

# **Binfield Badger Group**

**Protecting badgers across Berkshire**

Charity Number: 1075886



**Newsletter No. 118**

**September 2019**

## **CRUEL CULL STARTS AGAIN :**

**11 new areas**

**64,000 to be slaughtered**

**£60m cost to taxpayers**

## **WHY?**



**PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION:** see page 7

**Our Next Meeting:**

**What: An Illustrated Talk – ‘All Things Badger!’**

**Where: Farley Wood Centre, Binfield**

**When: Thurs 31st October 2019, 7.00pm for 7.30pm**



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## GROUP NEWS AND DATES FOR OUR NEXT MEETING IN 2019

### PUBLIC MEETING – 31st OCTOBER – An Illustrated Talk on ‘ALL THINGS BADGER’

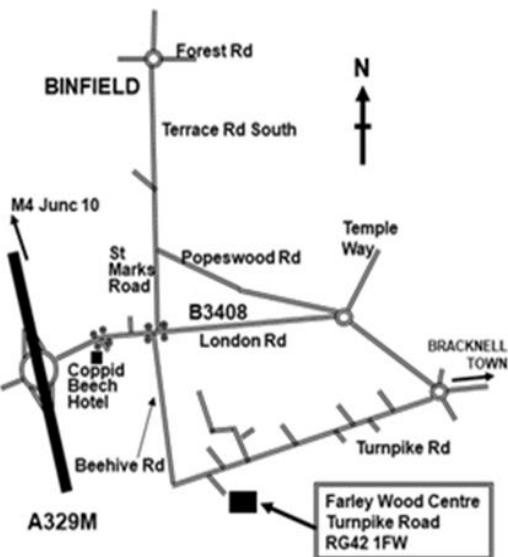


We are delighted that John, our Joint Chairman, will be sharing with us his extensive badger knowledge, gathered over many years with the Group. His involvement in observing, recording and, on occasions, rescuing ‘meles meles’ will guarantee an informative and interesting evening! Remember to tell your friends – there is no entrance fee - everyone is welcome.

Doors open at 7.00pm and the meeting will start at **7.30pm** at –

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

Please remember to put the date in your diary!



### SUMMERTIME .... AND WE'VE BEEN OUT SPREADING THE WORD FOR BADGERS!



Once again, BBG went on the road this Summer, taking part in Fun Days, Green Fairs, Family Days and more besides. It's always a great opportunity to talk with others about badgers and spread the love for our black and white friends. **If you know of an Autumn event or Christmas Fair that would be good for us to join, do please let us know.**

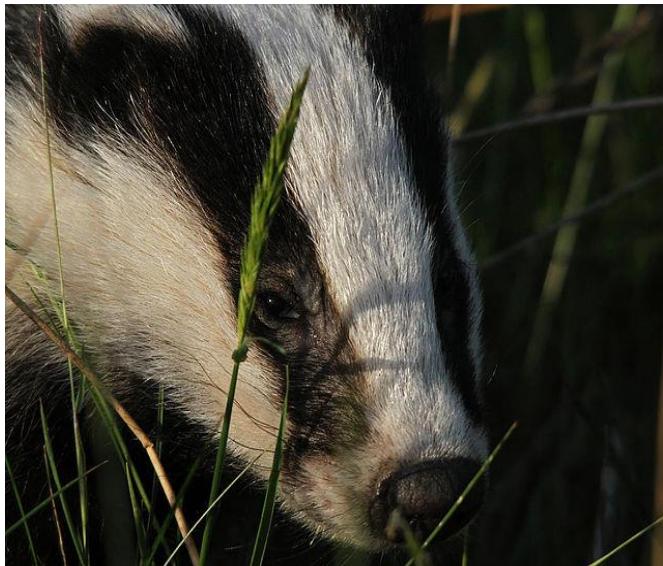


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“The controversial badger cull in England has been expanded to an “unimaginable scale”, according to a leading expert who warned the Government is paying far too little attention to the transmission of tuberculosis between cattle when they are traded.

Ministers have approved culling in 11 new areas, taking the total to 43. Up to 64,000 animals are likely to be killed this autumn, up from a maximum of 42,000 last year.

TB infections in cattle blight farms and cost taxpayers more than £100m a year in compensation payments.

