

# **Binfield Badger Group**

**Protecting badgers across Berkshire**

Charity Number: 1075886



**Newsletter No. 139**

**December 2024**



*(‘Baby Badger’ by kind permission of Susy Fuentes – [www.susyfuentes.com](http://www.susyfuentes.com))*

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

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## GROUP NEWS



Luke from **Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue** kindly came along to our Public Meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October to talk about the important work of this charity. For those of you who missed his interesting talk, you can find out here about the background to the founding of this wonderful Rescue and how they are having to tackle new challenges to continue to provide their important service to wildlife.



## OXFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE RESCUE

- Jill



Many of you were present at our Public Meeting in October when Luke Waclawek gave us a very informative, passionate and enjoyable talk about Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue – a place where we take our badger casualties from West Berkshire.

Luke explained that OWR started like many other wildlife rescues, by

complete chance after he stumbled upon an injured wood pigeon that he and his wife Ruth ended up tending to at home after seeking veterinary guidance. This one pigeon, soon turned into many more, and the addition of other wildlife species including hedgehogs and even the occasional fox and badger. They learned as they went along, connecting with other like-minded people and soaking up their wildlife care knowledge.

As many more people heard of the work they were doing, their family home turned into a wildlife rescue, but this was quickly outgrown, and after being offered a small barn and a small patch of land to rent they moved the rescue to its current location in Blewbury.

The rescue is now an organisation that has over 100 active volunteers, 5 members of staff who treat thousands of sick, injured and orphaned British wild animals annually. Their ambulance team is made up of 14 highly trained, skilled and experienced wildlife medics, with a plan to increase the team over the next couple of years, alongside the addition of a further two active wildlife ambulance vehicles. Their area of operation currently covers 1200 square miles, across South Oxfordshire and into West Berkshire with an average response time of an hour. Their charity's motto is "Every Patient Matters".

The Rescue is now at a critical juncture though, as they were served notice of an end of tenancy, which expires in early 2025. This means they need to find a new location from which to continue to operate.

The team at OWR have been frantically trying to find new premises and launched their '**Wildlife Hospital Appeal**' - a campaign that set the fundraising target of £250,000 so they can secure land to call the charity's forever home. The objective is to build a wildlife hospital with dedicated onsite veterinary and rehabilitation facilities, specifically catering for the rescue of deer, foxes, badgers and otters as well as many other beautiful creatures that have come to rely on them across South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

<https://www.oxfordshirewildliferescue.co.uk/oxfordshire-wildlife-hospital-appeal>

**If anyone wishes to help this amazing Rescue – please do get in touch!**

[oxfordshirewildliferescue@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirewildliferescue@gmail.com)



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**A NOVEMBER SURVEY IN WEST BERKSHIRE – WITH ADDED FUNGI! - Julian**

Julian has been an active member of our Group for some years now and regularly joins us for sett survey walks throughout the county. He is passionate about all wildlife, trees and plants and has published two books: *'Animal Trust'* and *'Animal Wild'*.

Here is an extract from his recent Blog *'Animal Wild'* - <https://animalwild.blog>, which was inspired by our Survey Walk last month in beautiful West Berkshire. Apart from much heartening evidence of badger activity, he was able to photograph some beautiful fungi:

*"This was our most outright enjoyable survey for some time with quite the profusion of wildlife, overshadowed only by the knowledge that the area (not far from me) is commonly and currently used for hare coursing, which is of course illegal. But it was wonderful to see for example five Roe Deer, a Buzzard and little flocks of Redwings, and a number of clearly active badger setts and latrines (we even wondered if what we were seeing was not one giant sett with its annexes, subsidiaries and outliers) showing recent digging, hairs and prints. The sheer quantities of earth badgers move so efficiently never cease to amaze me.*



*There was also a bewildering variety of fungi – it has, by all accounts, been a very good year for them.*



*Everyone was cheered by the sunshine as we walked around fields and through woods. We covered 4.75 miles over five hours (we stop and potter around a lot!), leaving plenty of time to admire trees and hedgerows.*

*I caught this oak just as the sun kissed it."*

If you're interested in joining us on one of our regular survey walks, you can learn more about what's involved:

<https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/about-sett-surveys>



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**BADGERS' WINTER FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL – CAN YOU HELP? - Badger Trust**



As the winter nights close in, badgers everywhere are bracing themselves for a season filled with danger and uncertainty.

