

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 136

March 2024



End the Cull....Don't Extend the Cull!

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Binfield Badger Group

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GROUP NEWS AND OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING & AGM DATE

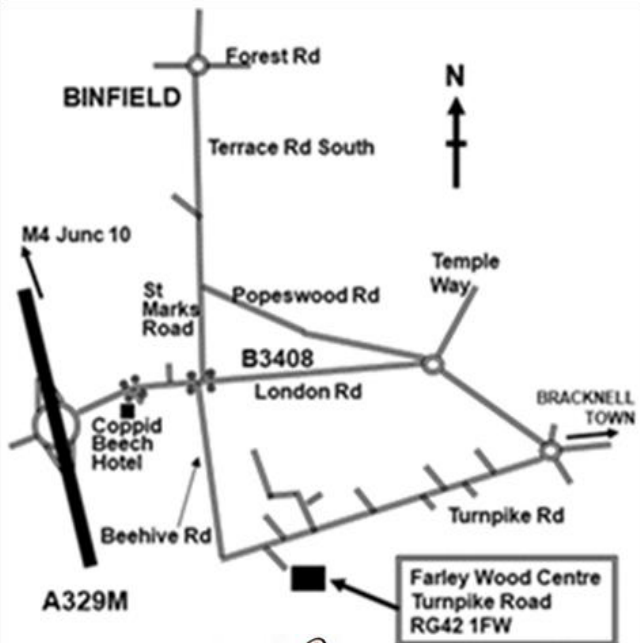
An illustrated talk by
Ailsa Claybourn
**'FIND YOUR
WELLBEING
THROUGH NATURE'**

28th March 2024

All are welcome to attend the
meeting and AGM at

Farley Wood Centre, Turnpike
Rd RG42 1FW

FREE - for all the family –
7:00pm for 7:30pm
Refreshments available, raffle
and sales stall



We are looking forward to welcoming you to our Public Meeting and AGM on Thursday, 28th March.

The meeting will start with an inspiring talk by **Ailsa Claybourn**, a regular volunteer with the British Trust for Ornithology and BBOWT. She will tell us about the science behind our love of nature and how this can enhance our feeling of wellbeing – much needed in this troubled world!

Following a short break for refreshments, we will hold our short **AGM** - a chance for members to hear about what the Group has been up to over the past year and contribute any views/suggestions!



TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP



Another year has flown by and, **if your membership is due for renewal, you will find a form included with this newsletter.** *There is more information on how to renew on Page 8.*

Please continue to support our activities. The ongoing bovine TB debate and cruel Cull, habitat loss due to housebuilding and the fight against wildlife crime, mean your support is again vital, so we all stand together.



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The announcement that Natural England is again considering more supplementary killing of badgers is little surprise. Still, it is a devastating blow to anyone who cares about wildlife, the importance of science in policy-making and a farming industry struggling to control cattle-to-cattle disease spread among its herds.

Supplementary culls are being sought by farming groups in Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, and Warwickshire, where 70+% of badgers have already been shot under licence in a failed bid to eradicate bovine TB (bTB), an infectious disease among cattle.

Natural England has already overseen the killing of more than 210,000 badgers in England to March 2023 – we are due to hear the kill figures for 2023/2024 soon

The badger death toll already represents an estimated half of the entire UK population of one of our most charismatic and well-loved protected animals.

Yet bovine TB still accounts for the premature slaughter of less than 0.5% of cattle in England in any one year, a proportion which has barely shifted since before badger culling began in 2013, despite Westminster government claims to the contrary.

What are Supplementary Culls?

Government policy requires that more than 70% of badgers are killed in a cull area in the first year, and then more are shot every subsequent year for a total of four years to keep the population down to 30% of its starting number. This cull method is called 'intensive culling'. 'Supplementary culling' continues the killing in the same areas for another two years.

Supplementary culling might be introduced for one of two reasons claimed:

1. farming groups failed to kill 'enough' badgers during the four-year intensive cull (though Defra and Natural England annually claim that every year's cull has been 'sufficient to deliver expected policy benefits'), or
2. they have killed enough badgers, but there is evidence that there is a known surviving population of badgers infected with bTB, which now pose a known disease risk to other cattle.

However, population estimates are made by the cull contractor, not independent researchers, and so understanding the percentage of a population killed or other risk factors to a specific population such as road traffic collisions, resource availability, or badger crime that each population faces is unknown. This makes determining the percentage of a population killed little more than guesswork.