**But scientists and conservationists oppose the cull, saying there is little evidence it is effective and is being badly run.”**

**Dominic Dyer, chief executive of the Badger Trust, said:-**

*“This year will take the number of badgers killed since the cull started to over 130,000, pushing the species to the verge of local extinction in areas of England which it has inhabited since the ice age. The public costs of the badger cull are estimated to exceed £60m by the end of 2019, yet the government has provided no evidence to prove this cruel slaughter is having any significant impact on lowering bovine TB.”*

**Prof Rosie Woodroffe, an ecologist at the Zoological Society of London, said:-**

*“The culls have expanded to unimaginable scales. I cannot understand why the government has permitted this massive expansion of badger culling, when it has not yet responded to the Godfray Review it commissioned and received nearly a year ago.*

*The review concluded the government and farming industry were paying far too much attention to badger management, and far too little attention to cattle-to-cattle transmission, which is responsible for the majority of TB incidents in cattle.”*

The review also called upon Government to properly evaluate badger vaccination as a non-lethal alternative to culling. Woodroffe also said “*Ministers regularly call for the conservation of wildlife in other countries, but refuse to invest in helping their own farmers to coexist with wildlife.*” George Eustice, the farming minister, said the Government would fully respond to the Godfray Review in the near future.

**Arthur Thomas, the campaigns manager at the animal welfare group IFAW, said:-**

*“The expansion to the badger cull is not only a tragedy for British wildlife, but also for our farmers. The government’s decision flies in the face of scientific evidence.”*

**The Binfield Badger Group are strongly opposed to the expansion of the cull:-**

Since the Government introduced badger culling in 2013, the policy has been surrounded by obfuscation, muddled thinking and politically motivated actions. The Randomised Badger Culling Trials carried out at the Government’s behest, under the auspices of Oxford Don, Lord Krebs, concluded that badger culling was not the solution to the spread of bTB in cattle. Nonetheless, the policy was introduced.



Its ineffectiveness was further commented on over the years by a panoply of renowned, objective scientists. And yet, the cull has continued and grown. Despite this, the voices of objection have not been silenced and calls from all quarters demand that this ineffective, inhumane and costly policy be stopped.

The cull has spread further still this year and with unprecedented levels of slaughter; some 64,000 badgers are to be killed across the various cull zones. If you laid them end to end, starting in Binfield, they would stretch due West to the county border with Wiltshire.

## **Vet says badger culls causes 'immense pain'**

Prof Ranald Munro was the chair of an independent expert group appointed by the government to assess the first culls, which is now disbanded. He said up to 9,000 badgers are likely to have suffered "immense pain" as a result of the culls.

He has written to Natural England to say that the policy is causing "huge suffering". He adds that the culls are not reducing TB in cattle and in one area the incidence of the disease has gone up.

Prof Munro's independent expert group found that up 23% of badgers took more than five minutes to die after they were shot. These figures prompted the group to conclude that the culls were inhumane in its assessment report to government.

Speaking ahead of the announcement of new culling areas for 2019, Prof Munro estimated that 40,000 badgers have been culled so far which according to the expert group's figures equates to thousands of them dying slowly. *"They are saying 'oh yes, we are observing'; but they are observing at a level which is of no value whatsoever in determining the humanness of culling and whether badgers are being injured or how long they are taking to die."*



A Natural England spokesperson said: *"We help to implement the badger culling policy under the direction of Defra and in line with decisions taken by ministers. .... One of our roles is to independently consider licence applications to cull or vaccinate badgers, and we take policy advice from Defra when deciding if the activity will deliver effective disease control. Licensing is not done lightly and those involved in the cull - farmers, contractors and Natural England staff - take the welfare of badgers very seriously."*



## THIS YEAR'S BADGER CULL HAS STARTED – HOW CAN YOU HELP?

In the most recent round of Government licensing, some 11 additional areas were introduced. **At first sight, Berkshire was not on the list. However, we suspected that might not be the full picture. Mining into the data a little further, we identified areas of West Berkshire included under the new East Wiltshire zone.** The Government's failure to identify specifically our county appears rather disingenuous!

