

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 122

September 2020

SADLY FAMILIAR....?

CRUEL CULL STARTS AGAIN:

11 new areas this Autumn

62,000 to be slaughtered

£70m cost to taxpayers

WHY?



‘They could kill every badger but bTB will still remain’see page 6

In this issue:

- Group News see page 2
- An Extraordinary Rescue see page 3
- Devastating News - Cull comes to Oxfordshire see page 7



Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

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GROUP NEWS AND MEETINGS IN 2020

You will be aware that our April meeting and AGM had to be cancelled following Government advice in relation to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Unfortunately, taking account of the ongoing situation, it has been decided **to postpone our next meeting, which was scheduled for 29 October.**



Like so many organisations, all our planned events and hide watches have sadly had to be put on hold. We will email members as soon as we have any updates. Please also keep an eye on our website:

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk and our Facebook page: fb.me/binfieldbadgers

Rest assured that the Group's committee continues to function normally and is holding its monthly meetings via Skype due to the Covid restrictions.

Stay safe and we look forward to meeting up again soon.



The Group's Accounts for 2019-20 – these audited annual accounts, which would have normally been circulated to members at our April AGM, are available for inspection. If you wish to do so, please email us at: badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk



BADGERS WILL BE BADGERS, DESPITE LOCKDOWN (Part 2!)

(The Badger Trust has issued badger groups around the country with advice on how they can continue to help with rescues and advice on badger matters, whilst adhering to the Covid-19 restrictions issued by the Government.)



Over the summer months, the Group has responded to numerous calls, where help and advice has been needed on various badger-related activity. Here are a few examples :-

- a Maidenhead resident had seen a limping badger on her garden security camera. It showed that he had unfortunately lost one of his hind feet, but seemed well and active, so no intervention was required;
- in Southcote, an endoscope camera was used to investigate a 'suspicious hole' dug under a shed. At the time, no sign of badgers or other wildlife was found in the hole, but 'we are still looking into it'!!
- in Kintbury and Thatcham, we were notified of large scale, illegal tipping near active setts. This was investigated and has been reported by the Group to the Wildlife Crime Officer;
- near Lambourn, we received a report of major disturbance where 3 large setts had been blocked following tree felling - a further serious incident which has been reported to the Wildlife Crime Officer.

If you're worried about a badger, please do contact us with details at badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk or report it via our website.

Next, is an account of the lengths to which our intrepid (and very patient) team will go to achieve a successful rescue!



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In July of this year we had a call from a concerned member of the public who reported a “limping” badger in her garden. The lady lived on the Berkshire/Hampshire border and was lucky enough to have a large area of woodland as part of her rather wonderful garden



and amongst many animals that she was feeding, was a family of badgers. Over a short period of time, she noticed one of the smaller badgers had developed an increasingly exaggerated limp on one of its front legs.

We were sent a number of photos and videos and, after some discussion, agreed to visit her home to take a look. Our first observations confirmed that the limp was certainly severe enough to warrant trapping the badger to take it to a wildlife hospital for assessment.



Night one - Our first attempt to capture the badger involved setting bait at the rear of a trap. Over the bait we placed a large stone that was wired to some string, with the intent that once the badger moved the stone, the string would trigger the release of a trap door and close it. Then it started raining..... so rather than risk having a badger trapped in a cage overnight, we postponed to the following evening.



Night two – we set the trap again and added a 2nd cage. This time we used a ‘spiders web’ design of string as our thoughts were that the badger might not have enough strength in his good front leg to move the stone. So...with 2 traps set and bait that included such delights as sausage rolls, corn on the cob, peanuts and dog food, we retired to our cars and, armed with night vision, we sat and waited. Two badgers arrived...and went...and arrived again...and went, then arrived again and the limping badger entered the first cage. He reached over the top of the string, ate some sausage rolls, pondered for a few moments and then turned around and walked out without the cage triggering! He did the same in the 2nd cage. Now, this is where we gave the badger the name “Bendy”. It’s actually quite difficult for badgers to turn a full 180 degrees in a narrow trap, especially with an injured front leg, so we knew Bendy was quite special! The evening ended when both badgers sat down next to each other, grooming. This went on for quite a time and they then disappeared, not to be seen again that night – by which time it was almost midnight and we thought it was time to head home.