Furthermore, unlike cattle, as no one tests badgers for bTB infection before or after culling, there are no grounds to believe that Defra, Natural England, APHA, or farming groups know the bTB status of badgers in any area and so lack actual evidence to the second claim.



Over 94% of all bTB cases are spread cattle-to-cattle

What Defra, APHA, Natural England, researchers and the TB Advisory Service alike do know is that 94% of all bTB cases arise from cattle-to-cattle infections, not from badgers or any one of the possible wild or domestic hosts, including deer, sheep, pigs, llamas, farm cats, earthworms, etc.

At the National TB Advisory Service Conference in November 2023, speaker after speaker told attendees that most cattle bTB infections are caught from other cattle. Delegates were also repeatedly told that more reliable testing of cattle, far better hygiene (biosecurity), and the deployment of the available cattle vaccine were what the farming industry needed as a matter of urgency. However, as England's Deputy Chief Vet said in her opening remarks, officials were 'following Ministerial policy'.

Yet this policy fails to use 'every tool in the toolkit' – the oft-quoted DEFRA line – and relies on wiping out half the population of an untested native wild animal to control bTB spread rather than address the elephant (or should that be 'cow'?) in the room: effective cattle measures.

Wales & Scotland don't cull badgers and reduce bTB more effectively than England

Wales and Scotland do not cull badgers and achieve much lower rates of bTB by focusing on cattle, the primary bTB disease spreaders. For example, Wales applies stricter controls to cattle via country-wide annual testing, restrictions to cattle movement, and mandated farm biosecurity. By paying greater epidemiological attention to cattle, the Welsh bTB strategy is amongst the most progressive and effective bTB control programmes employed in Great Britain to date.

And a recent report from a Northern Ireland whole-genome government-backed study showed that cattle were 800 times more likely to pass bTB to badgers than badgers were to cattle. The report stated, "...cattle were likely driving the local epidemic, with transmission from cattle to badgers being more common than badger to cattle.

Badger Trust once again calls for an immediate end to all badger culls operated by the UK government in England.

It's time to give the public, taxpayers and farmers a truthful picture of the actual level of bTB disease hidden in the English cattle herd and to immediately end a distracting, destructive, and costly badger cull policy that does not stop the spread of bTB in cattle.

The government owes that much to the taxpayer and the farming industry at least.



The UK government's own data show cattle-to-cattle spread is the primary transmission source for bTB, yet it has been reluctant to use the most effective cattle-based methods to take the steps needed to stop the disease. The recommendations in the Trust's report [*'Tackling Bovine TB Together: Towards Sustainable, Scientific and Effective bTB Solutions'*](#), point to a more effective approach for Great Britain, especially England, *focusing on cattle*:-

a more comprehensive cattle testing programme using the most reliable combination test methods, cattle vaccination, and enhanced cattle biosecurity, including cattle movement.





Show your support for our call to End the Cull and Save Badgers.

We call for an immediate end to all badger culls operated by the UK government in England. Will you join us? [Sign the petition now](#)

As January 31st marked the end of another horrific badger culling season, the **Badger Trust** launched a petition to make **January 2024** the last cull season and calls for no more cull licences to be issued.

The government has targeted 260,000 badgers for death since 2013, representing well over half the badger population. With nature in crisis and the farming industry struggling with effective disease control, the cull has become a costly distraction from the cattle measures needed to deal more quickly with bovine TB (bTB), measures that the government has been slow to implement in England.

The Trust also published an executive summary of its new report, **'Tackling Bovine TB Together: Towards Sustainable, Scientific and Effective bTB Solutions'** -

(a copy is available as a pdf download when you click on the 'Sign the Petition' link above or go to: www.badgertrust.org.uk/end-the-cull/end-the-cull-petition).



The report is a significant attempt to get a collaborative way forward in dealing with the damaging disease of bovine TB in the most effective way possible. Its approach is rooted in looking at the evidence to develop a policy framework and measures that reduce the impact of bovine TB on cattle and other animals throughout Great Britain. It contains clear and evidence-based recommendations for the best way forward in tackling the disease and protecting our natural world.



