



## Spring Newsletter 2023

Dear member

At the woodland setts, snowdrops have given way to daffodils and our badgers brush against wild garlic as they go about their business – so it is time for our Spring newsletter.

A briefer one than usual, as at the end of the month we have the opportunity to catch up on events in person at our AGM.



Springtime badger activity in Gloucestershire – digging and more digging.



## Cull

On writing, the cull figures for last year have yet to be released. No doubt NE will follow their usual pattern and pick a day when news coverage will be minimal. They are expected to show that the number of badgers killed has exceeded 200,000 - over half the estimated population. As a group, we will be doing our best to support the Badger Trust's campaign to mark this horrific milestone.

### [Badger Trust launches 'End the Cull campaign' as culling spells disaster for a protected species](#)

The Spring newsletter coincides with the only time in the year when the cull is not ongoing. So for now, we will enjoy the thought of that sleepy, milky, new badger life, cocooned in the earth.

## Grants

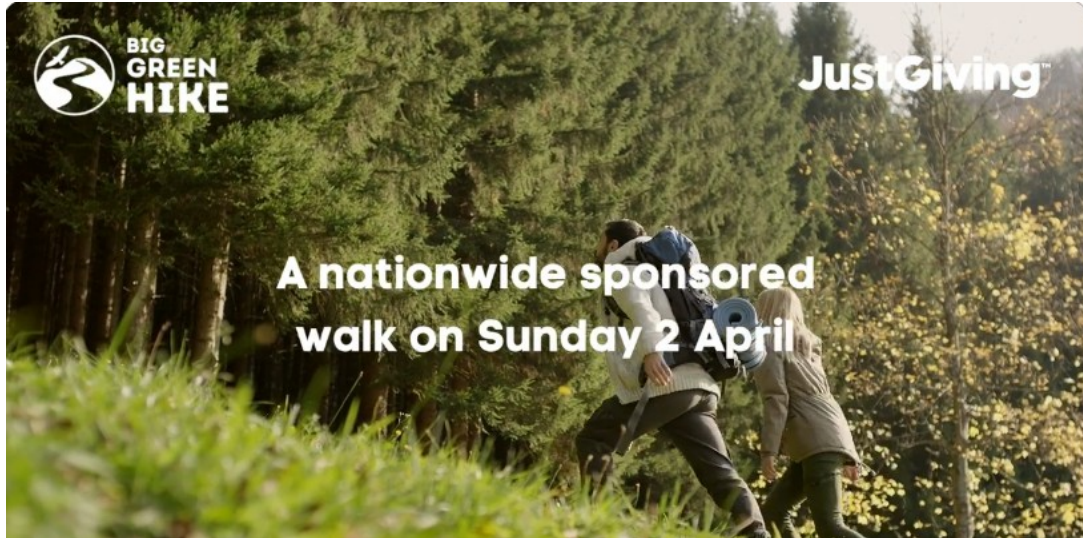
The group has made an application for a Badger Trust grant to buy additional cameras for field work use, so we can monitor setts where persecution or crime is suspected.



Trailcam footage of blocking at a Fairford sett in the vicinity of a VWH Hunt meet.

## Fundraising

Well done to members who took part in this year's Big Green Hike to support and promote the national Badger Trust. Now they've had this warm-up, any takers for the London Marathon dressed in a badger costume...?



## Fieldwork

Our Field Officer will be giving a round-up of cases at the AGM so we won't cover too much here.

### Day House Quarry, Chepstow

Much to-ing and fro-ing as we tried to establish what was going on here, with this proposal to create an underwater research facility on the site of the former National Diving Centre. A member of the public found evidence of badger activity by the perimeter fence, but we could not establish the location of the sett. This case demonstrates the problem of a development being too far away to do our own survey and assessment. Ideally, we would have people to call on across the county - but like Chepstow itself - this is a long way off.





## A417 Missing Link

After years of consultations and planning, this massive £460m infrastructure project has received approval and people in hi viz jackets and hard hats are appearing in the area.

Culverts and a green bridge will be amongst the mitigation measures for wildlife, including badgers. The plan for the bridge looks impressive but as badgers like to stick to tracks they have chosen and used for years, one wonders how they will take to this new, imposed route.

