recorded 72 active new setts (a mixture of mains, outliers), 27 of which were found on group surveys.
- A further 23 existing sett records were updated, 9 of which were checked/updated during group surveys.

We need to know where our badgers are so we can best protect them. We'd love to see still more new faces getting involved; no experience necessary, just a willingness to learn!

Provisional dates for our upcoming Sunday BBG group survey (including training) sessions next year are :-

8th January; 5th February; 5th March; 2nd April



Signs of Badgers in the snow - the recent scattering of snow across the county has revealed some night time 'badgery' activity!



A well used badger path at our Copse sett



Badger tracks on the icy Copse pond, a few years ago.



Another popular badger path spotted in West Berks



Christmas Time at the Copse Sett – through the eyes of Little Star perhaps - John

"I don't yet know if I am pregnant. I have been at about this time of the year, for each of the last five years. I am feeling well and I am anticipating that I shall be giving birth at some point during February 2023. This autumn was so mild, it has enabled me to find plenty of food and therefore to have built up my fat reserves to see me through the



winter. Myself and all of the other badgers, generally tend not to roam far from our setts during the middle of winter. With the cold temperatures predominating, our natural

food sources are somewhere between severely limited to none existent. With there being no food around, some days we don't even go above ground. We are however lucky at my sett in that we can sometimes find supplementary food nearby which has been left out for us.

As a result of our winter sedentary life style, finding a mate during December could be troublesome. This is where my elegant, if rather unusual mechanism of delayed implantation kicks in. For most of the year, we badgers are out every night and during these times finding a mate is none too difficult, as my own cub bearing history shows. Following any successful encounters during the year, my system stores fertilised eggs until this time (December) where a number will implant in my womb. After a seven week gestation, I will then give birth during February. Yes, February is still in the middle of winter, but my cubs will be safe and warm in their subterranean nest chamber and will not be taking their first steps above ground until about the middle of April.

With the arrival of springtime, our natural food sources will again be plentiful. The timing of my cubs' birth provides them with the best opportunity for growth during the year so that they will be a healthy size by year end, which will get them through their first winter."



This Autumn, the Government added another 11 cull zones to England, covering a land mass almost double the size of London. Their attack on nature began with badger culling over ten years ago. Since then, this iconic and much-loved native animal has been pushed to the brink of extinction whilst allowing bTB to rage uncontrolled in English cattle herds.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of Badger Trust expressed his grave fears:

“The local extinction of badgers is happening right here, right now. The government has finally admitted they want 2022 to be the record year for badger deaths from their senseless cull. Over 67,000 badgers have been marked for slaughter this year, with massive new areas intensively culled for the first time – including in Northamptonshire, Hampshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

We already know parts of the southwest are empty of badgers – the government seems intent on wiping out this iconic mammal. If they tested the culled badgers they would know that most don’t even have bTB.

England is a killing field for badgers and people need to act now to stop the unpopular cull before we lose this amazing creature forever.”

Government figures revealed that up to 67,801 badgers could be killed this year. These harrowing figures come with scientists confirming that bTB is unaffected by badger culling. As a cattle-to-cattle transmitted disease, badger culling does not work to reduce rates of the disease in cattle. Despite the science and the badger’s protected legal status, this government is quite literally washing away badgers from Britain, a place that they’ve called home for the past 500,000 years. (*Badgers remain safe from culling in Wales and Scotland, and bTB rates remain lower there as well.*)

- **In 2021, 129 badgers were killed in the Berkshire zone (plus an unknown number in the Wiltshire and Oxfordshire zones which cross the border into Berkshire). Whilst we were relieved they didn’t add an additional specific Berkshire zone, we were devastated to see the target for 2022 for Berkshire set to a minimum 312, maximum 457. The actual kill figures for this autumn’s 2022 cull won’t be published for several months.**

The total death toll since the culling began could now exceed 240,000 badgers – a supposedly protected native species. It is clear that the government is increasing badger persecution rather than phasing it out as they promised. Recent statements by Defra spokespersons have also U-turned on the promise of a phase-out of badger persecution. Instead, Defra now claims to retain the right to keep culling badgers beyond 2025 where “epidemiological evidence supports it”.





This year, Badger Trust's seasonal message completely focuses on the animal with its campaign Christmas wish – to end the controversial badger cull in England.

Whilst the New Year is often a time of celebration, the charity expects to see the total number of killed badgers exceed 200,000 when the government releases cull figures in early 2023.

At this time of year, traditionally badgers would be snuggled with their clans in underground setts. There, they rest in a deep sleep-like state known as torpor. Yet, this year setts across England sit empty for the first time in history.

Badger Trust has produced a new campaign film**, which starts by depicting the family-oriented social ties of badgers, the most iconic of Britain's last remaining native carnivores. With voices including Virginia McKenna, founder of Born Free, Naturalist Steve Backshall, and children discussing their love for badgers, the film then pitches to the heartbreaking truth that badgers across England are facing.