Night three – so, this time we were determined and double strung our traps!! Two sets of ‘webs’ in each trap and more delicious morsels including sausages to tempt Bendy. We were lucky and didn’t have long to wait before Bendy appeared and went into the first trap. He headed towards the sausages and, thankfully, our string trap sprung! We had been watching again through our night vision and quickly but quietly approached the trap to transfer Bendy to a travelling cage. The team were very professional and within minutes we had him safely in a car and on his way to the wonderful team at **Tiggwinkles** in Buckinghamshire.





On arrival, Bendy was assessed and the news wasn't great. His leg was dislocated at the shoulder, causing radial nerve paralysis. Where the leg had been hanging, it had caused a pressure sore on his paw which would have eventually become infected. He couldn't be returned to the wild, but the vets recognised that Bendy was young and he was a little fighter, so the decision was made to amputate his front leg.

He was given pain relief and a week to settle down, after which the operation was carried out – and he has made a remarkable recovery!

The vet who carried out the operation has kept in regular contact with our team and says he is amazing and managing much better now on 3 legs, rather than when he was dragging his floppy front leg around! He's the first amputee at Tiggywinkles.

He has now been moved to an outside pen and apparently can be a bit of a handful! The team fully expect him to be zooming about on 3 legs soon, at which time he will then go in with their other resident badger and will be moved to the visitor centre. Tiggywinkles were amazing and we are very grateful to their team for giving Bendy a chance.

Bendy was last visited in early September by two of our Committee and, although the badger viewing area isn't open yet, the staff at Tiggywinkles said he is doing great! His favourite daytime pastime is snuggling down under his bedding – and who can blame him with this seasonal autumnal weather we are having already.

We'll continue to provide updates on Bendy in future newsletters, so watch this space!



Tiggywinkles is a Wildlife Hospital dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating all species of British wildlife. Since opening their doors, over 300,000 patients have received treatment there and on their busiest days they can have over 1,600 patients on site!

All British wild animal casualties brought to the hospital are treated completely free of charge and are released through a controlled programme, back to the wild, when they are fully fit, with every casualty given a chance. As with Bendy, any animal or bird unable to be released back to the wild is maintained at the Hospital, in as natural conditions as possible for them - **every creature matters**.

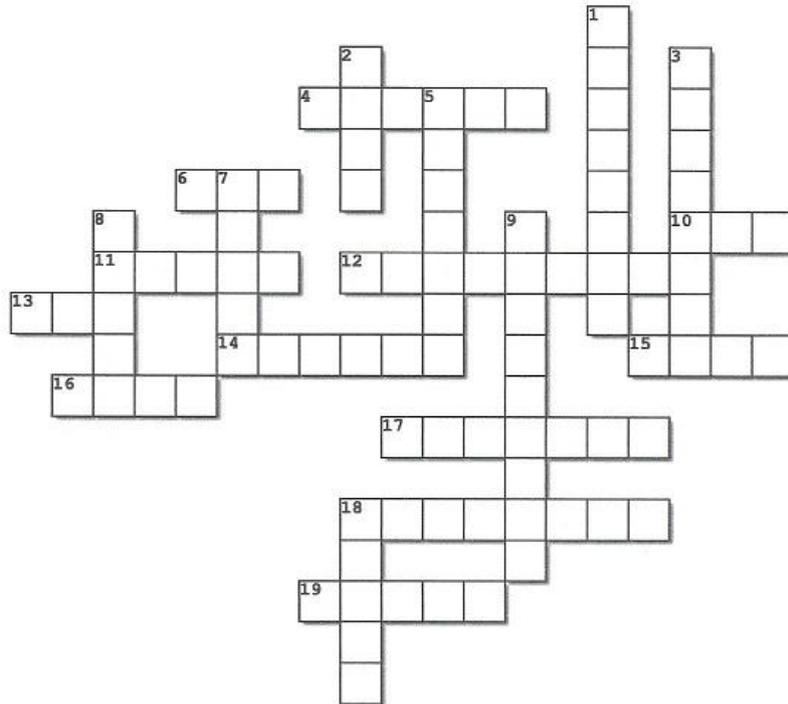
Read all about Tiggywinkles and how you can support their great work here:-
<https://www.sttiggywinkles.org.uk/>



If not, have a go at one of his puzzles – good luck with this Crossword ! :-

School of Professor Brock

BRITISH MAMMALS CROSSWORD



Crossword clues:

