

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 135

December 2023



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

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Binfield Badger Group

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Come to our next Public Meeting on Thursday, 14th December



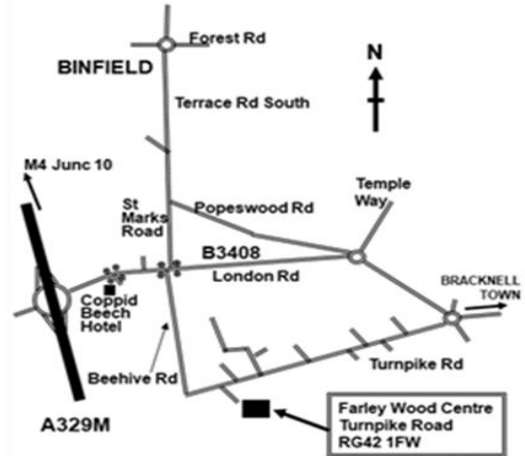
Luke Smith, the new Wildlife Crime Officer for West Berkshire, is kindly coming along to give us an illustrated talk about his work. This promises to be a very interesting evening - **with some additional festive fun and refreshments!**

Remember to tell your friends – there is no entrance fee - everyone is welcome and there may be some pre-festive refreshments to enjoy!

Doors open at 7.00pm and the meeting is at:-

Farley Wood Centre, Turnpike Road, Binfield, RG42 1FW.

The meeting will start at **7.30pm.**



We've been Harvesting the Badger Love this Autumn!

- Jill



At the end of October, Binfield Badger Group had a fabulous day at BBOWT's Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham for "**Apple Day**". Apple Day is run in conjunction with the



Thatcham Festival with the aim of celebrating our wildlife during harvest season. This is an annual event that has always attracted a large crowd, and this year was no exception.

The Nature Discovery Centre is an amazing place and is packed full of interactive wildlife and natural history displays. There is a network of footpaths ranging from small family-friendly walks to longer paths for the more adventurous. The Centre is surrounded by a mosaic of different habitats with fantastic wildlife to see all year round. There are also badgers resident on the site! It has a Community Orchard that contains local heritage fruit trees and hedgerows for foraging – and this is the area that we set up next to for Apple Day.

We were very busy talking to people all day and met some lovely folk; some had even travelled quite a distance for the event. Our aim at these events is to educate people about badgers – and I'm always happily amazed at the number of people who tell us they have badgers visiting their gardens – they are lucky indeed! We managed to raise some funds as well as enjoy the lovely weather we were blessed with. Other stalls and activities alongside Binfield Badgers included a live apple-pressing service with people bringing their own apples, kids storytelling sessions, cider makers, apple themed children's activities and....Morris Dancers!



If you want to visit the Nature Discovery Centre – it is located between Thatcham and Newbury, a short distance off the A4. The address is Muddy Lane, Lower Way, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 3FU.



An apple a day.....this beautiful photo “*Surrey Badger with Apple*” is by Stuart Pevy, the winner of the Mammal Society’s 2023 Mammal Photographer of the Year competition. The theme this year was ‘Mammals Through the Seasons’ and Stuart’s badger photograph took the overall winner prize, as the ‘apple of the judging panel’s eyes’!



“An unusual and charismatic moment of a handsome badger,” said judge Dani Connor, professional wildlife photographer.

“Badgers have faced so much persecution in recent years, it’s beautiful to see one with such character. A reminder of how wonderful these animals are.”

Photograph courtesy of the Mammal Society - www.mammal.org.uk



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The care of a 120+ year old badger sett and its surrounding Copse and lawn areas was given to the Binfield Badger Group under a legal agreement with the Council in July 1988.



Since that time, the regular cutting of the grass to maintain good foraging areas for the badgers and the inspection and remedial work to ensure the safety of the ever-maturing trees, particularly on the boundaries of the Copse, has been an ongoing task. We are very grateful to our Committee member, Cathy, who currently takes on the majority of this essential, hard work during the year.

However, after several fruitful meetings with the Council over the past year, we have now been able to enlist the occasional help and expertise of some of their Countryside Rangers. We are pleased to take up their offer of arboricultural advice and practical assistance in maintaining a safe and secure woodland environment – not only for the precious resident badgers, but for their human neighbours.

We undertook our first 'joint foray' into Copse Maintenance on a (thankfully) sunny day in mid November. A lot of dead tree wood and undergrowth was removed (some kept back to provide winter homes for insects); the pond was cleared of choking weed growth; our sadly neglected fruit trees were expertly pruned; and we also made use of the extra muscle-strength on hand to manually lift one side of the old hide, to correct a door that sticks! A successful day's work!



