

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 127

December 2021



Moonlit Badger courtesy of Amnesty International

🌿 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 DURING ANOTHER MOST UNUSUAL YEAR

With the Coronavirus pandemic continuing to disrupt our lives this year, we reluctantly decided to cancel our October public meeting. However, we were determined to hold our long-postponed 34th AGM and this was successfully organised via Zoom on 20 May. Thank you to everybody who was able to join us online. Glad to say, the Group's committee has continued to function normally and has been holding its monthly meetings during 2021 via Skype and Zoom.

Likewise, sadly once again all our planned fundraising events earlier in the year had to be put on hold, but this Autumn we were at last able to 'engage' with the public, at the Sonning Village Show, the Binfield LETS community event and our very successful 'Charity Pot' event with the friendly people at LUSH in the Reading Oracle. We must also thank Waitrose in Twyford for an unexpected but generous donation of £333 to the Group through their 'Community Matters' scheme!



Our monthly group sett survey sessions also had to be abandoned during the early part of the year, but once restrictions were lifted, we were able to resume this vital exercise. With the devastating news that this year's Cull was being extended further into Berkshire this Autumn, we have been concentrating our surveys in the south and west of the county. Thank you to all the willing survey volunteers who regularly turn out in all weathers to help. We're always happy to welcome new members to our survey team. Find out more here:



<https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/volunteer-sett-surveying>

A date for your new 2022 diary! – keeping everything crossed, we have booked the Farley Wood Community Centre for a 'face to face' public meeting at 7.30pm on **Thursday, 7 April 2022**, when representatives of APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) have kindly agreed to come and talk to the Group about their important on-going research into badgers and bTB. There will be further details in our next March 2022 newsletter, but in the meantime, please see page 5 for an introductory article by Jill.

Of course, there continues to be lots of trailcam clips, badgery news and updates on our website: www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk and on our Facebook page: fb.me/binfieldbadgers





Our trips into LUSH are always an uplifting high spot in our events calendar with this year proving no exception. Once again, our wonderful hosts in the Reading Oracle store provided us with an opportunity to speak with people of all ages.

Naturally, the cull was frequently to the fore, and we were able to give out a number of pre-printed postcards for people to send to their MPs, but other issues cropped up too.

A number of people voiced concerns about the effects of building and other development on wildlife in their area. Sadly, we're not in a position to allay such fears. Indeed, we regularly express our concerns to local Councils on such matters. Nonetheless, it was encouraging to hear diverse people expressing their desire for us to build back greener. As well as recruiting new friends for the

badgers, the efforts of LUSH staff raised over £700 for us; a phenomenal boost to our coffers in these difficult times.

Thank you LUSH; your support in helping us to reach people and raise funds is invaluable. Look forward to seeing you all in 2022!



Build! Build! Build!

For the past few years, we've monitored planning applications in Berkshire fairly closely, reviewing the online portals each week and picking out those which have significant implications for badgers.

A noticeable change in the last twelve months or so is that we're getting more calls from individual people, contacting us to express their concerns about a local development near them. Having received details, we work with residents and survey the area in question, formulating conclusions on any implications for badgers and contacting the relevant Council if appropriate.



It would be naïve to think that planning panels base their decisions on the presence or otherwise of badgers alone. However hopefully our voice, alongside other conservation organisations, raises legitimate concerns which cause the relevant authorities to pause for thought.





Holding the tenancy to The Copse (a Local Wildlife Site) in Binfield is both a privilege and a responsibility for Binfield Badger Group.

The privilege comes from knowing we are helping to protect the badgers who live here, safeguarding the future of this special sett located in the heart of our urban world. And, more practically, it provides us with the opportunity to follow the lives of 'our' clan through the years.

As a result of this fortunate position, we are able to maintain a 'clan history' back to 1990 and, for example, know that our current sow, Little Star, has been breeding here since 2018 and has now had 8 cubs! And what a 'little star' she proved to be this year, managing to raise 2 cubs whilst recovering from a bad injury.

The protected nature of the site also means we are able to position a range of cameras throughout the year at strategic locations. This has allowed us to capture sufficient fascinating and enchanting clips of badger life to provide the footage for *'The Secret Life of Badgers'*, a film produced by the Badger Trust for use in schools nationwide.