**The Badger Trust's Winter Appeal**, recently posted to supporters, shares the story of Poppy, the hopeful badger, highlighting what badgers face during these harsh months - *and how you can please help.*

[Donate today](https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/donate-single) <https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/donate-single>

Winter should be a time for rest and safety, but for badgers, it's anything but peaceful. **The longer nights bring deadlier roads, illegal hunting and the constant threat of setts being blocked or destroyed. Many badgers won't survive this winter without help.** The Badger Trust is fighting to protect badgers, but we can't do it alone.

*A gift of £20 could help train police forces to stop crimes like sett blocking.*

*A gift of £40 could help train local groups to rescue and rehabilitate injured badgers.*

Every pound you give could help us campaign to end the badger cull and raise awareness through vital initiatives like *Give Badgers a Brake* and the *Badger Watch* app.

For pregnant mothers huddled underground, for cubs yet to be born, and for badgers desperately trying to survive -**your support could be the difference between life and death.**

**Together, we can ensure badgers not only survive this winter but thrive for years to come. Let's help make the coming year look like this for our precious brocks –**

**BADGERS MAY NEED A 'WINTER TOP UP' THIS YEAR!**

**- Dave**

If anyone is feeding badgers, they may want to increase the frequency and quantity of feed as a lot of the usual feeding grounds are somewhat flooded or heavily saturated and the badgers still seem to be quite active. I guess it's because it has not been cold enough to encourage them to their winter lie in. I've noticed at a couple of setts they are foraging very late, which suggests a lack of access to food. Small dog biscuits are going down very well.....



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The extent of flooding caused by recent storms could be having a devastating impact on badgers. From loss or damage to badger setts, to difficulties finding food in flood-affected habitats, life will be harder for badger clans throughout the UK.



Late winter storms, particularly in February, come at the worst time; new-born badger cubs are underground, so unless the sow can get them out (she does this by grabbing them in her mouth one by one), sadly they will drown.

### **What happens to badgers when a sett is flooded?**

Where badger setts have been damaged or flooded completely, whole badger clans could be disturbed and have to move. Badgers in floodplains do get used to it as they are born to that way of life, having to move from their setts and find higher ground, even hollowed-out trees. However, prolonged flooding, more regular floods, and floods seen in areas not normally subject to them may have a bigger impact on previously unaffected badgers not used to these conditions.

### **How will badgers feed in flooded areas?**

Badgers will, if they make it to dry ground, have much less foraging ground available. They are very opportunistic and will eat carrion and those animals that may not have died. They will also break open wood and bark where they can find insects, such as woodlice.

### **What is the effect of severe weather events on badgers?**

According to the Met Office, "Several indicators show that the UK's climate is becoming wetter," with its projections showing a trend towards wetter winters and drier summers on average in the UK. And even in summer, flash flooding can occur when heavy bursts of rain hit parched ground. The after-effect of flooding can be devastating for humans – as it sadly is for the UK badger population and a whole range of wildlife too.





- A \_\_\_\_\_ ★ - Badgers may become intoxicated with this after eating windfalls ★
- B \_\_\_\_\_ ★ - Old name for a badger ★
- C \_\_\_\_\_ ★ - A family of badgers ★
- D \_\_\_\_\_ ★ - Necessary to create 'S' below ★
- E \_\_\_\_\_ ★ - Badger's favourite food ★
- F \_\_\_\_\_ M\_ F\_ - Roald Dahl's story features a badger ★
- G\_ B\_ - Badger Trust's campaign to reduce road ★  
A\_ B\_ ★ deaths ★
- H\_ ★ - The Hogwarts House that includes a badger ★  
★ in its symbol ★
- I\_ ★ - A native animal ★
- J\_ ★ - Collection of people to try crimes, including those against badgers ★
- K\_ ★ - Lord who led the Randomised Badger ★  
★ Culling Trials ★
- L\_ ★ - Badger's loo ★
- M\_ ★ - Family of mammals to which badgers belong ★
- N\_ ★ - By night ★
- O\_ ★ - Eat everything ★
- P\_ O\_ - Law to look after badgers ★  
B\_ A\_ ★
- Q\_ ★ - What you need to be when watching badgers ★
- R\_ B\_ ★ - Badger's headwear in Bodger and Badger ★
- S\_ ★ - Badgers' home ★
- T\_ ★ - Badger in the Chronicles of Narnia book, Prince Caspian ★
- U\_ ★ - Where 'S' is ★
- V\_ ★ - A female fox might live in a disused 'S' ★
- W\_ ★ - Central head stripe, tips of ears ★
- X\_ ★ - An injured badger might need one of these ★
- Y\_ ★ - Describes a cub ★
- Z\_ ★ - Fertilized egg that will grow into a badger ★

