

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 134

September 2023



260,000 Badgers Killed since 2013 under Government's 2023 Cull Plans

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Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

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GROUP NEWS AND A CHANGE TO OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING DATE

Make a note in your diaries – our next Public Meeting will now be on Thursday, 14th December

Luke Smith, the 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.

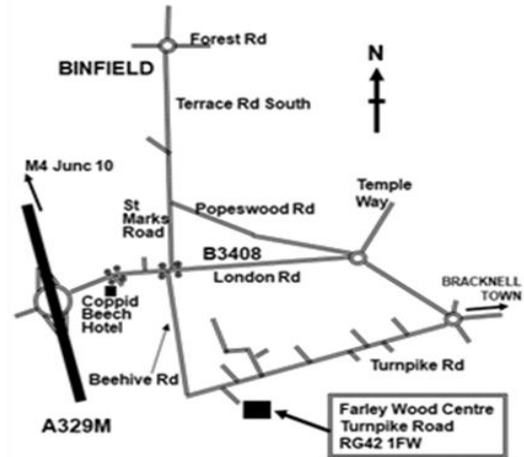
Remember to tell your friends – there is no entrance fee - everyone is welcome and there may be some pre-festive refreshments to enjoy!

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.

Please remember to put the date in your diary!



We've been Spreading the Badger Love again this Summer



The Group has been getting out again to some of the summer events around Berkshire. It's a great opportunity to speak to people about badgers and their welfare.



We've had stalls at the 'Party 'Bye' the Pitch', Binfield Cricket Club; the Environment Fair at St James's, Woodley; St Mark's Church Fete, Binfield and at the **NAWT** (National Animal Welfare Trust) **Open Day** at Trindledown Farm, on the beautiful Lambourn Downs. NAWT runs a rescue and rehoming



centre, caring for elderly animals and you can read more about their work at: <https://www.nawt.org.uk/>.

We hope you'll come along to meet us at our stall at **BBOWT'S Apple Day at the Thatcham Nature Reserve (RG19 3FU) on Sunday, 15th October**. We always welcome a few extra helping hands (and paws!), if you have an hour or two to spare. Hopefully, we will gain some new supporters and raise some funds, whilst having fun as a team. Fingers crossed the sun will still be shining!



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NEWS FROM THE COPSE

Our brave 'matriarch' badger, Little Star is thankfully still featuring on recent trailcam clips from the Copse. We have for some time been worried by her occasional limping, carrying her right rear leg. However, she appears to dig as if there is no problem and has been seen scratching and grooming with the leg. However, more recently, we have been heartened to see her walking fairly normally.



As you may know, Little Star, has been breeding here since 2018 and has become famous for surprising us by suddenly turning up with her latest offspring, after a period of absence from the sett. Her twins from two years ago (a sow and a boar) are still in residence.

Among the other wildlife sharing the Copse and regularly caught on camera are a male and female muntjac and a female roe deer. A couple of smart looking foxes often pass through and you can see videos on our website of some delightful interaction between fox and badger cubs, who are so obviously enjoying a game of chase together!.

<https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/copy-of-video-clips-1>



HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP? - Judith

Thank you to all of our members who have now renewed for another year.

However, if you find a Reminder Form included with this newsletter, then I have not yet received your 2023 form and subscription, which is now overdue. *(If you have asked for this newsletter to be emailed to you, your form will be also be attached.)*

Please check that your details are correct, and then return your form to us as soon as possible, either by post or scanned and emailed to: membership@binfieldbadgers.org.uk



Payments - there are 3 ways to pay. **(1) pay by BACS** - our bank details are: Name: Binfield Badger Group / Sort code: 40-47-39 / Account number: 71496212; **(2) return a cheque** (made payable to 'Binfield Badger Group') along with your membership form - our address is given on the form; **(3) pay via Paypal** - please use the 'Donate' button in the 'Join Us' section on the website:

<http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/join-us>

We do hope that you will continue to support our Group.



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BADGER CULL INTENSIFIES – 260,000 Killed Since 2013 – Badger Trust

<p>Up to 53,234 more badgers could be killed by January 2024</p>	<p>Half of Britain's badgers killed No change to bovineTB End the Cull NOW</p> <p>www.BadgerTrust.org.uk</p> 	<p>The total death toll for badgers in England is expected to surpass 260,000 since culling began in 2013</p>
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The government finally published this year's planned intensive badger cull 'kill targets' – despite culling starting again in August. **The government's stated aim is to 'remove' (kill) between 70% and 90% of badgers in each cull area and across most of the South West of England. In 'low-risk' areas, there is no upper limit.**