With this privilege naturally comes the responsibility of maintaining the woodland, for the wellbeing both of the badgers and their human neighbours. Sometimes, we have to undertake relatively low-level maintenance which we can manage ourselves – and a big thank you to all who have helped at our Copse Maintenance sessions! At other times, we have to secure the services of professional arborologists to perform health and safety checks on the trees and deal with any resulting issues. Until this past year, these checks have produced a clean bill of health on each occasion, and few costs.

2021, however, has seen a flurry of tree issues and a lot of necessary expenditure. Most of this has been on surveys and the ensuing planned work, but we have also had to take expensive emergency corrective action, particularly in relation to 2 trees. Fortunately, the Group has held a good level of reserves in hand for just such a scenario. Sadly, however, those are now severely dented.



These significant demands will necessitate our reviewing how best to manage the Copse going forwards. However, whatever the outcome of our deliberations, the badgers can rest easy in the knowledge that we'll continue to protect their homes and wellbeing for as long as they stay with us.



A research project was launched earlier this year to detect the presence and location of TB in badgers in the “Southern Edge Area” counties. It is being conducted by APHA (the Government **Animal and Plant Health Agency**) in collaboration with the University of Nottingham and covers Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and East Sussex – the counties making up the Southern Edge Area.



The project's intent is to collect a significant number of fresh, found-dead badger carcasses – especially any killed on roads in these counties – which will be examined and tested for TB. It is running now and extends through to April 2022, but is likely to be extended. A prior study was launched in 2016 and was based on badgers found dead between 2017 and 2018, but the results have only just been announced.

Unsurprisingly, **the study concluded that badgers are not a key source of bovine TB.** The Badger Trust has welcomed the long awaited release of this 'Badgers Found Dead Study' (BFDS), with results that clearly support the Trust's view that badgers are not a reservoir host for bovine TB, but rather a spillover host.

These latest results support those of a previous survey of culled badgers in 2016, which found less than 5% of culled badgers tested positive for TB. The BFDS, commissioned by DEFRA in 2016, investigated the prevalence of TB in 'found dead' badgers in Edge Areas of England, covering the northern counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; and in the southern counties of Oxfordshire, Hampshire, East Sussex, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

A total of 372 badger carcasses underwent post mortem examination and sampling. In all five southern counties – including Berkshire - only three *M. tuberculosis complex bovis* (MTCB) positive cases were identified, all from Oxfordshire, giving a prevalence for Oxfordshire of 3.8% (3 out of 79), and an overall prevalence for these counties of 1.0%. Almost all badgers in the northern study showed no clear signs of tuberculosis lesions at post mortem examination. No lesions typical of *M. bovis* infection were observed in any of the badgers examined in the southern counties.



Why do we need YOU?!

Over the past several months, members of the Committee have been provided with the equipment needed to recover and send a badger carcass from Berkshire through to the test team at the University of Nottingham. However, the number of badgers collected has been very low so far – so **we need more and are asking for your help in reporting badger carcasses that you may see in your area.**

This is an important project and the greater the number of carcasses submitted, the more proof we can point to that badgers are not the vector for bTB transmission in cattle.



What to do if you see a dead badger on the roadside

- *Firstly – please make sure it is dead. If it still shows signs of life, you need to call one of the numbers below:-*

Binfield Badger Group -	0844 804 1146**
RSPCA 24 hour emergency call outs -	0300 1234 999
Leatherhead Wildlife Aid (24 hour) -	09061 800132
Tiggywinkles (24 hour Wildlife Rescue) -	01844 292292
Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue. -	01344 623106

- **If it is dead** – please report it to us so our volunteers can collect it.

You can report it either on our website at this link:-

<https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/report-dead-badger>

or ideally, on our Messenger app linked to our Facebook page

[fb.me/binfieldbadgers](https://www.facebook.com/binfieldbadgers) – this is the best method as it is the most expeditious as carcasses will need to be fresh to be of most use and need to be collected same day, or within a day or two at most.

Please be as specific and precise as you can with the location – ideally provide us with a grid reference or a What3Words reference or road names and landmarks. There is nothing more frustrating to be called out to a collection but being unable to find it!

What happens to the badger carcasses?