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



## MITIGATION MEASURES – PROTECTING BADGERS DURING ‘BUILD, BUILD, BUILD’ - Andy



At BBG, we check the Berkshire local Council planning portals regularly. Where we find an application with implications for badgers, we write to the relevant Council, sometimes objecting outright to the proposal if we believe it has serious implications for local badgers. However, we're also realistic that granting or refusing a planning application is rarely determined only by considerations for badgers. We thus also seek mitigations which will form part of the conditions attached to any approval given. **Naturally, as a**

**small group of volunteers, we might well not spot everything, so do please let us know if you come across a planning application that you think has implications for badgers by going to: [planning@binfieldbadgers.org.uk](mailto:planning@binfieldbadgers.org.uk)**

When devising mitigations, our first request for developers is that qualified ecologists carry out an up-to-date survey of the application site. Given that many months, or even years, may have passed between a developer purchasing land and the first spade going in the ground, it's vital that a current picture of badger activity in the area is understood. This means not only being aware of any setts on site but also knowing whether badgers are visiting to forage, as might well be the case with greenfield open pasture, or even traversing the area to reach feeding grounds.

We also seek measures to reduce the risk of injury or accident to badgers during any building activity. Thus, we often ask that soil mounds be covered so that they are not turned into setts overnight (acquiring legal protection) and that trenches have a means of escape for badgers who fall in, with any pipework capped to prevent entrapment. We also ask builders to be aware that badgers have poor eyesight. Sharp or pointed tools and objects therefore need to be housed such that they are not a danger. We ask for a similar level of care with poisonous materials which might otherwise be ingested. When working on ground clearance, we look for developers to follow current guidance from Natural England when using power tools and to use only hand tools when working in close proximity to a sett. We also remind them of the need to consider the drop-line of any trees being felled to ensure that they do not land on badger homes.

Suitable fencing also needs to be chosen which will keep people and dogs out but still let badgers in. Similarly, security lighting needs to be kept to a minimum so that the least disturbance is caused to our nocturnal friends. With this in mind, we also ask that work be halted two hours before dusk and not started until an hour after sunrise to avoid disturbing badgers at the start and end of their day.

All of these measures provide important basic protection for badgers affected by construction work and there are probably many responsible constructors who follow them. However, there is a legitimate concern that not all workers are given toolbox talks to inform them of their obligations and that not all constructors prioritise meeting wildlife requirements. It is reasonable, therefore, to fear that mitigation requirements are not always met. Sadly, external scrutiny of what happens on the ground is lacking, Councils not having the resources to provide officers who check that best practice is being adhered to. Going forwards, if the mantra is to be '*build, build, build*', we need an accompanying





practice of 'check, check, check' if we are to give badgers any chance of surviving the building phase and keeping their homes whilst we are busy building ours.

Perhaps Councils need to ask knowledgeable volunteers to help with this scrutiny – BBG could surely provide some helping hands!



***“Our house was here yesterday ...where’s it gone? Somebody just stole our field!”***

In the next issue, we'll have a look at how badgers can be protected during the habitation phase.

**CHRIS PACKHAM TELLS DEFRA HOW TO END THE CULL - Badger Trust – 7/11/24**

Chris Packham OBE reported that he had a 'good meeting' with Defra Secretary of State, Steve Reed MP. He shared his plan outlining solutions to end the badger cull, drafted after consultation with scientists and researchers. The pair also discussed the UK's ongoing water quality issues.

Peter Hambly, Chief Executive of Badger Trust, commented:

*“Badger Trust welcomes the meeting between the Defra Secretary of State Steve Reed MP and nature expert Chris Packham OBE, which included discussions on the continuing unnecessary slaughter of thousands of badgers.*

*This government concedes that the badger cull is ineffective in dealing with bovine TB. We urge the Secretary of State to get a grip on this policy, end the badger cull as soon as possible and introduce an effective and cattle-based solution that works.”*





**WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR - VOTE FOR IAN WOOD! -**

This extraordinary photo by Ian Wood has been nominated for the “**Wildlife Photographer of Year - Peoples’ Choice Award**” from 60,000 entries.



Read about Ian’s passionate concern for the fate of badgers in our countryside, which inspired him to sit patiently for many hours in order to capture this image :

**<https://www.agoodplace.co.uk/badger-cull-information>**

He says “*It’s a honour to get a nomination in Wildlife Photographer of the Year People’s Choice, where this photo has been chosen from nearly 60,000 entries. However there’s a much darker side to this image. I used to live on the edge of a town, where semi-urban badgers thrived and they would come up to forage each night. A year ago I moved to the countryside in Dorset where badgers are being killed at such an alarming rate that they are already becoming locally extinct. Unless the badger cull is halted with immediate effect I fear we will only see badgers in England in urban environments in the not so distant future.*”

Here are some more beautiful photos, taken at the ‘rewilding’ project he’s started in Dorset.