- **53,234 badgers on government kill targets for 2023**

As the Badger Trust feared, this year's licence data reveal that up to 53,234 badgers could be killed this year, meaning **the total death toll for badgers in England is expected to surpass 260,000 since culling began in 2013.** This unscientific onslaught is now pushing badgers to the brink of extinction in long-established cull areas, despite the fact that badgers are not tested to establish whether they have bTB or are a risk to cattle. *All cattle slaughtered are proven to have bTB; with badgers, no tests are undertaken.*

- **Cattle 800 times more likely to pass bTB to badgers than badgers to cattle**

However, the problem isn't badgers – it's cattle biosecurity. For example, a recent government study in Northern Ireland showed that cattle were 800 times more likely to pass bTB to badgers than badgers were to cattle. Bovine TB is primarily a respiratory infection, and whilst some level of infection can remain in the environment, its main route of transmission is direct contact with an infected individual.

Cattle-to-cattle transmission has been recognised overwhelmingly as the primary driver of bTB outbreaks in cattle herds. Even the government's own data show that bTB is mainly spread from cattle to cattle. And independent scientific studies of government data in cull and non-cull zones show there is no difference in bTB reduction between the two, which is why cattle biosecurity is vital in fighting this disease.

- **Government proposes 'extreme badger culling' consultation**

Yet the government still plans to consult on even more extreme culling. Despite a pledge to end badger culling in 2025, the government is expected to consult on 'Epidemiological Culling', where shooters will kill 100% of badgers in an area, based on (as yet unspecified) "epidemiological evidence". Again, instead of focusing on more effective cattle-based measures, badgers remain the scapegoats for a poorly controlled cattle-spread disease.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of Badger Trust, said: ***"The local extinction of badgers is happening right here, right now. 260,000 badgers represent over half of Britain's badger population – there has never been an assault on nature like this over a decade in our history. The government won't even test the culled badgers – they know most wouldn't even have bTB. Every cow slaughtered has the disease, but with badgers, it's so different."***



"Even worse, as the latest study shows, any that do have bTB are 800 times more likely to have caught it from cattle. The same study found that transmission rates from badger to cattle is negligible. The best way to deal with bTB is through cattle-based measures – enhanced biosecurity, such as restricting cattle movements and effective cattle testing and vaccination."

- **England remains the only country in Great Britain to cull badgers,** with Scotland being largely bTB-free by restricting cattle movements into the country and Wales reducing bTB without resorting to badger culling. Both Scotland and Wales have healthy badger populations.

With 210,555 badgers culled up to the end of 2022, the total death toll since the present culling began in 2013 could now exceed 260,000 badgers – *even though badgers are a protected native species.* **It is clear that the government is increasing badger persecution rather than phasing it out as they promised.**

These statistics come at a pivotal time in the culling operation, in what is meant to be the last period that intensive culling licences are to be conducted. Whilst the government previously promised a phase-out of badger culling, these kill targets reveal a vastly different picture, *with the planned epi-culling consultation proposing 100% badger culling in some areas.*

While the government refuses to admit badger culling is unnecessary to reduce bTB in England, badgers – who have lived on the British Isles for over 250,000 years – are being wiped out from their native English landscape.

Their absence will be the legacy of this failed disease control strategy.



WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS LATEST CULL NEWS HAVE ON BERKSHIRE BADGERS?

It is all too easy to become immune to the big numbers we see every year of badgers culled under the Government's ineffective and inhumane badger cull. 210,555 badgers have been culled since 2013 across England – an unthinkable number.



With this large number in mind and the 1000s culled in some other counties, the numbers culled in the Berkshire zone have thankfully been relatively small – 77 were culled in the Berkshire zone in 2022. **However, the target they aim to kill this year is significantly higher – somewhere between 356 and 501 badgers just in the Berkshire zone.**

Year	Min Target	Max Target	Nos. killed:	By freeshooting	Via cage trapping
2021	141	192	176	137	39
2022	74	101	77	55	22
2023	356	501			

And we mustn't forget that many more badgers are likely culled around the county border under Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire licences. Numbers impacted in those areas will never be known, but all of which means that culling now spreads across much of the county and could be close to many of us.

To see the figures for the other licensed cull areas in England, including neighbouring Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire, go to the Trust's website:

https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/news/categories/_cull



And now we hear.....**GOVERNMENT HAS 'U-TURNED' ON STOPPING THE CULL!**



The Minister for the Environment, Therese Coffey, told the National Farmers Union (NFU) that she had **“scrapped any arbitrary deadline about when we would stop culling”** during a speech in Westminster on Wednesday, September 13. She said her decision had been led by scientific evidence and a lack of progress on alternative solutions.

This announcement represents a significant change from the policy set out in 2021 by Ms Coffey’s predecessor George Eustice, for an effective end to culling once existing licences expired in 2025.