The audience watches on as sand artist Rachel Shiamh draws the image of a badger into the sand on a stunning Devonshire beach, only for it to be washed away by the tide, disappearing from British shores forever. It represents more than 200,000 badgers who have been unfairly wiped from England in the past decade.

Peter Hambly, Badger Trust Executive Director said:

“The badger cull is England's greatest wildlife tragedy happening before our eyes.”

** Watch the Trust's new campaign film :- <https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/post/seasonal-wish-for-badgers-as-setts-sit-empty-for-the-first-time-in-history>



The annual report, **'Wildlife Crime in 2021'**, created by Wildlife and Countryside Link and Wales Environment Link with input from member organisations including Badger Trust, confirms a worrying connection between cyber-enabled crime and badger persecution.

It shows that 526 incidents of badger crime were reported to Badger Trust in 2021, including badger baiting and details how young adults and teenagers use the internet to promote badger baiting with dogs, a cruel and illegal blood sport. Gangs use social media platforms such as TikTok and Facebook to organise badger baiting and recruit more young members.

Badger baiters are also well known for their links to other criminal activities, including crimes against humans such as theft and domestic violence. Using social media for gang recruitment via badger baiting puts young people at risk of being exposed to and involved in other criminal activities.

The 'Wildlife Crime in 2021' report comes at the same time that the government has stripped back proposals for the Online Safety Bill, which seeks to protect young people from harmful online content. The Badger Trust has been campaigning for animal welfare (specifically badger baiting) to be included in the bill to protect wildlife and young people from illegal and harmful activities.

Overall, the annual wildlife crime report highlights the need for badger crime, including badger baiting, to be a notifiable offence. Under current protections, police do not enter reported badger crimes into a national database. Therefore, it is currently not possible for police to monitor regional and national badger crime statistics, despite the badger being a legally protected species. Crime monitoring largely falls to organisations such as Badger Trust, which has an online reporting centre and a specialist Wildlife Crime Officer. However, the Badger Trust warns that 526 reported badger persecution cases in 2021 are just the tip of the iceberg.

Badger Trust is calling on the government to make badger crimes notifiable, a key message of the PBA30 campaign launched this year on the 30th anniversary of the Protection of Badgers Act. **Together we call on the government to:**

- **Extend the maximum sentence for convictions under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) from six months to five years, bringing it into line with Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021. Tougher sentencing would deter badger baiting.**
- **Make badger persecution notifiable to the Home Office, under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992), so that the real level of crime can be accurately assessed, reported on, and tackled.**



PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT 30 YEARS

Short and suspended sentences for badger crime are no deterrent for gangs involved in badger persecution.