Armed with our analysis, we organised Wounded Badger Patrols in those areas that further intelligence suggested were most likely to be the subject of attack. Happily, our patrols and surveying suggest that culling has not yet started in Berkshire, for which reason we're now carrying out WBPs in Wiltshire, where 90% of the county is subject to culling. **If we find that culling commences in Berkshire, we will naturally organise patrols for our county.**



Several of our members have already said they are willing to assist in some way with these WBPs. We know this won't be for everyone, but if you want to know more, please email:

[badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk](mailto:badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

In the meantime, just a reminder that evening WBPs are a legal, effective, well-established and safe means of protesting against the cull and caring for our county's badgers - many badger lives have thus been saved over the years in other counties.

Evening patrols involve being a visible presence, walking in small groups on public footpaths with hi viz jackets and torches. Patrollers must be over 18 and prioritise their own safety at all times.

### Here are other ways to show your support:-

- ✓ **Join our sett guardian scheme** - the Group is keen to establish a 'sett guardian' scheme with local residents in a range of Berkshire locations.  
If you're interested in conservation and would like to help, please email:  
[setts@binfieldbadgers.org.uk](mailto:setts@binfieldbadgers.org.uk)
- ✓ **Write to your MP** to protest about the expansion of this unscientific and ineffective cull : [www.writetothem.com/](http://www.writetothem.com/)
- ✓ **Spread the word by sharing our Facebook page** – [fb.me/binfieldbadgers](https://fb.me/binfieldbadgers)
- ✓ **Sign the SaveMe Trust's Petition** for a Public Inquiry – see page 7



By being a member of the Binfield Badger Group, you are already helping us in protecting badgers, both in Berkshire and through our support of the Badger Trust, across the UK.

**Thank you on behalf of the brocks!**



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Queen guitarist Brian May has issued a fresh call to end the badger cull – and reveals his plan to prevent cattle contracting TB.

The rock legend-turned animal rights activist has long campaigned against the annual Government-backed killing programme.

He renewed his call for a halt to the rural bloodshed after ministers unveiled plans to slaughter nearly 64,000 badgers across England's countryside this autumn.

**His Save Me Trust charity has launched a petition calling for a public inquiry into the “inhumane, ineffective, financially unsustainable” cull. (See page 7)**

Brian revealed how a project he backs was helping curb the disease in cows –

*“It is now apparent to all concerned with fighting the scourge of TB in cattle that the current policy of culling badgers is not benefiting anyone, least of all the farmers.*

*We, based at Gatcombe Farm in South Devon, have proof on a small scale that a policy of blocking transmission routes in the herd, without interference to wildlife, can change a chronically TB infected herd to a herd that is officially TB free within three years.*

*Under the leadership of our gifted vet, Dick Sibley, we're about to test the new combined strategy on multiple farms in Wales, to confirm the results.”*

He called on farmers to boost biosecurity measures to cut the chances of cows contracting TB.

*“We believe there is now no justification for continuing with a failed policy, and the country must now commit to a new policy of action on farms. This includes new strategies on birthing conditions, feed, testing, and, crucially, slurry management.*

### ***The badger cull must end now.”***

Campaigners reacted with fresh fury this week after the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs revealed which areas of England have been granted licences – with the cull widened to 11 new areas.

Fresh zones will be setup in Avon, Cheshire, Cornwall, Staffordshire, Devon, Dorset, Hertfordshire and Wiltshire, the ministry confirmed.

Culling will also continue in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Somerset and Cumbria.



**The SaveMe Trust is calling for a public enquiry into the current badger cull.**



- The government is allowing badger culling in 11 new areas. Licences have also been reauthorised in 29 existing areas; badger culling will take place in 40 zones.
- The government can't identify the disease in cattle. Cattle-to-cattle transmission is responsible for the majority of TB incidents in the herd. The current test is around 45% effective in the field. The government is irresponsible to launch a cull on badgers without a bTB test that identifies the disease accurately.
- The government called for a review of the policy in 2018, yet it hasn't responded to the Godfrey Review before issuing the new licences.
- Badger culling is financially unsustainable and it's not helping farmers as it won't stop herd breakdowns.
- The Independent ISG report said the cull was inhumane. The report was held up by Owen Paterson and this issue was never addressed. It continues to be inhumane.
- bTB remains latent in the herd and is spread in slurry to other cattle and no system has been put in place to reduce the spread through this. Thousands of tons of slurry are produced by cattle every hour of every day. Anaerobic macerators should be fitted on every farm to neutralise the slurry by killing bTB.
- Leading government scientist, Lord John Krebs called it a 'crazy scheme' and said that 'the government is embarking on a scheme that isn't backed up by science.'
- The government has embarked on a costly eradication program with no proven transmission route for the disease and no proven track record for success.
- TB in cattle soared by 130% in one of the longest running cull zones this year, showing the policy is failing. Government data from the Gloucestershire pilot cull zone for 2018 show a 130% increase in confirmed bTB cases in cattle after 6 years. (OTFW)
- Only a public enquiry can clarify these issues.

