



<https://gloucestershirebadgergroup.org>

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2022

Cull

Obviously keen to capitalise on badgers' dehydration and hunger, the summer was barely over when the first shots were fired in the Intensive Culls – which started on 31 August. In Gloucestershire, this covers the Forest of Dean (Area 46). N. Cots and Stroud are enduring 8 months of Supplementary culling, and this is the first year when the guns are silent in the original Gloucester area. NE - never the most transparent of Govt. departments - are yet to publish official notification of the Intensive Culls. This is usually long on guidelines the shooters ignore and short on factual information - other than the horrific target numbers.



A cage set to trap in Wiltshire - a county that has a cull area that includes S. Glos. The death toll here is second only to Devon.

We had a brief survey near Newent – one of the most hard hit areas in the early years - and saw some signs of life. But the few setts that survive are a shadow of their former selves, and the large social groups of badgers that we used to watch playing together on autumn nights are gone forever.



One sett that is extant, near Hartpury – with walkers have to negotiate the large piles of spoil that the badgers throw onto the footpath.

This is the last year when new areas of the country will be added. But with enthusiastic cullers now holding the top jobs (Truss I and Charlie III) who knows what will happen? And Truss's stated intention to lift the fracking ban may well bring yet another threat to wildlife habitation. The combination of above-ground infrastructure and below-ground drilling causing seismic waves, will likely be something of a catastrophic combination.



Climate change

The intense and prolonged drought was devastating for badgers – many of whom were also enduring supplementary culling. And as the rain finally came, the so did the rain of bullets in the Intensive Culls – badgers out in the open, eagerly worming no doubt being easy targets. We can only hope that the badgers can build up enough fat reserves in time for the winter. But this year was certainly a stark indication of the vulnerability of earthworm predators to increased temperatures.



A tree near a sett stripped of bark, as hungry badgers search for grubs, and a badger-proof trough - depriving badgers of a water source.

Crime and Persecution

Hunting

As with the intensive culls, August was not over before the cub hunting season started and with it, the danger of sett blocking and dig-outs into setts. Cub hunting is focussed on woods to trap families of foxes, so all the more likely that fellow residents like badgers will be impacted by the abhorrent activities that take place.



5.9.2022. Prolific sett blockers and soon to be in court, the VWH blowing a kill horn call when out cub hunting at dawn behind the RAU. The local woods showed signs of several long since dead setts.

Sett destruction

It was always expected that the cull would weaken the perception of the protected status of badgers - amongst landowners, the public and now it seems - even the police. There was a recent case in Wiltshire, where police refused to take action when a farmer bulldozed a sett with deep ploughing machinery, because the sett was on land licenced for culling. The police should be aware that the PBA is still in force and badgers cannot be killed by being torn apart with machinery or through suffocation. In Gloucestershire - cull or no cull - we shall continue to insist that badgers to be given the protection they are entitled to by law.

[Wiltshire Hunt Saboteurs | Facebook](#)

10.9.2022

Fencing

Badger-proof fencing is bad enough, but this landowner (we think NT Coleshill) surpassed themselves by creating an enclosed tree planting area with fencing that straddled a sett. There are signs of the badgers trying to make their way under the wire. A simple 2-way gate could have eased the problem, or best of all - just leave the entire sett outside the perimeter (the entrances were in their current position long before the fencing).



We are just trialling the Badger Trust's app, which should make recording and reporting easier, even for those with little knowledge of wildlife crime.

[Badger Groups get 'sett' to test a new Badger Watch App to tackle crime \(badgertrust.org.uk\)](#)

Development

Diving School, Chepstow

There was a report of an RTA very nearby. The death of this large badger was likely related to disturbance from the site - perhaps having to find a new route to foraging areas. We saw a similar thing at the canal excavation site near Newent, where there were 2 RTAs in close proximity to the ongoing works.

Prestbury

This central Cheltenham development near Hewlett Road, rumbles on. Our Field Officer recently attended a parish council meeting and had to have strong words over the usual misinformation about badger predation of hedgehogs. They won't be making that mistake again.

A417 Missing Link

The Planning Inspectorate's recommendation report on this massive road scheme near Crickley Hill, has just gone to the Secretary of State. A decision will be made by the end of the year, with construction taking place from 2023 – 2026. The main threats to badgers (apart from the loss of their homes), include disturbance and increased mortality from from the works, loss of foraging areas and isolation of clans. Measures would be put in place to minimise all these, with embedded mitigation including 3 wildlife culverts, 3 overbridges and fencing.