Help us campaign for tougher sentencing

BadgerTrust.org.uk

BADGER TRUST

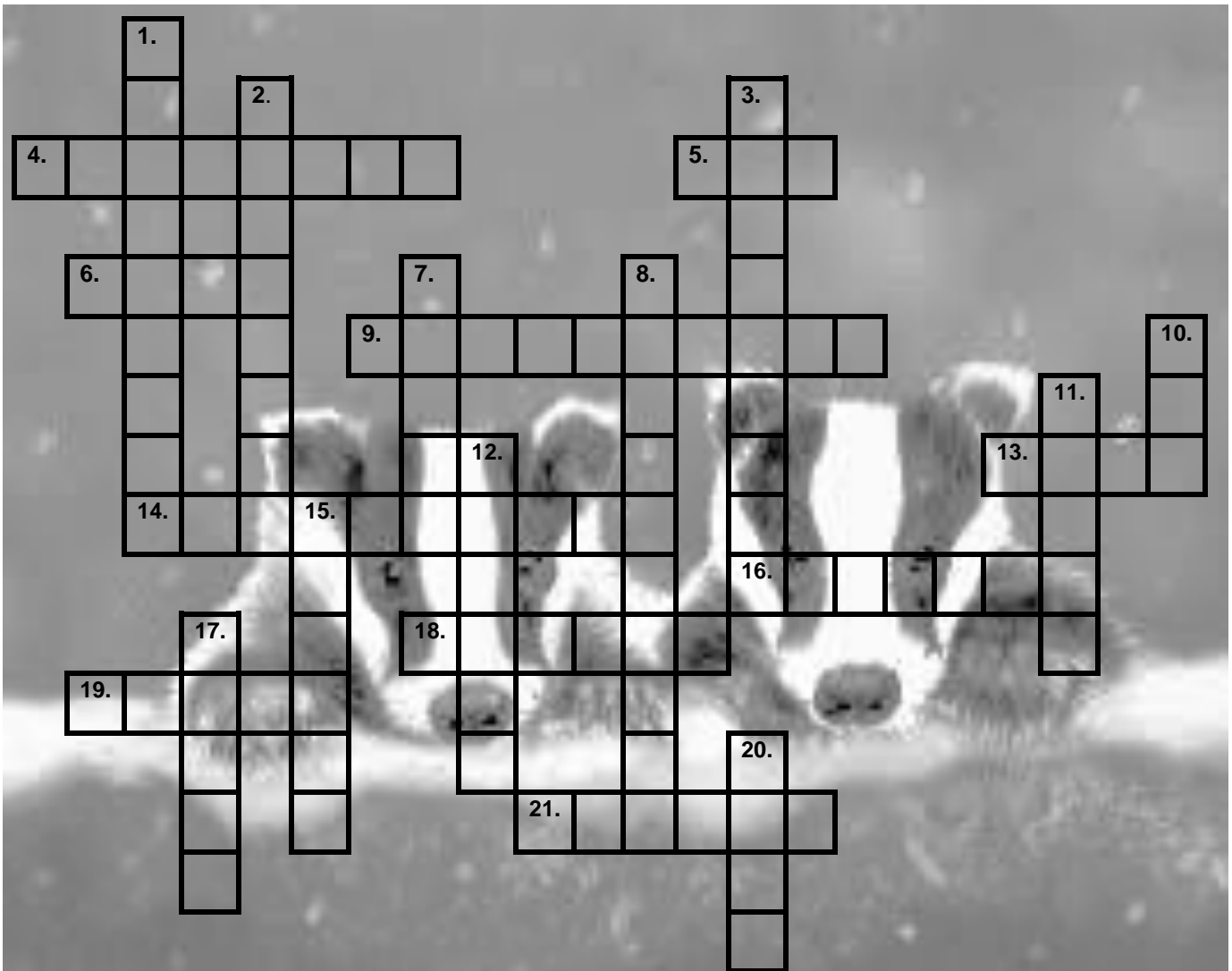
#PBA30

#StopBadgerCrime





Christmas Badger Children's Crossword



Across

4. The mammal family to which badgers belong
5. A female badger
6. A family of badgers
9. The House in Hogwarts that has a badger in its emblem
13. A male badger
14. An important part of the badger's diet
16. A badger's loo
18. A black and white mammal
19. The traditional country name for a badger
21. To badger

Down

1. A parasitic plant brought indoors at Christmas time
2. An animal that badgers might see flying in the sky on Christmas Eve
3. The word to describe an animal that comes out at night
7. A baby badger
8. Latin name for a badger
10. A tree brought in at Christmas time
11. An African species of badger
12. A word that means 'to look for food'
15. A Christmas bird
17. A bush that badgers might see berries on at Christmas time
20. A badger's home

(Don't cheat! – solutions near the end of the newsletter)



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Printer cartridges :

Badger Trust will receive a donation for ink cartridges recycled through *Recycle 4 Charity* - <https://www.recycle4charity.co.uk/InkjetCartridges>
Check to see if your ink cartridges are part of the scheme then order a free postage label to send in your used cartridges and help the badgers!

Stamps:

You can now donate your used stamps to raise much needed funds for Badger Trust. All kinds of stamps are welcome, on or off paper. Simply cut or carefully rip the postage stamp from the used envelope, being careful that you don't damage the stamp, and once you have a collection pop them in an envelope making sure you have the correct postage to:

Badger Trust
PO Box 16992
Sutton Coldfield
B73 9YA

Jewellery and bank notes from any country:

You can donate all your broken and unwanted jewellery to raise money for Badger Trust. *Our partners at Recycling for Good Causes can recycle:*

- Any jewellery – gold, silver, costume jewellery, watches, broken and damaged items (like odd earrings, snapped chains or items with missing stones).
- You can donate any unwanted banknotes from ANY country of any age.

If you would like to donate your jewellery and banknotes to support Badger Trust, simply use your own envelope or jiffy bag (No bigger than A5 in size) and post free of charge by printing out the freepost label and attaching to your envelope.

<https://www.recyclingforgoodcauses.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/envelope.pdf>



Do you shop on Amazon? Help badgers whilst you shop!



You can support us, at no cost to yourself, through your day to day shopping! All you have to do is shop on **AmazonSmile** (www.smile.amazon.co.uk instead of www.amazon.co.uk) and select *Binfield Badger Group* as your chosen charity. Then BBG will receive 0.5% of the value of any purchases you make!

Every item available for purchase on www.amazon.co.uk is also available on AmazonSmile at the same price. Amazon have so far donated nearly £17 million to charities through their Smile Foundation.

To start supporting us on Amazon, you can either type in www.smile.amazon.co.uk and select *Binfield Badger Group*, or use the link below or this QR code:

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1075886-0>



<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1075886-0>



With thanks from Berkshire's badgers!