Across

4. Type of British deer with speckled markings
6. A popular mammal known for being hunted
10. A flying nocturnal mammal
11. The name of a fox's home
12. An animal that eats only plant materials
13. The colour of Britain's only native squirrel
14. Another burrower which might make its home in an abandoned badger sett
15. A hedgehog's favourite garden food
16. Another inhabitant of deciduous woodland
17. A food loved by badgers and birds alike
18. The name of the crest on an adult badger's skull
19. A female fox

Down:

1. An occasional prickly treat for a badger
2. A British mammal that sleeps above ground in scrapes
3. A blue spring flower and tasty treat for badgers
5. A young hare
7. An aquatic member of the mustelid family
8. A hedgehog's favourite place to sleep
9. Some butterflies do this in winter but British badgers do not
18. A hedgehog has about 5000 of these



Binfield Badger Group, supporting Berkshire's badgers

(Don't cheatAnswers near the end of the newsletter!)

Find more activities here: <https://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/fun-stuff>



GOVERNMENT GOES FROM BADGER CONTROL TO BADGER ANNIHILATION

“The government could kill every badger in England but bTB will remain in cattle as over 90% of infections are passed from cow to cow.” –

Jo Bates-Keegan, Chair of the Badger Trust

The Badger Trust claims the government is rapidly moving from badger control to badger annihilation as it expands the badger cull policy to 11 new areas of England in 2020.

In a major betrayal of public trust, the government has gone back on its recent commitment to phase out badger culling in favour of badger and cattle bovine TB vaccination. It will now licence the shooting of badgers in 54 areas in over 28,000 square kilometres of England stretching from Cornwall to Cumbria.

For the first time, badgers will be killed in the counties of Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Leicestershire and **Oxfordshire**. This is despite the fact that successful badger volunteer-led vaccination projects are being undertaken in many of these areas, many with public funding. Badger culling will also be expanded into the low bTB risk area of Lincolnshire for the first time.

Based on the maximum kill figures published by Natural England, **up to 62,000 badgers could be killed by the end of 2020, bringing the total killed since the cull policy started in 2013 to over 164,000.**

The Badger Trust estimates **the public cost of the badger cull will exceed £70 million by the end of 2020**, taking into account administration, equipment, training, monitoring, policing and legal defence costs.

Responding to this major expansion of the badger cull the CEO of the Badger Trust, Dominic Dyer, said :

“The decision to expand the badger cull is a huge betrayal of public trust by the government. Rather than phasing out the shooting of badgers in favour of vaccination, the government is now embarking on a mass destruction of the species, which is little more than ecological vandalism on an unprecedented scale.

In the next three months the badger cull could kill up to 62,000 badgers across a geographical area larger than Wales. This could result in population collapse with badgers pushed to the verge of local extinction. This is no longer a badger control policy, it's a badger eradication exercise.

Over 102,000 badgers were shot under cull licences to date, yet only around 900 were subject to post mortem and bTB tests. Of this number only around 5% were found to be infected with bTB at a stage where they were a danger of infecting others badgers or possibly cattle. The vast majority of badgers killed under the cull policy are bTB free and their deaths will have no impact on lowering bTB in badgers or cattle.”

The Chair of the Badger Trust, Jo Bates-Keegan, said

“Despite the huge costs and cruelty of the badger cull, the government has yet to publish any reliable scientific evidence to prove that badger shooting is having any impact on lowering bTB in cattle in or around the cull zones. The government could kill every badger in England but bTB will remain in cattle as over 90% of infections are passed from cow to cow.



In reality, the only long term solution to reducing bTB is to implement effective cattle bTB testing, movement and biosecurity controls. Whilst the focus remains on badgers, progress will be painfully slow and we could lose this beautiful animal in large areas across the country. If the government and farmers can't change their tunnel vision then the best approach for all must be vaccination of cattle and badgers. This offers a better future for farmers, taxpayers and the protection of badgers.

Badger vaccination is more humane and significantly more cost effective than badger culling, yet the government is failing to provide sufficient safeguards to protect either vaccinated badgers from being shot or vaccination schemes already in place, let alone supporting them to expand.

Far more public funding is needed to train and equip vaccination teams and to promote the scientific benefits of badger vaccination to farmers and landowners. The government does not seem to have considered the potential for farmer led vaccination companies to take over from those running current culls”.



CULLING TO START IN OXFORDSHIRE FROM 1ST SEPT 2020 - OBG - 15.8.2020



Registered charity no. 1186850
OxonBadgerGroup.org.uk
@OxonBadgers

Target of 2223 badgers to be killed in Oxfordshire.