On arrival at the University of Nottingham, carcasses will be assessed for freshness and suitability to submit for post mortem examination. Decomposing or extensively damaged carcasses are not collected. The main body of the badger should be intact, and as a general rule if the skin is discoloured (greenish) and/or both skin and hair can easily be pulled away from the carcass, it is not be recovered.

Test results from badger carcasses are provided to us and the project will produce data summaries on a monthly basis, so we can keep our members updated on the results over the coming months.



We are most grateful for any assistance you can provide for this important project!

Thank you!

*** (Premium rate phone number – we will call you back!)*



Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Can you take the 12 Days Wild challenge?

12 DAYS WILD is BBOWT's mini Christmas challenge, encouraging you to **do one wild thing a day from 25th December to 5th January**. In those days between Christmas and New Year, winter wildlife is just waiting to be explored!

Your wild acts could be little things to help nature - like recycling your Christmas tree or feeding the birds – or ways to connect to the natural world, like walking off your Christmas dinner in the woods or admiring the beauty of a winter sunset.

They don't have to be big, but they'll make a big difference to your wellbeing and your family's! Sign up now to receive lots of inspiration for wild, wintery activities:-

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/12dayswild> - and then you can share your winter wild activities on Twitter, using #12DaysWild



THE BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE UPDATE

- Badger Trust

Thank you! You helped us (the Badger Trust) raise £7,000 for the Emergency Badger Rescue and Rehabilitation Fund via The Big Give #ChristmasChallenge21 – the first time we've taken part.

And HUGE thanks to our amazing pledgers – Bowland Ecology, Lighten and 16 more kind folks – who DOUBLED your donation up to our original target of £5k!

This funding is urgently required to provide help for local badger groups on the ground who are called out to injured badgers needing specialist care for recovery and rehab, often via out-of-hours vet services and specialist wildlife rescues.



Badger Groups will be able to apply for grants in the new year and we'll keep you updated in future newsletters.

If you missed the Big Give appeal but would like to give a gift to our general campaigns, go to:-

<https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/donate>



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As the festive season approaches and starts to crowd everything out, **a quick update on the latest on our cull campaigns:**



England: The intensive cull period for 2021 has passed, as this occurs mainly in September and October. But supplementary licence activity continues to the end of January next year – meaning many thousands of badgers continue to be killed under the English Government's futile policy.

Wales: Thankfully, Wales delivered some great news with the cancellation of all lethal badger interventions, and the launch of a 'refreshed' bTB approach and a consultation, which Badger Trust is working on now.

On 18 November, the Trust welcomed the announcement by the Welsh Minister for Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths MS, of an end to the use of badger culling as a technique to control bovine Tuberculosis (bTB), which was announced at the opening of a 12-week consultation into the future of bTB measures in Wales. It has been estimated that £1.5m has been spent to date on the Test, Vaccinate and Remove (TVR) programme, a selective culling approach with little impact on the control of bTB. The majority of badgers killed under the scheme test negative for the disease at post-mortem.

The Minister advised the Senedd on Tuesday, 16th November 2021:

“I will be phasing out the badger trap-and-test work in persistent herd breakdowns from this year. From an epidemiological perspective, the small sample size and short follow-up period provide limited meaningful results to gauge the impact of interventions on cattle TB. Work will be completed on existing farms, but new ones will not be recruited.”

The key focus of the revised approach will be on cattle, the victims of the disease and the main transmission source.

Northern Ireland: DAERA, the NI equivalent of Defra, has not yet announced the outcome of the consultation earlier in the year which proposed a new badger cull, to which we strongly objected with our response. It is currently conducting a couple of assessments further to the consultation, and we wait with our friends at Northern Ireland Badgers for the outcome. At best it's likely a delay, but we'll see.

What next for the badger cull? The 2021 intensive licence cull period is over, yet the supplementary licence cull period runs to 31st January 2022. We now await the publication of the total number of badgers confirmed killed under the 2021 intensive licences. Sadly, we expect the figures to reveal the largest number of badgers killed under this policy.

[THE TRUST URGES YOU TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE CULL!](#)

DISCOVER more about the cull and how you can help:

<https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/cull>



KIDS' PAGE - TIME TO DECORATE! - WHO NEEDS TINSEL? -

We thought we'd remind you of how to have fun making some of these plastic-free ideas suggested by the Woodland Trust!



Transform a pine cone into a cheeky robin red breast!