## Why is this important?

**The current badger cull policy is inhumane, ineffective, financially unsustainable and can't possibly succeed in its goal to reduce bovine TB in cattle.**

**It's bad for badgers, cattle, farmers and the public.**

**PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION, BY FOLLOWING THIS LINK:-**

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/public-enquiry-into-bovine-tb-and-the-current-policy-to-cull-badgers-1>



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**'The Secret World of Badgers'** by author Patrick Barkham

There is a free pleasure to be obtained from almost any ordinary scrubby patch of British countryside at twilight. It can be as exhilarating as a good football match, as engrossing as a night at the theatre and as soothing as a hot bath. And the vast majority of us never experience it.



This evening of superlative entertainment is - badger-watching!

For years, I was among that majority of adults who had never even seen our largest carnivorous mammal alive in the wild, apart from glimpses with the help of car headlights. Despite always loving nature, I grew up in Norfolk in the 1980s, when badgers were much scarcer, and I never took the simple steps to find their habitat and discover their habits.

My grandma would have disapproved. She spent much of her later life watching over badgers. Jane Ratcliffe was an ordinary housewife, but when her children left home, she began watching badgers at setts near her home in Cheshire. She learned that the best way of stopping these cautious animals from sniffing her out and avoiding her was to climb a tree! From her elevated position in an old oak, she would watch badgers and their cubs gambolling in the bluebells below.



She found great pleasure in this experience, but also pain: of 27 setts she used to watch, by the early 1970s, all but one had been dug out by badger baiters, who then set their captured badgers against dogs. Jane joined the campaign to protect the badger, and helped win: the badger became the first British land mammal to gain legal protection in 1973. It is still legally protected today. Unfortunately, its persecution continues too.

I began watching badgers in 2011, when I also began researching a book, '*Badgerlands*', about the extraordinary history of humans and badgers in this country. My first attempts weren't successful, but I enjoyed the sensations of sitting in English woodlands and pasture at dusk, watching one world wake up as another goes to sleep. Dusk is the most magical time, if we give it time. Sit quietly at dusk and you'll soon see bats and perhaps a tawny owl drift silently past; feel cool air sinking; discover new wild perfumes and mysterious nocturnal sounds.



Eventually, with the help of friends, I saw some badgers in the unlikely surroundings of a patch of scrub by a canal in Wolverhampton. Badgers live in or close to many busy urban areas, from Brighton to Edinburgh, and I was astounded to watch these badgers emerge when barking dogs and evening walkers were so nearby.



When I first saw a badger nose, it twirled at the entrance to the sett like a sommelier, tasting the air for notes of promise and danger. Then, caution abandoned, the badger trotted out. Watching three badgers hoover up peanuts we had thrown around the sett entrance was surreal: these quintessentially British animals looked as exotic to me as zebras on safari.

Since then, I've learned a few badger-watching basics: get to your sett-side seat an hour before sunset because badgers often emerge before dusk; bring a few peanuts (but nothing more extravagant) to ensure they stay around their sett for more than a minute; and keep quiet and downwind, and ideally above, their sensitive noses.

Badger-watching is a simple pleasure I hope more of us can discover. Some Wildlife Trusts and wildlife accommodation offer badger watching from wooden hides, but it's possible to find setts near public footpaths and watch them without any help. If you do, I guarantee you will return home changed, twinkling with a little bit of magic from the parallel universe where badgers peacefully go about their business, while the human world rushes noisily past in the distance.

Patrick Barkham

(Natural History Writer for the Guardian and the author of '*The Butterfly Isles*', '*Badgerlands*' and '*Islander*').



(Please email us if you would like to arrange a watch from 'Adrian's Hide' in Binfield at: [badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk](mailto:badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk))



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### What are our badgers up to in the Autumn? Brock the Badger will tell you . . .