Ms Coffey echoed advocates in the farming community who maintain that culling is the most effective way to stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB), saying: **“We will cull for as long as we need to, in order to make sure we become bovine TB-free. We have to do what is right for the farmers.”**

In 2020, the NFU lost a legal battle to challenge the ban, and its position has long been disputed by animal rights campaigners and others concerned for the welfare of badgers. **Derbyshire Wildlife Trust boss Jo Smith** said:

“We are disappointed the Government seems intent on allowing badgers to be culled on mass – despite making promises to end intensive culling and focus on cattle-based measures, supplemented by a badger vaccination programme.

This outdated move comes despite the government’s pledges to move away from the reliance on extensive shooting and lethal control of this protected species, and instead invest in a cattle vaccine and to support badger vaccination programmes.”

She added: *“In 2022, 33,627 badgers were culled nationally, with 1,939 of those here in Derbyshire. Backtracking on plans to stop intensive culling could result in tens of thousands of healthy badgers being shot across England for years to come. We understand the hardship that bTB causes in the farming community and the need to find the right mechanisms to control the disease. There is no concrete evidence that proves culling badgers is the answer to reducing risks to cattle, and instead it is cattle-based measures that are bringing down bTB rates.*



“England’s cattle-to-cattle disease transmission problem must be urgently resolved through cattle-focused measures such as improved cattle testing and vaccination, enhanced biosecurity, and controlling cattle movements.

This is a critical turning point. We call on the government to stop badgers being killed on mass for good and focus on cattle measures and badger vaccination instead.”



SAVE OXFORDSHIRE'S BADGERS (SOBS) APPEAL TO OXFORD UNIVERSITY - OBG



SAD 'Badgers' from our neighbouring Oxfordshire Badger Group, held a peaceful, silent protest outside the Department of Biology, Oxford University, marking the start of this year's badger cull with a minute's silence. They fear the government plans to continue the cull and drive badgers to local extinction. Oxford University is the intellectual 'home' of the science underpinning the badger cull and they are appealing to the University to speak up for badgers and STOP THE CULL

The badger cull season started on 1st September. DEFRA licences for the 3 'Oxfordshire' Cull zones allow for a total of 1834 badgers to be shot, but cull licences from neighbouring countys extend into the county.

Oxfordshire Badger Group (OBG) estimate around 60% of the county (west of a line from Banbury to Thames) is a killing zone. Shooters aim to 'remove' seven in 10 badgers. They are operating within 5-10 miles of Oxford City. Over the next 8 weeks, thousands of healthy badgers will be shot in Oxfordshire alone. Families will be decimated. The cull is NOT being 'phased out' as promised. Many new licences have been issued, and existing ones expanded this year.

Government may be about to break its promise to end culling in 2025. It is to consult on introducing 100% culling in response to new bovine TB (bTB) outbreaks in cattle herds. Culling could continue indefinitely across most of England. Why? Scientific evidence from 10 years of culling shows that culling every badger in the country won't affect the spread of the disease. bTB is hidden in the herd and passed from cow to cow.

Covid has taught us what it takes to control an infectious disease: isolation - vaccination – detection. The farming industry simply does not want to bear the cost of taking the better cattle measures that could eradicate it quickly. "Business as usual" has already cost 210,000 badger's lives.

It could drive badgers to extinction in large areas of Oxfordshire.





Now some good news!....

Badger Trust has been one of the leading campaigners to include animal cruelty in the Online Safety Bill, alongside coalition partners in the AfA Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition and the Alliance to Counter Crime Online. Many of the charity's supporters joined other campaigners in writing to MPs and members of the House of Lords to urge this change – **and this week, the government has introduced animal cruelty into the scope of the Bill.**

The introduction means that animal cruelty will now become a priority offence, which means that it joins the most serious illegal content, including terrorist content and child abuse, as content social media platforms must work to prevent.

This amendment to the Bill is a great result for animals and platform users – especially young people – as social media companies will now be responsible for proactively preventing content that causes unnecessary suffering to animals from reaching users. Failure to comply could, for the first time, lead to fines of £18m, or 10% of a tech company's total global revenue. *(See the next page on how YOU can be active in ensuring these prosecutions are carried out!)*

Badgers are among the most widely featured native animals in horrific online content that shows animal cruelty and abuse. Badger-baiting gangs, in particular, use social media to flaunt the violence they inflict on badgers and dogs. They also use social media to arrange criminal activity in many cases. The content filmed is then exposed to many young people, including children, which is traumatising and could help normalise violence towards animals among vulnerable groups.