The report brings together evidence around bTB spread and attempted control over the last fifty years and points to a more effective approach for Great Britain, especially England, focusing on cattle, cattle testing and vaccination and enhanced cattle biosecurity (including cattle movement). This approach would lean on the more effective methods used in Wales and Scotland, where badgers are not culled, leading to a faster reduction in bTB rates throughout Great Britain and the suffering this causes. With cattle-to-cattle transmission the proven primary method of bTB spread, the report also calls for an immediate end to the distracting, destructive, and costly badger cull that does not address the spread of bTB in cattle.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of Badger Trust, said:

“We urge people nationwide to sign the petition to stop any further badger culls. Help us show that the public wants to protect nature and the environment and stop the destructive wiping out of a critical native species.

The badger cull is costly in terms of money wasted by the government and the farming industry and costly in terms of its impact on nature, ecology, and the largest carnivore left in Britain. It is a cost the evidence shows is wasted and becomes a distraction to effective policymaking.

*A quarter of a million badgers killed – nearly all of them not even tested for bTB – is a stain on this country’s relationship with nature;
the cull must end now.”*





Early this year, I was called out to a concerned resident in West Berkshire who was living next to a property that had submitted planning permission to rip out an ancient hedgerow in front of their property. They wanted to “widen their driveway and access”. Obviously I had serious concerns with the proposal to remove what appeared to be an ancient, healthy and wildlife-rich roadside hedgerow, but the fact that badgers were using it for access to a subsidiary sett and foraging was of equal concern.

The lady who called us out runs a 55-acre equestrian facility – with rolling hills, hedgerows, ancient oaks and acres of pasture – ideal for sharing between horses and badgers. The lady is a firm badger fan and had even done a rescue of her own a few years back when an injured badger was found on the property and taken to the local wildlife hospital for treatment.

I was delighted to be given full access to roam at will across the grounds and found a number of active setts at all corners across their land, as well as some outlying holes and a subsidiary sett in the hedgerow opposite the land proposed for development.

There were badger runs everywhere, but sadly the planning applicant had blocked some runs with large panel fencing, which appears to have forced the badgers to divert their runs into the hedgerow that is proposed by the planning applicant to remove.

A letter of objection was sent by Binfield Badger Group, noting our concern that any development that restricts the badgers access to the subsidiary sett – and setts further afield to the West – would have a detrimental effect on the badger’s ability to roam and forage.

We are hopeful that this development request is refused and the hedgerow will stay in place for all wildlife to continue to use on the future.



Another year has flown by and the time has arrived again for membership renewals. The ongoing bovine TB debate and cruel cull, habitat loss due to housebuilding and the fight against wildlife crime, mean your support is again vital.



If your membership is due for renewal, your form is enclosed.
However, if you have asked for this newsletter to be emailed to you, a blank form has been included for you to complete please.

- **Please check that your details are correct**, particularly post codes and phone numbers, and add any changes in the box next to the entry.
- **Email addresses are very helpful** so we can let you know what is going on; *no personal details are shared with anyone else.*
- **Core Group Communications** – please *carefully* read the ‘Opt In’/‘Opt Out’ statements, just above your signature on the form *and tick the appropriate box.* (We hope you will choose to continue hearing from us regarding badgers and other wildlife-related issues, including our newsletters.)
- **Newsletter options-** you can now indicate on the form if you would prefer to receive your quarterly newsletter **by email**, by ticking the appropriate box.
(Of course, this will greatly save on the ever increasing cost of printing and postage!)
- **Membership rates** - the annual Membership rates continue to be £6 per adult and £2 per child (under 18). Please remember that from this fee we pay a levy of £2 per head to the Badger Trust to support its valuable work. The membership fee doesn’t cover our costs, so we (and the badgers!) continue to be very grateful to those able to add a donation to their fees. *Please indicate where you are able to Gift Aid any donation to the Group by ticking the box.*
- **How can you help?** - You will also see a section asking for details of how you can help - you are sure to find something that interests you, but more ideas are always welcome! Please get in touch today with your ideas, or comments on current issues – contact details are all listed on the back page of this newsletter.

Please 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) pay via Paypal** - please use the ‘Donate’ button in the ‘Join Us’ section on the website; **(3) return a cheque** (made payable to ‘Binfield Badger Group’) along with your membership form - our address is given on the form.
(We are charged fees for every cheque banked and for every Paypal transaction so more of your money goes to badgers if you are able to pay via BACS.)

(If paying by BACS or Paypal, please still remember to return the form to us, It would help if you mark the form “paid via BACS” or “paid via website” please.)