Autumn is a good time for us badgers. The weather is usually wetter, which means that there are worms to be found. Earthworms are often easy to catch. On dark, mild, damp nights, earthworms come up to the surface



of the ground- if badgers go to the right places, we can find them lying on the ground, and snap them up!



Autumn fruits, such as acorns, blackberries, elderberries, yew berries and crab apples are another favourite. In some places, they grow quite close to the ground where we can get to them.

As well as eating, we also like to spend some time in the autumn preparing our homes for the coming winter. We dig out our tunnels and chambers, and on dry nights we bring in lots of fresh bedding material. We use this to make comfy nests in our chambers, to keep us warm during the winter. (*Courtesy of 'Brock's World'*)



*...and here's a poem in praise of the humble Blackberry – so abundant this year -*



*Each season brings a brand new change,  
Lots to see throughout the year.  
Robins, finches, thrushes and wrens  
Build nests in spring right here.  
In full leaf the bramble's a brilliant green,  
It's a vibrant summer sight.  
Keep your eyes peeled in June and July,  
For its flowers, pink and white.*

*The nectar is sweet, it's such a treat,  
Attracting lots of minibeasts.  
Butterflies, wasps, hoverflies, moths  
And the buzzing bumblebee.  
Late summer brings the fruit we love,  
A juicy, sticky snack.  
Watch closely as the berries ripen,  
From green to red to black.*

*Three cheers for the mighty bramble bush!  
A tough, quite common shrub.  
Find it growing in gardens, hedges & woods,  
In barren wasteland and scrub.  
The bush itself is a prickly thing,  
Long scrambling stems, sharp spines.  
The Romans used to use these  
As their version of barbed wire.*

*They're yummy in pies, cakes or in jam  
In smoothies or ice cream they're lush.  
But the best way by far is to pick them by hand  
And eat them straight from the bush!  
But blackberries are not just for people, no.  
Lots of animals eat them as well.  
An autumn feast for **badgers** and mice  
Blackbirds and red admirals.*

*As autumn comes, the leaves start to change  
To a colourful, dazzling red.  
They brighten the woods in the winter months  
When much wildlife is tucked up in bed.  
So a year in the life of a bramble bush,  
From blossom to bright red leaves.  
Look out for it next time you're out in the woods  
And munch on its tasty berries!*



## BADGERS OF THE MONTH! – BASILDON BADGERS FC

The Binfield Badger Group are proud to sponsor Basildon Badgers FC's '**Berkshire Badgers Trophy**', which is awarded each month to the young player who has shown special effort and qualities while playing for their team. Here is the latest worthy trophy winner for June:



Rupert, who has won the award for stepping up this season, helping to prepare for each session on a weekly basis and consistently performing strongly in both training and matches. He reached the milestone of 30 goals for Badgers this season, including scoring the penalty that won the club it's first tournament. Hopefully there will be more of the same this season, which starts again this month.... so the next award will be handed out at the beginning of October...



## And finally...Swansea City Football Club joins badger pilot - BBC News – 17/9/2019

Swansea City Football Club and local caravan park owners are helping fund badger vaccinations as a pilot project to eradicate bovine TB on the Gower peninsula.

Hundreds of badgers will be vaccinated over a four-year period, and there will also be measures to reduce the risk of cattle becoming infected.

A third of the funding comes from the Welsh Government. Ministers have ruled out widespread badger culling as seen in parts of England.



The badger vaccinations are the first phase of the project, followed by a farmer engagement programme that will include enhanced cattle surveillance, biosecurity and risk management.

They are hoping to trial new diagnostic tests on cattle in the area too, working with universities in Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Warwick.



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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:** *Currently Vacant*

**Newsletter:** Judith Darnell, Woodley

**Vaccination:** Jill Hoblin, Newbury

**Sett/RTA Records & Surveys:**

Karen McCoy, Sonning

**Rescues & Surveys:** *Currently Vacant*

**Planning:** Andy McCoy, Sonning

**Website & Facebook:** Zoe Egan, Windsor

**Your MP:** [www.writetothem.com/](http://www.writetothem.com/)



**Badger Trust**, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.

Phone - 08458 287878 or 08458 BTRUST

Web - [www.badger.org.uk](http://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

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**



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