Despite the Government saying in March that culling would move to vaccination, the badger cull is set to come to Oxfordshire on the 1st September.

Leaked information in August showed that Natural England will be licensing 11 new badger culling areas including Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Badger group, (OBG) are very saddened and disappointed to learn that there will be badgers culled under licence in Oxfordshire this autumn.

When the first pilot culls started in 2013, they were confined to areas with a high incidence of bTB. Oxfordshire, as an Edge area with relatively low bTB rates, has so far been spared.

Vaccination of badger clans in Edge areas like Oxfordshire is a humane and effective way of building 'herd immunity'. The aim is to keep badgers healthy and help prevent them becoming infected by spill over from cattle outbreaks. The cull alternative - licenced slaughter of up to 70% of badgers every year for four years - is totally unacceptable. It is a "scorched earth" policy that could lead to local extinctions of an apex native mammal.

In March this year, the government announced that it accepted the independent scientific report into bTB management. It promised to phase out culling and boost investment in vaccination. This seemed to offer a managed exit strategy to end culling and was widely reported and welcomed. Yet relief was short-lived. In May, DEFRA consulted on how to



manage culling alongside existing vaccination areas. This strongly suggested plans to renege on this promise. It issued it's response to the consultation on 17th August.

In August, a document was leaked that shows the government is pressing on with a massive expansion of culling into Edge and low risk areas. Oxfordshire is listed as Cull Area 49. The licence is to cull a minimum of 1640 and a maximum of 2223 badgers starting 1st September. The total number of badgers culled in 2020 could be as high as 65,000 badgers across 15 counties (not counting Cumbria and Lincolnshire). This will add to the 100,000 badgers killed to date. This betrayal of public trust is a tragedy for badgers.

OBG's position is that it is more important than ever to continue our vaccination drive. We offer an important alternative to the very many people who do not want to see badgers shot on their land. We and all the other other vaccination groups prove vaccination is viable. **BBOWT vaccinate on their land** and are close partners for this project. To learn more about OBG's vaccination project see:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/oxfordshire-badger-group-vaccination-project>

We are working hard to raise public awareness and lobby MPs to back phasing out culling in favour of improved cattle based controls and increased support for badger vaccination schemes like ours.

The best way you can help at the moment is to write - ideally by email - URGENTLY to your MP and the Secretary of State:

www.writetothem.com/



Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



BBOWT'S PROMISE - "We will keep the pressure up. This is not over yet."

Stop the cull talking points – We urge you to raise these with your MP

- *A badger cull is not necessary for the control of Bovine TB.* Even the government has acknowledged this. In March they pledged to invest in cattle vaccine and away from culling. The decision to expand the cull is a total reversal of this position.
- *BBOWT leads one of the country's extensive badger vaccination programmes. A cull here threatens this programme. Vaccinated badgers could well be killed.* This seriously threatens the government's stated aim of expanding badger vaccination programmes.
- *2,223 badgers can be legally shot in Oxfordshire this Autumn; 70,000 nationally.* This will, in effect, *cause localised extinctions* of one of the last remaining large mammals we have left. But no research at all has been conducted into the impact of such a huge ecological change.
- *The cull will continue for four more years.* This will have a devastating impact on local and national populations.
- *The cull allows for free shooting.* The British Veterinary Association recently reiterated its opposition to this practise. *Many badgers can be injured but not killed and die lingering, painful deaths.*



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Following the announcement by Defra on 7 September of 11 new badger cull licences that could result in over 62,000 more badgers being killed in 2020, the Shadow Defra Secretary, Luke Pollard MP, wrote to the Defra Secretary, George Eustice MP and to the Head of the Bern Convention Secretariat, confirming that the Labour Party supports the grounds of the Bern Convention. **The complaint relates to the impact of the badger cull on the badger population in England.**

The Badger Trust (with the support of Born Free and Eurogroup for Animals) lodged the complaint against the Government under the terms of the Bern Convention, which protects wildlife and natural habitats in Europe. England is home to over 25% of the Eurasian badger population. The Badger Trust believes the large-scale culling of badgers is threatening the species with population collapse in many areas, which is an infringement of the Bern Convention Treaty.

