

INTRODUCTION.

The Eurasian Badger, (*Meles meles*,) has been present in Britain for thousands of years. It has a truly omnivorous diet, eating everything from earthworms to windfall fruit.

Generally, the badger or Brock as it is sometimes referred to, is a benign and quiet creature, although very strong and powerful. Badgers have very sharp claws, primarily for excavating their setts; they also have sharp teeth and very strong jaws.

The underground home of the badger is known as a "sett", and these can be huge chambers connected by a myriad of tunnels. These setts also contain the nurseries where the female badger can look after their young. Cubs are usually born around the start of the year.

Badgers are clean and sociable animals. They regularly change their bedding material and unlike foxes, do not leave food or dung in or near the sett.

A badger may live to be over 10 years of age, but that is very much the exception.



What was that sound?

PERSECUTION.

Despite being harmless and secretive animals, badgers have suffered centuries of persecution from man. The cruellest comes in the form of "badger digging" or "badger baiting", where badgers are forced to fight a long and vicious struggle with specially trained dogs. The dogs are often very badly injured, or even killed, but so is the badger. The injured dogs can sometimes be treated but the badger is never given any thought.

Ironically, it is the strength, courage and family loyalty of the badger that ensures that man continues to match his dogs against it. An estimated 9,000 badgers every year meet their deaths from digging or baiting.

However, the majority of premature deaths among badgers result from traffic accidents. It has been estimated that a total of 40,000 badgers are killed on our roads – out of an estimated population of 250,000.



Do I really want to go and feed or is it better to sleep?

PROTECTION.

Badgers have legal protection in England and Wales from "The Protection of Badgers Act 1992" and also "The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Whilst this legislation gives some protection to badgers it does need strengthening and the Badger Trust and individual groups are working towards this. The police are not able to arrest those who dig or bait badgers and many badger enthusiasts would like to see this changed. It is illegal to take or ill-treat a badger and to disturb its home.

If there is a need for safety or animal welfare reasons to disturb a badger a licence must be obtained from The Wildlife Management Unit of Natural England and this will normally be only granted in very exceptional circumstances.



Sleep won the day for this one!

NORTHUMBERLAND BADGER GROUP.

The group exists to protect and study badgers in their natural environment, with the purpose of ensuring the long-term safety and survival of perhaps Britain's best-loved animal.

The Northumberland Badger Group is assisting in the protection of badgers by:-

- Recording the distribution and status of badgers in Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside.
- Regularly monitoring setts to check for disturbance and damage.
- Liaising with the police and RSPCA to help prosecute offenders.
- Advising on proposed road, housing, mining and other developments threatening to badgers.
- Strengthening badger setts to protect badgers from disturbance.
- Lobbying MPs and other decision makers to improve protection for the badger.
- Establishing a network of group contacts for badger protection in designated areas.
- Maintaining contact with other badger groups in surrounding counties to pass on information and assist each other to develop good communication systems so information on disturbances can be circulated quickly.
- Advising when necessary veterinary and wildlife experts on rehabilitation and re-homing.
- Promote awareness of badgers through field training days and talks.



HOW YOU CAN HELP.

If you know of a badger sett please check it occasionally for signs of disturbance, also let the Badger Group know of its location. If you do find any signs of disturbance or if you see any signs of suspicious activity **DO NOT APPROACH**. The persons who do this can sometimes be violent and may attack you so please stay safe.

YOU SHOULD HOWEVER: -

Contact the Police immediately using either 999 if in danger or by calling 101 if not urgent. Make a note of the descriptions of all individuals seen, their dogs and any implements they have with them. Also note any car registration numbers you see in the area. If you come across a disturbance at a sett after the event, you should contact both the Police and the Northumberland Badger Group. Please make notes of all you see and if possible take photographs but do not move anything or walk over the site.

We would also like to know of all setts and road casualties and a Grid Reference would be appreciated so that we can record them accurately on our database. Better still WHY NOT JOIN US and help directly?

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Northumberland Badger Group 07901951565

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

Active Incidents 999

Non urgent incidents 101

Always ask for an incident number

RSPCA 0300 1234 999

(Injured animals)

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Northumberland Badger Group

“Our aim is to conserve, protect and, promote badger habitat and conservation especially within Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside”.



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