Survey results show that there is a single main sett, one annex sett, seven subsidiary setts, and 25 outlier setts within the scheme boundary that would be permanently lost. The loss of a main sett would be unavoidable. Provision of an artificial sett, and recorded use by badger, would be required prior to closure of the main sett. Additional setts within 30m of the DCO Boundary include one main sett, two subsidiary setts, and 11 outlier setts which potentially require closure during the construction phase depending on the nature of the works.... The badger population would be subject to moderate adverse impacts from loss and severance of habitat as a result of construction activities. The residual effects associated with the scheme are considered to be slight adverse at the local level.

[A417 Environmental Statement \(virtual-engage.com\)](https://www.virtual-engage.com)

RTA's

August was a truly terrible month for road casualties. We obviously only receive a small sample - but taken as a percentage increase - the search for food in the drought killed as many badgers on the road as dehydration did in the field. The usual highest month is April, and this year there were 9 RTAs reported.

3.8.2022	2	A4215
3.8.2022	1	A429
4.8.2022	1	Innsworth Lane
16.8.2022	1	B4211
22.8.2022	1	A429
22.8.2022	1	A429
22.8.2022	1	Welsh Way
26.8.2022	1	A433
27.8.2022	1	A46
29.8.2022	1	A424
30.8.2022	1	Birdlip Hill
August Total	12	

One member of the public who regularly drives the A429 Stow Road contacted the Badger Trust as she was so concerned by the number of RTA's along the Northleach-Cirencester section.

Vaccination

On visiting NT Sherborne, we came across several cages. The scientist given as the contact on the labels is certainly not anti-cull and works at Woodchester. We just hope the NT badgers aren't part of some bTB research, but that this is just a straightforward vaccination programme.



It was disappointing to find that at the home of Springwatch of all places, a sett nearby had been partially hard blocked - fact apparently unnoticed by vaccinators and NT staff. The latter were informed and the ranger will now check on setts.

On the subject of Springwatch, please sign the petition to support Chris Packham as he is again under attack by the loony right, Countryside Alliance. He's been a great advocate for badgers - both condemning the cull and conveying the beauty of these creatures to a wider audience.

[Petition · Chris Packham · Change.org](#)

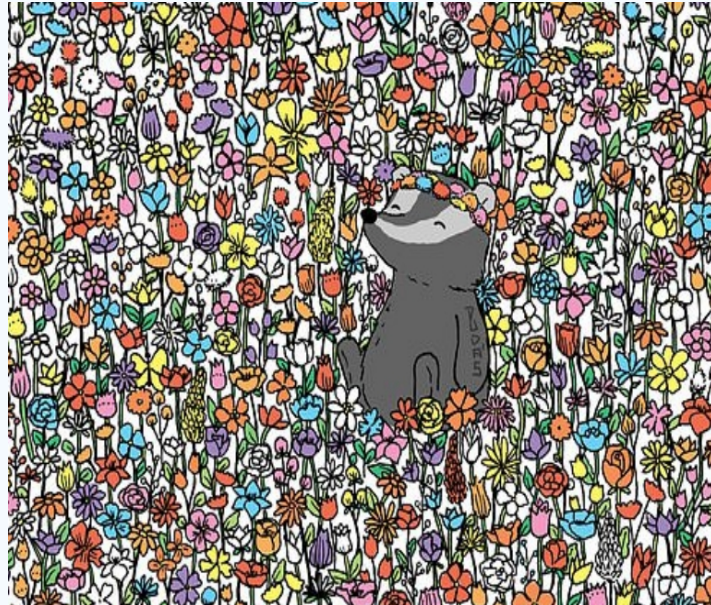


Events

[Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve Fayre](#). We'll be having a stall here on 24th September. Come along and support us and them.

[Oxfordshire Badger Group Conference](#)

[Every Badger Counts - Conference Tickets, Sat 12 Nov 2022 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)



Group

A few of us are working to keep the group going after a very damaging period of inactivity, when only fieldwork was conducted. Co-opted recruitment to the committee from the existing membership has drawn a blank, so we will have to seek external sources – such as volunteer agencies. We particularly need people with planning, fundraising and social media expertise.

Once this year's cull is over, we hope to have a long overdue AGM to vote on the proposed changes to modernise governance and to attempt to reinvigorate the group (name, constitution, committee, membership fee) - and give it some much needed management input.

In preparation, it would be helpful if anyone who no longer wishes to be a member could get in touch. Then we can relaunch the group with the knowledge that we have the backing of a committed and enthusiastic core membership.

After 10 years of culling in Gloucestershire, the plight of badgers here has never been so dire. Local badger extinction is a real possibility – so we'll try to ensure that the group does not itself disappear, just when our badgers need us most.



Remembrance of a summer past and badgers perhaps now lost to the cull. The fragile impression of badgers weaving through the long grass on their nightly journey from sett to woodland, as generations of badgers have done before.