Responding to the Labour Party support for the Bern Convention complaint, Dominic Dyer, CEO of the Badger Trust, said :

“The Badger Trust welcomes the support from the Shadow Defra Secretary, Luke Pollard MP, for the complaint lodged against the Government in the Bern Convention concerning the badger cull policy.

Britain is on track to leave the EU single market at the end of January 2021 without a trade deal, at a time when the nation is in the middle of a pandemic that has caused the worst economic downturn in living memory.

After decades of industrial farming, building development and, more recently, climate change, Britain is now one of the most nature depleted countries in Europe.

Despite numerous commitments that leaving the EU will not undermine safeguards to protect the environment, it's clear that the government is increasingly putting short term political and economic interests before protecting species and habitats.

The badger cull is a prime example of a policy which is being driven to support the economic interests of the dairy and beef industry, with disastrous consequences for wildlife protection.

Outside of the EU, the Bern Convention Treaty takes on increasing importance for Britain in terms of its responsibilities to protect species and habitats. Britain has over 25% of the badger population in Europe but this is being increasingly endangered as a result of a major expansion of badger culling that could see up to 164,000 badgers killed by the end of 2020 (since the cull policy started in 2013).

The complaint on the impact of the badger cull on the badger population in England – put forward to the Bern Convention by the Badger Trust, Born Free and Eurogroup for Animals – is an early test case for how Britain intends to meet its environmental protection obligations outside of the EU. In the past, EU Member States might hesitate to condemn Britain for its failures within the Bern Convention, but after the long and difficult Brexit process will this still be the case?

If Britain is found to have failed to adequately monitor the impact of large scale badger killing on the overall badger population level in England, EU member states of the Bern Convention can call for action to be taken against Britain under the terms of the Convention.

Public and political opposition to the cruel, costly and largely ineffective badger cull policy is growing in Britain. Any infringement of the Bern Convention Treaty could prove highly embarrassing to the British Government in Europe and around the world. It raises wider fears that leaving the EU was a huge mistake when it comes to protecting wildlife.”



“It is often said, and quite rightly so, that nature is for everyone. However, in essence, I realised that nature is only for everyone who is privileged enough to access it. And if they can access it, are they made to feel welcome?” –

Jamey Redway



Issues of diversity have been in the news since our last edition, especially relating to the BAME community, as expressed by Black Lives Matter. Prior to the focus given by this movement, we'd already been reviewing our diversity across a number of demographics.

The Badger Trust national body is comprised of men and women pretty equally it seems to us, with 6 women trustees and 4 men, a female chair person and a male CEO. Certainly our own Binfield Badger Group committee is co-chaired by Jill and John and the 9 strong committee has a good mix, being comprised of 5 women and 4 men. We didn't set out to have that balance, it's just organically grown that way.

However, we're aware of some ways in which we don't reflect Berkshire's social profile. One of the issues we've been looking at is the under-representation of people from the BAME community in our group. We don't ask BBG members to define their ethnicity and have no data on this, but something we've noticed at our meetings (and when we go to the annual symposium or to the Badger Trust AGM) is the very few people present from the BAME community. We're in discussion with other organisations about ways of improving our inclusivity in this respect.

One badger fan, who is also a Trustee of the Norfolk Badger Trust, is **Jamey Redway**. She has recently written an article for the British Trust for Ornithology, providing an important insight and thought-provoking commentary. You can find her article by clicking on this link:

<https://www.bto.org/community/blog/diversity-birding-why-it-matters>



Other observations we've made include that our age profile seems skewed towards the upper end and we're very conscious of trying also to appeal more to younger people. With this in mind, we've extended our programme for schools significantly. We've also written to a number of them, introducing ourselves and offering support in delivering education on badgers. We're very conscious, however, that we don't seem to be reaching people in the 20-40 age bracket.

Naturally, these absences from our membership profile matter because we should be seeking social justice across society, including within our badger group, and that naturally includes trying to make ourselves accessible and welcoming to all people. It also matters because we don't want to miss out on the pool of talent and support offered by people from different communities.

If you have any observations or comments on any of these issues, do please get in touch.



Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin**Secretary:** Judith Darnell, Woodley**Treasurer:** Karen McCoy, Sonning**Membership Secretary:**Judith Darnell, Woodley
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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**Planning:** Andy McCoy, Sonning**Website:** Karen McCoy and Cathy Holwill**Your MP:** www.writetothem.com/**Badger Trust**, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.

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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

Thames Valley Police Wildlife Liaison 08458 505505

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 MAY 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**