Badger Trust is pleased the government is now supporting action against this growing problem by bringing violence towards animals into the scope of the Online Safety Bill.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of Badger Trust, commented:

“We must do everything we can to stop criminals from sharing animal cruelty online. This cyber-enabled wildlife crime – crimes against wild animals facilitated by the internet – encourages crimes against animals and is on the rise as online technologies become more widespread.

The government's inclusion of animal cruelty in the bill is a great step forward and a tribute to everyone who campaigned for this change. We hope that the Online Safety Bill will now put in place the framework to help protect animals from this violence and children from being exposed to it.”

The Online Safety Bill passed its final Parliamentary debate on 19 September and is now ready to become law.





How YOU can Recognise, Record and Report Cyber-Enabled Badger Crime

Badger Trust encourages internet users who witness badger persecution online to **remember the Three Rs: Recognise, Record and Report - , Don't repost it, Report it!**

1. Recognise

The first step in protecting badgers from persecution is to recognise signs of badger persecution.

The following examples are key indicators that footage shared online shows illegal activities related to badgers:

- Blocking or obstructing sett entrances (e.g. with soil or other debris)
- Damage to tunnels or chambers (dogs entering a sett, people digging into the sett with shovels)
- Dogs chasing or fighting badgers
- Person/s holding, chasing or posing with injured or dead badgers

2. Record

The second step is to record evidence that badger persecution has been shared online:

- Screenshot evidence of the post and save it securely
- Never engage with the content witnessed because every share, comment, and like makes the content more popular

Criminals favour the internet due to how easily accounts can be deleted and re-created. However, their photographs and videos can be used in court, so evidence must be collected carefully.

3. Report

Now that the crime has been recognised and recorded, the final step is to report it.

There are two fundamental parts to reporting badger persecution you see online:

- Report the crime with the social media platform it was shared to (so the platform can remove the content and suspend the account)
- [Report the crime to Badger Trust](https://www.badgertrust.org.uk) (for the crime to be recorded as part of national badger crime statistics).



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 time, we have an extract from the team's 'News from the Set', with exciting news at the start of their new season.



"Eight years in and 2023/24 represents our biggest season as a Club so far by some distance. Firstly, we're now happy to confirm that we've five league teams between the ages of six and eleven to cover the majority of players we have. Of the five, three are looking to carry on the great work of last season where they won 2 trophies and took big steps forward in terms of progress and quality of football. For our two new teams, they've lots to look forward to this year. Watching the U7's first game on the 17th September was great and we were fortunate that the rain held off too. The team won its first two matches and managed 10 goals in the process! More importantly, they got a good

runabout and looked like they were having a great time, with the above photo as evidence.

Unfortunately, there remains the challenge around numbers, so if you know anyone who might like to play (on an ad hoc basis is fine) please tell them to get in touch as we'd really like to keep this group rolling but will struggle unless we get more children."



Our Badgers have decided the Rugby World Cup should come to Binfield!



We know our Copse Clan are rather prone to a bit of kleptomaniacism from time to time, but.....

.....they are obviously rugby fans too and wanted a bit of the World Cup action! (or maybe, in the dark, the ball was mistaken for a rather large, tasty egg!)

Looks like the ball came off worse in the tackle.....and it was evidently 'scrum..ptious'!



AND FINALLY - A Heartfelt Plea to Save our much persecuted, beautiful Brocks

Below is an extract from the moving poem 'The Badger', written by Richard Bonfield, 'Born Free's' Poet-in-Residence from 2009 until 2017, who sadly died in 2021.

It was written for Born Free and Brian May's SaveMe during the 2013 cull in the West Country and is, sadly, never more relevant, 10 years on.

Virginia McKenna, Born Free's Co-Founder & Trustee, gave this tribute to Richard:

"He had a unique and wonderful way with words – creating images and stirring emotions with extraordinary sensitivity and imagination. Richard wrote many special poems for us. We have a never-ending gratitude to him for sharing his innermost thoughts and feelings."

The Badger

*'If we could eavesdrop on his world and watch the badger's life unfurl,
We'd find that 'family' is the thing and 'burrowing and tunnelling',
Spaghetti loops at every meal and peanuts which they love to steal.
That 'play' is central to a life, whose backdrop is the starry night,
That 'love' is acting centre stage, oblivious of mankind's rage
Which would deny the badger's life and make of him a greenwood Christ
By hanging him upon a tree for all his trumped-up perfidy.
Be thankful, then, that he has friends who work to make this torture end
And let the badger's family be, beneath the spreading chestnut tree.'*



As the badger's friends, let's keep on fighting 'to make this torture end' – we can't lose this much loved, iconic animal from our British countryside!



Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin

Secretary: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Treasurer: Karen M^cCoy, 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

Postal Address:

Binfield Badger Group
PO Box 3805,
Bracknell,
Berkshire
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

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.