If you know of anyone who would like to become a member, they can go to the ‘Join Us’ page on our web site: <http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/join-us>, where the whole application process can be done quickly and securely.



QUIZ PAGE

Spring's here – Try our BIRD SEARCH (don't get into a flap!)



N E R W G A L C T S
 C O L L A R E D O I
 H N E D O V E N A F
 A I O G T K G B T S
 F B B S I T U L I P
 F O I P H P B U T A
 I R N R E U D E B R
 N V U N L I T O F R
 C S B L A C K B O O
 H C N I F B I R D W



WHY DID THE TOAD CROSS THE ROAD?



- Cathy, BBG



When toads come out of hibernation from early February through to early April (depending on weather), they will join with hundreds of other toads to migrate and return to the exact same breeding ponds that they themselves first emerged from. They follow the same route and tend to make their move just after dusk under the cover of darkness. The darkness makes it much harder for predators to spot them, but if that route includes a road, the timing unfortunately coincides with rush hour traffic. It is estimated that 20 tons of toads meet their end each year under the wheels of UK traffic. Unlike the more obvious sightings of road-killed badger, deer or fox,

small animals such as amphibians get flattened without drivers even knowing that they are there!. Toad populations across the UK are estimated to have fallen by 68% over the past 30 years (Froglife) and in some locations in the south east, entire populations have been lost in just a few years.

Toad Patrols - The good news though is that thousands of volunteers up and down the country are now helping toads by getting involved with Froglife's national **'Toads on Roads' campaign**, designed to reduce these casualties. A Toad Patrol comprises volunteers who patrol the road with buckets and torches looking for amphibians on the way to their breeding ponds. Toads are picked up along with any newts or frogs that are crossing the road. They are then escorted safely over the main road and left to get on with their life. For every toad and frog they help cross the road, in June/July, hundreds of tiny froglets and toadlets will emerge from the pond as they begin their own journeys.

Interested in getting involved? - - Extra 'toad patrolling' hands are always needed so if you are able to spare an hour or so in the evening just after dusk, you could make a big difference to the population of our British toads. There are toad patrols across the UK and the Froglife website has a handy tool which allows to enter your postcode and find toad patrols in your area: <https://www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads/tormap/>

Happy 25th Birthday Henley Toad Patrol! - This year marks the 25th anniversary of Henley Toad Patrol. It was set up to maintain the

large common toad population living in an area known as Oaken Grove (adj to Henley Business School). The woods in which the toads spend most of their lives, lie to the north of the busy A4155, linking Henley to Marlow. The lake lies to the south of the road and every year, thousands of toads migrate from the woods towards the lake to breed. Nobody knows exactly how far they travel, but it's thought to be up to two miles away, which is a long way if you are only 3 inches long! Each year, a 600m temporary barrier is erected at the busiest crossing point to stop toads getting onto the road. **Over the last 25 years, 140,000 toads have been carried across the road by volunteers** with the yearly average being 5,500 toads. A mild and wet winter meant migration started early this year and volunteers have already saved over 10,900 toads (plus over 330 frogs and 170 Smooth newts). So all in all, a very busy year, and looking like a record year!



For a short film about HTP see <https://vimeo.com/270946067> – or find us on social media incl. Twitter @HenleyToads & Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HenleyToadPatrol>



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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.



This month our winner is Theo who having started the season really well suffered a broken leg playing football in the garden and has had to sit out the last couple of months.

He's returned to the team full of energy and enthusiasm and it's great to see him enjoying his football again

Well done Theo!



BIRDSEARCH - SOLUTIONS

Did you find them all?



N	E	R	W	G	A	L	C	T	S
E	O	B	B	A	R	E	D	O	I
H	A	E	D	O	V	E	N	A	F
A	I	O	G	T	K	G	B	F	S
F	B	B	S	I	F	U	L	I	P
F	O	I	P	H	P	B	U	F	A
I	R	N	R	E	U	D	E	B	R
A	V	U	N	L	I	T	O	F	R
E	S	B	L	A	C	K	B	O	O
H	E	N	I	F	B	I	R	D	W



Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin
Secretary: Judith Darnell, Woodley
Treasurer: Karen McCoy, Sonning
Membership Secretary:
 Judith Darnell, Woodley
 Binfield Badger Group
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 RG42 1HH

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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

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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 <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
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.