Our brave sow, Little Star, features on our front cover, caught on camera at the Copse by John (with a background suitably enhanced for our December and Christmas issue!) She was our natural choice as she has proved a real star over the past few years, producing the new cubs to maintain our Copse clan!





Have you ever wondered why a Badger Group gets involved in planning applications? Surely the professional ecologists' survey, commissioned by the developer, will do the job and likely do it better than a bunch of amateur enthusiasts?

Well, yes, a professional survey is done often to a high level of accuracy and technical detail – but only for the defined range that it has been commissioned to cover. And that range might just be the application site itself and perhaps a small area

around it, so it won't necessarily gather all information needed to consider the complete picture of impacts to badgers in the area. And that's where we can add value.

We had an interesting example recently where a main sett, 300 metres from an application site, was not considered in the ecology report commissioned by the developer. From a quick look on Google Earth, it did appear that the work may well not impact the badgers overly, given (a) it was a small development directly abutting existing housing and (b) what appeared to be wide-ranging foraging opportunities directly accessible from the sett and away from the proposed building work.

However, contact from local residents alerted us to frequent visits from badgers to existing gardens beyond the application site – so we set(t) out to survey the area. To our surprise, we found very few signs of any badger foraging activity in the woodlands and open grassland directly accessible from the sett. This absence of foraging signs highlighted the importance of the very strongly marked runs we did find leading directly across the application site to access gardens of existing houses. Moreover, some of those houses were built just 3 years ago, presumably on top of previous favoured foraging sites. So the badgers were simply doing what badgers do and sticking to their traditional runs, whatever we put in their way. And they likely will continue to do so if this application is permitted with its roads, houses, humans and dogs.

We can't protect badgers completely from the effects of the never-ending house and road building across the county, but we can at least give them a voice. Knowing where setts are, monitoring new planning applications and getting boots on the ground gives us the knowledge we need to provide a wider view, raise objections or suggest mitigations such as unlit wildlife corridors, as in this case.

Of course, our precious brocks would do so much better without our constant encroachment onto their land, but that doesn't look like slowing down anytime soon!



BADGER CRIME – HOW WE CAN HELP TACKLE IT - Binfield Badger Group



Badgers have an unenviable record of persecution in this country - they remain one of Britain's most persecuted species with an estimated 30,000 becoming the victims of wildlife crime each year.

The most unthinkable crimes are the malicious ones, which include deliberate sett interference and blocking, badger digging and baiting, snaring, poisoning and unlicensed shooting. But badgers also suffer as a result of negligent crimes, occasionally by unwitting homeowners finding an unexpected hole in their garden, but mostly from construction, agricultural and forestry operations, where sett entrances may be filled with debris of various types, tunnels damaged by ground movement or badgers poisoned such as through mis-use of pesticides. **We might like to think that badger crime doesn't occur in leafy Berkshire, but sadly it can be closer to home than you might think.**

What you can do: (in all cases, your personal safety is priority - on no account should you personally approach people you suspect of wrong-doing). :

Our Group's website has more advice on this emotive issue:

<https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/wildlife-crime> You'll find information on how to recognise signs of badger crime; what numbers to phone if you suspect a badger crime has already happened or if a suspicious incident is in progress:

ANNUAL WILDLIFE CRIME REPORT REVEALS 42% DROP IN CONVICTIONS - BT



Badger Trust Post – 5/12/2023-

Today marks the launch of the **Wildlife Crime 2022 Report** at the House of Commons. The annual report, created by Wildlife and Countryside Link and Wales Environment Link with input from member organisations, including Badger Trust, *confirms the need for better crime statistics and response by making wildlife crime notifiable*. It also shows that there was a 42% drop in convictions for wildlife crime – more people are getting away with wildlife crime than ever before.

Craig Fellowes, Wildlife Crime Officer at Badger Trust, said:

“Getting animal cruelty into the Online Safety Bill was a great step in raising the chances of getting more convictions for wildlife crime. Badgers continue to be persecuted by hunters, baiters and others. It's time to make these people pay for their crimes and get more resources into convictions by making badger crime notifiable.”