You can make this fun bauble with a pine cone and some scraps of felt. Cut out a red circle for the robin's breast, a yellow triangle for its beak, and some small black and white circles for eyes. Stick them to the pine cone with strong glue. Then loop some string around it and hang it on your Christmas tree.



Pom pom garlands are fun to make from natural wool in bright, festive colours.

Loop the wool over three fingers until you have a nice thick bunch. Carefully remove the loop from your fingers and place it on a flat surface. Cut a small length of wool and tie it around the middle of the loop – your loop should now look a bit like a bow. Make sure the knot is nice and tight and cut off the excess. Finally, cut each side of the bow and fluff up your pom pom.



Pine cone garlands in traditional colours.

You'll need plenty of pine cones for this craft. Look out for them on a winter walk and collect a few to take home. Inside, the warm, dry air will open them up. Remember to gently tap the cones over some newspaper to let any bugs escape before you paint them. Paint the pine cones with your favourite colours and let them dry. Then attach them to ribbon or string and drape the garland around your Christmas tree or along a shelf.



Reducing the amount of plastic we use is a great way to help our environment and protect our planet. The Woodland Trust's family membership is from £5 per month, helping them to protect the UK's native woods and trees for wildlife and people.



NO LICENCES TO BE ISSUED FOR TRAIL HUNTING - National Trust - 25/11/21

Hunting wild mammals with dogs was banned in England and Wales by the Hunting Act of 2004. However, the law does allow what is known as trail 'hunting' to continue. This activity involves people on foot or horseback following a scent along a pre-determined route with hounds or beagles. It effectively replicates a traditional hunt, but without a fox being chased, injured or killed.

Despite trail hunting being suspended on National Trust land since November 2020, after years of protest by anti-hunt campaigners, Trust Members have now voted to ban it.

This follows fears it is being used as a "smokescreen" for chasing and killing foxes, after a police investigation into webinars involving huntspeople discussing the practice.

At the charity's Annual General Meeting in October 2021, members voted by 76,816 to 38,184 in favour of banning trail hunting on National Trust land.

The National Trust's board of trustees has now announced the charity will no longer issue licences for trail hunting on Trust land, including the exercising of hounds. They will only license drag hunting* - all other forms of hunting will not be licensed on their land.

(*Drag hunting is an equestrian event where a scent (usually aniseed) is laid along a pre-determined route, which leads to specific fences. The aim of drag hunting is not to chase animals and the routes are laid in areas where a live quarry presence is unlikely.)



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 over £2 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>

With thanks from Berkshire's badgers!



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



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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.



The Team are now well into their 7th season and have brought their player of the month award back. This time, Rob, the team coach, wanted to give a special shout out to Max, one of the worthy winners of the Berkshire Badgers Trophy :



This is Max. He is in year 3 and has only been playing with us since April, having never really played football before. His ball skills have really improved since then and he is now one of the strongest players in our year 2/3 group and scores many goals!. The skill that helps him stand out is that he listens to coaching instructions to bring other players into the match, for example passing the ball more often and helping his team mates score goals.

Well done Max!



AND FINALLY...Did you know you can Adopt a Badger? - Secret World



Secret World's adoptions make great presents all year round.....especially for those who are difficult to buy for!

By adopting a wild animal, either for yourself or as a gift for someone else, you will be helping to ensure injured, sick and orphaned wildlife will be cared for and treated and given the best chance of being released back into the wild.

As the West Country's foremost wildlife rescue service, each year Secret World Wildlife Rescue provide treatment and care for over 5,000 animals in distress until they are ready to be returned to the wild. They not only rescue wildlife regionally, but also receive casualties from all over the UK due to their well known expertise in wildlife rehabilitation.

Adopt a Badger! - sign up today from just £3 a month Your adoption will be helping their adult badger casualties and each of the orphaned badger cubs every step of the way. Secret World give the best care and endeavour to ensure that they will have every opportunity to have a second chance in the wild. Your help will be very much appreciated. From just £36 a year you can help these amazing animals.

Find out more on Secret World's website :-
<https://www.secretworld.org>



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Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin**Secretary:** Judith Darnell, Woodley**Treasurer:** Karen M^cCoy, Sonning**Membership Secretary:**Judith Darnell, Woodley
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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 MAY 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**