7 Days to make a Difference – and YOU DID IT!

- Badger Trust



This year's **Badger Trust Big Give Christmas challenge** was fundraising to **'Be There For Badgers'** - extending the hours of their dedicated reporting centre, a lifeline for orphaned and injured badgers in need - **two of the biggest threats to badgers are wildlife crime and road traffic collisions.**

- **Badger crime** is prolific in all areas of the country with crimes from badger baiting to sett blocking remaining prevalent long after the Protection of Badgers Act was established.
- **Traffic** is also a great threat to badgers, with over 50,000 badgers (a fifth of the adult population) being tragically killed on our roads each year. Badgers consistently top the list of most numerous victims of road traffic accidents of mammal species.

With your generous help, the Trust have been able to unlock £4,500 in pledges and champion funding.....which has been doubled to £9,000 under the Big Give online match funding campaign. In fact, to date the amount raised stands at £10,935!



On behalf of the Badger Trust, **THANK YOU** to all who were able to donate this Christmas.



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WE CATCH UP WITH OUR FAVOURITE FOOTIE TEAM – THE BASILDON BADGERS!

The Binfield Badger Group are proud to sponsor Basildon Badgers FC's '**Berkshire Badgers Trophy**', which is awarded to the young player who has shown special effort and qualities while playing for their team.

Rob, the team coach, says:



Each month, our lead coaches gather together to talk about those who have made the most progress or contribution to the club during the month. For this month, we decided that we needed to look beyond the players that we have and instead amongst those people who freely give up their time on a weekly basis as they want to help others.



Here are Holly and Nancy Slater who are sharing the award for the month. Despite having no siblings / children in our pre school Badgers training group, they both make a massive difference by offering up their time on a Saturday morning and we believe this award is well deserved for their efforts! They're both good fun and bring to training a relaxed and friendly approach that we have found to be the recipe for success over the years, particularly with younger players. Additionally, neither are afraid to get stuck in and without them we would struggle to put on the sessions and gain the levels of player interactions that we do. In short, they're essential and we're very grateful for the time



they give up and the energy they bring.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS BADGER CROSSWORD – SOLUTIONS

How did you do?



Across

4. Mustelid
5. Sow
6. Clan
9. Hufflepuff
13. Boar
14. Earthworms
16. Latrine
18. Badger
19. Brock
21. Pester

Down

1. Mistletoe
2. Reindeer
3. Nocturnal
7. Cub
8. Meles meles
10. Fir
11. Honey
12. Forage
15. Turkey
17. Holly
20. Sett



AND FINALLY..... TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT OUR GROUP



If you know of anyone who would like to become a member, they can go to the Membership page on our website, www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk, where the whole application process can be done quickly and securely – they can just fill out the page then click 'Submit' to send it....

.....or cut out this advert and pop it in their Christmas card!!



Are you interested in badgers?

Would you like to join a local badger group to learn more about and help these fascinating animals?

We are a friendly local group who arrange walks, talks and sett surveys and are looking to expand membership in the area.

If you would like to join us or want to find out more, please email us at:-badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk or call us on 0844 804 1146 or visit our website www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

Binfield Badger Group
Protecting badgers in Berkshire
Charity Number: 1075886



COMMITTEE**0844 804 1146 (Premium Rate)****Chairpersons:** John Fennell and Jill Hoblin**Secretary:** Judith Darnell, Woodley**Treasurer:** Karen McCoy, Sonning**Membership Secretary:**Judith Darnell, Woodley
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RG42 1HH**Group email:** Mike Coon, Maidenhead**Talks:** John Fennell, Binfield**Copse maintenance:** Cathy Holwill, Reading**Newsletter:** Judith Darnell, Woodley**Vaccination:** Jill Hoblin, Newbury**Sett/RTA Records:** Karen McCoy, Sonning**Surveys:** Committee members**Rescues:** Carol and Trevor Samuel, Maidenhead**Website:** Karen McCoy and Cathy Holwill**Your MP:** www.writetothem.com/**Badger Trust**, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.

Phone - 08458 287878 or 08458 BTRUST

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RG42 1HH**E-Mail:**badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk**Facebook:**fb.me/binfieldbadgers**Website:**www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk**EMERGENCY NUMBERS:**

(cut out and keep)

RSPCA 24 hour emergency call out number

0300 1234 999

Police emergency only (use 101 for non-urgent)

999

Thames Valley Police Wildlife Liaison

08458 505505

Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue, Camberley

01344 623106

Leatherhead Wildlife Aid, Surrey

09061 800132

Aylesbury Wildlife Hospital Trust, Haddenham, Bucks

01844 292292

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO A FRIEND WHO MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE GROUP - HELP THE BADGERS BY INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER – YOU CAN NOW JOIN ONLINE.**A FULL COLOUR VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE.***Binfield Badger Group**Affiliated to the Badger Trust**www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk**Page 12 of 12*