Make reported badger crime a notifiable offence - Badger Trust is calling on the government to make badger crimes notifiable, which should also lead to an increase in convictions. 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
- Make badger persecution notifiable to the Home Office so that the real level of crime can be accurately assessed

Read the full Badger Trust Post at: [Annual wildlife crime report reveals the need to make wildlife crime notifiable \(badgertrust.org.uk\)](https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/annual-wildlife-crime-report-reveals-the-need-to-make-wildlife-crime-notifiable)

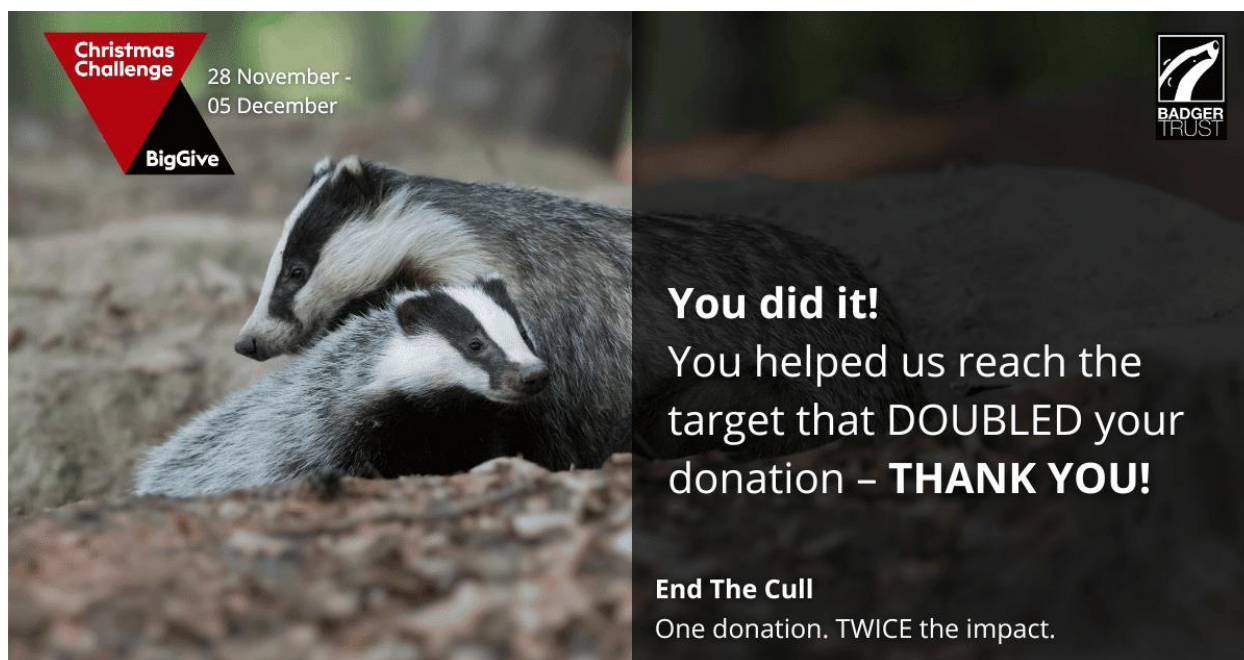


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YOU DID IT!!

Whether you pledged, donated or simply shared their newsletter or social posts, you made a difference for badgers.....you helped the Badger Trust reach the target for their **Big Give 2023 #ChristmasChallenge** – unlocking vital match funds from their generous pledgers that **DOUBLED your donation**.

As the Badger Trust is only a small charity, that means so much.

What will the Trust do with the funds?

Your gift will have helped them fund the research, collaboration, partnerships and awareness-raising needed to bring a change in policy to **End The Badger Cull**.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of the Badger Trust says:

The badger cull is a national wildlife tragedy and a direct assault on nature. Badgers are ecosystem engineers and their presence in their native range provides many benefits to other species and biodiversity at large.

By Ending the Cull we will be saving our most iconic British mammal, as well as focusing the most effective bTB eradication measures back onto cattle.

Thank you for your support!!





In case you didn't have the opportunity to help with the 'Big Give', did you know you can raise funds for badgers when you recycle?



From used printer cartridges and stamps, broken or unwanted jewellery, any country's bank notes – even old cars and motorbikes! – you can raise funds to help badgers.



Printer cartridges: - Badger Trust will receive a donation for ink cartridges recycled through *Recycle 4 Charity*.

Check to see if your ink cartridges are part of the scheme. Then order a free postage label to send your used cartridges and help the badgers! www.recycle4charity.co.uk



Jewellery: - You can donate all your broken and unwanted jewellery to raise money for Badger Trust. Any jewellery – gold, silver, costume jewellery, watches, broken and damaged items (like odd earrings, snapped chains or items with missing stones).

Banknotes: - You can donate unwanted banknotes from ANY country of any age.

Our partners at *Recycling for Good* will recycle them to support Badger Trust. Simply use your own envelope or jiffy bag (No bigger than A5 in size) and send them to *Freepost RSXA-GJBY-ARRZ, Unit 14 Amber Business Village, Amber Close, Tamworth B77 4RP*.