Please vote for Ian here: **<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy/peoples-choice>**



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## FAMILY CHRISTMAS WORD QUIZ SOLUTIONS



How did you do?



**ALCOHOL** – Badgers have been known to become intoxicated with this after eating windfalls

**BROCK** – Old name for a badger

**CLAN** or **CETE** – A family

**DIGGING** – Necessary to create ‘S’ below

**EARTHWORM** – Badger’s favourite food

**FANTASTIC MR FOX** – Roald Dahl’s story features a badger

**GIVE BADGERS A BRAKE** – The Badger Trust’s campaign to reduce road deaths

**HUFFLEPUFF** – The Hogwarts House that includes a badger in its symbol

**INDIGENOUS** – A native animal

**JURY** – Collection of people to try crimes, including those against badgers

**KREBS** – Lord who led the Randomised Badger Culling Trials

**LATRINE** – Badger’s loo

**MUSTELID** – Family of mammals to which badgers belong

**NOCTURNAL** – By night

**OMNIVORE** – Eat everything

**PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT** – Law to look after badgers

**QUIET** – What you need to be when watching badgers

**RED BERET** – Badger’s headwear in *Bodger and Badger*

**SETT** – Badgers’ home

**TRUFFLEHUNTER** – A badger in the Chronicles of Narnia book, *Prince Caspian*

**UNDERGROUND** – Where ‘S’ is

**VIXEN** – A female fox might live in a disused ‘S’

**WHITE** – Centre head stripe or tips of ears

**XRAY** – An injured badger might need one of these

**YOUNG** – Describes a cub

**ZYGOTE** – A fertilized egg that will grow into a badger



## GROUP MEETINGS IN 2025 – WHEN'S BEST FOR YOU??



Members of Binfield Badger Group will be aware that we hold two Public Meetings each year – one in April, which includes our AGM and one in October. We always endeavour to engage a Speaker to come along and over the past years, members have enjoyed a variety of interesting, usually wildlife-related talks, as well as learning about the work of the Group and other badger news.

Our Public Meetings have always been held during the evening, from 7.00pm until approximately 10.00pm, currently in the Farley Wood Centre, Turnpike Road, Binfield.

However, we are aware that some members may be more reluctant to travel to our evening meetings, especially in October and, after some discussion, **we are looking into the possibility of holding our future meetings on a Saturday afternoon, say from 2.00pm until 5.00pm?**

This, of course, would be dependent on the availability of the hall, but in the meantime, **we would be grateful to hear what you think of the suggestion of meeting on a Saturday afternoon in future.**

Please kindly email us on: [badgers@berksbadgers.org.uk](mailto:badgers@berksbadgers.org.uk)



## AND FINALLY..... LET'S NOT FORGET OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS!

The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch is the largest garden wildlife survey in the world. Thousands of nature lovers will be counting birds from their gardens, balconies, parks and local green spaces over one weekend.

*It's fun, free and will only take an hour, whenever it suits you..... from Friday 24 – Sunday 26 January.*

Nature is counting on you - right now, in the face of the nature and climate crisis, nature has never needed you more – and, with Big Garden Birdwatch, it's easy to get involved.



Sign up now: [rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch/register](https://rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch/register)



However you 'Big Garden Birdwatch', the RSPB hope they'll see you there!





## COMMITTEE

**Chairpersons:** John Fennell and Jill Hoblin

**Secretary:** Judith Darnell, Woodley

**Treasurer:** Karen M<sup>c</sup>Coy, Sonning

**Membership Secretary:**

Judith Darnell, Woodley  
Binfield Badger Group  
PO Box 3805, Bracknell  
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

**Planning:** Committee members

**Rescues:** Carol and Trevor Samuel, Maidenhead

**Website:** Karen McCoy and Cathy Holwill

**Your MP:** [www.writetothem.com/](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](http://www.badger.org.uk)



### EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

*(cut out and keep)*

Binfield Badger Group	0844 804 1146 <i>(Premium Rate)</i>
RSPCA 24 hour <u>emergency</u> call out number	0300 1234 999
Police emergency only (use 101 for non-urgent)	999
Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue, Camberley	01344 623106
Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue	07549 322464
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.**



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