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 off the stamps and pop them in an envelope making sure you have the correct postage to: *Badger Trust, PO Box 16992, Sutton Coldfield B73 9YA*



Recycle your old car!: - Recycle your car with *Giveacar* and turn it into a donation for the Badger Trust! All cars that are scrapped are 95% recycled, they'll arrange free collection and at a time to suit you.

Visit Giveacar.co.uk and tell them about your car. They'll arrange free collection across the UK.

Depending on its condition it'll be auctioned or scrapped. *Giveacar* then donates the proceeds to the Badger Trust.

P.S. You could donate a motorbike or caravan too!



A bewildered badger was saved from a "smelly situation" after falling into a sewage tank at a wastewater plant.

RSPCA inspector Naomi Norris said the beleaguered brock was lucky to land on a ledge after tumbling into the tank at Neston in Cheshire last month.

She said she and fellow inspector Katie Glenn worked for over an hour to pull him to safety - it had a pretty unpleasant experience, but wasn't as wet or as smelly as it might have been!



"He was lucky to land on the ledge as the surrounding water is about 20 feet deep. Although badgers can swim and he might have been able to clamber out, it would have been a pretty unpleasant experience for him. The badger ran around the edge of the tank for about an hour before we were finally able to catch him using a grasper and a net to support his weight as we pulled him up".

An RSPCA representative said the badger was "relatively dry and unharmed, apart from a couple of minor scratches on his nose", and was later released back into the wild.



....and the RSPCA have also been helping badgers locally:

Not a dramatic rescue this time, but just as important for the welfare of some local badgers in the Maidenhead area. The Group had received a report of sett disturbance, where garden waste was being dumped into sett entrances.

We had a very helpful response from the two RSPCA inspectors, who met one of our Group on site. They have now spoken to the management company who are in charge of the ground maintenance, instructing them not to dump vegetation on the sett and reminding them about the laws protecting badgers and their setts. They will visit the site again next week with the Wildlife Officer from the RSPCA and remove all the vegetation from the sett. Hopefully this will prevent further disturbance and the badgers will start using the main sett again. **A great result from the RSPCA!**





As you may know, we (BBOWT) launched our **Nature Recovery Fund** a couple of months ago and have had a great response. The Fund will underpin our ambitious plans to restore and link up nature across our region. But in addition, with enough support, it will help us tackle the impacts of the climate crisis in this area.

With the climate change conference, **COP28** taking place this month, this couldn't be more timely. As world leaders meet to negotiate global action on the climate crisis, there are actions we want to take locally to make the future more secure for wildlife and people. Our Nature Recovery Fund will enable us to work with more landowners to create a network of natural habitats that soak up carbon, store floodwaters after heavy rain and provide homes for threatened wildlife, like lapwing and curlew. We know we are in a critical decade for nature, climate and people. This is why we have raised our ambitions - we need to achieve a step-change in our work to restore nature across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire before it's too late.



In the face of the frightening evidence of a climate crisis, there are positive, long term things we can do, **but we can only do this with your support.**

You can find out more on our website about how restoring natural habitats will help tackle the climate crisis: <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-recovery-fund>



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.



This is Arthur Eales, October's winner, who plays up a year for the Under 8's team but has also kindly turned out for their new Under 7's team. He's spent the early part of the season banging in the goals for both age groups and really gets stuck in. He's a real credit to the club. Well done Arthur!



This is George Reed who plays in Midfield for our Under 10's team. The coaches awarded him the 'Badger of the Month' for his brilliant performances during November which saw the team win 3 out of 4 matches with George chipping in a number of goals (including 4 in one match!) Well done George!



AND FINALLY - OXFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE RESCUE NEED YOUR HELP!

Our friends at the Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue, who have kindly come to our aid on many occasions with badger rescues and rehabilitation, now urgently need your help.



In November 2023, the charity received a 12-month notice from their landlady to vacate its site in Blewbury, Oxfordshire. This devastating blow has now forced the charity to desperately fundraise to move its entire operation and find its forever home.

OWR began life in the family home of charity founders Luke and Ruth Waclawek. They nursed sick and injured wild animals that the local vet handed over to them. This was nothing more than a hobby the couple both enjoyed doing in their spare time. Since the spring of 2018, OWR has grown from 30 animals being treated annually, to what is now thousands on a yearly basis. The charity moved to its current rented site in Blewbury, but **now they have just 12 months to find a new home.**

If you can help in any way, please visit their website to find out more:

[Home \(oxfordshirewildliferescue.com\)](http://oxfordshirewildliferescue.com)



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Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin

Secretary: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Treasurer: Karen McCoy, 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

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

Web - www.badger.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

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.