One clan of badgers will be moved to an artificial sett. Sadly, this is not always successful. But as the current location is right near the current A417, the badgers will hopefully eventually find a safer home for themselves.

The Badger Trust has had no input in to this project, with the Wildlife Trust being the chosen consultant, with additional advice from the National Trust.



## RTAs

Spring is always the worst time of year for badger deaths on the roads. Judging by our small sample derived from incidents reported by the public, this year the rise seemed to start earlier and be worse than ever.

Another peak in numbers will be in a couple of months, when the cubs emerge from the setts and begin to wander. Tragically, one often sees generations of cubs killed in the same place year after year.

## Crime and persecution

The main perpetrators of wildlife crime - the fox hunts - have just hung up their jodhpurs for the season.



Feb. 2023. S. Glos. Hauling out a hound that was attempting to pursue a fox down a sett.

## Hunt crime

Sett blocking has been as bad as ever this year. The only improvement is that now some hunts will avoid blocking setts in highly visible and accessible locations - with terrier men sometimes standing by entrances to deter foxes. But unblocked setts have the unfortunate consequence that dig-outs will be more likely. There have been some horrendous examples of this - with huge, hacked holes into sett tunnels and chambers, marking the spot where fox, badgers and terrier suffered extreme cruelty.



Hunt dig-out hole into a sett chamber, near a Cotswold Hunt meet.



As far as policing goes, we are still without our local go-to badger crime PC – likely due to a redeployment of operational staff now that Gloucestershire Police are in Special Measures. Although we are without a specialist wildlife crime officer, the rural crime teams have received some relevant training and do seem to be taking time to assess evidence in reported incidents. The sergeant even has a badger screensaver on her computer (don't we all?)

Now that the League Against Cruel Sports have abandoned training the police on the Hunting Act, it will be entirely down to the Badger Trust to ensure that they are trained in hunting related offences against badgers.

In an effort to combat hunt crime, the Gloucestershire force are proposing to adopt the strategy of issuing Community Protection Notices. Clearly, the crime of sett blocking is not directly applicable, but reports help to build up an evidential base against the hunts. Hopefully, the issuing of a CPN will act as a check on their behaviour and signify that the police are now scrutinising their actions. But we will continue to push for directed action on blocking, particularly in getting the police to speak to complicit landowners.

### Logging

Ground clearance and logging over setts seems to be on the rise.

Just outside Cirencester, a small but very active sett was found marooned amongst cleared land and piles of logs and sawdust. 2 individuals who described themselves as landscapers, were at work with a chainsaw and shredder just 2m from the sett. The breeding chamber was likely to have been just under where they were working – at a time of year when newborns would be in the sett. They claimed they did not know it was a sett, though it could not have been more obvious.





In another case - where a huge forestry operation was ongoing on a shooting estate - land was cleared and saplings planted over a sett tunnel with a bonfire right by one entrance.



Whether it's 2 blokes with a truck or a large firm of contractors, it seems that forestry work is routinely undertaken with ignorance of, or deliberate disregard for either the law concerning sett disturbance or Forestry Commission guidelines.

### Persecution

Though fox hunts may be on their 5 month break, mindless cruelty continues year round.

At a sett near Burford, chicken wire was stuffed down an entrance where bedding was being brought in and a newly shot fox flung nearby. Blood from the fox was spattered across a sett entrance.

This used to be a quiet area but with a change of land ownership, cattle are now being grazed here. Such is the precarious existence of wild creatures.





A sad day's sett surveying.

## Events

### Vale Open Day

This year, the group will again have a stall at Vale Wildlife Hospital Open Day. Come and support us and them.



Badger cubs in the expert care of Vale last summer.



VALE WILDLIFE HOSPITAL



# Open Day 2023

SAVE THE DATE

## Sunday 2nd July

11am ⇒ 4pm      Entry £5pp (Under 10's Free)

Beckford (Nr Tewkesbury) GL20 7AN

For more information call Natalie on 01386 882288  
or email [info@valewildlife.org.uk](mailto:info@valewildlife.org.uk)

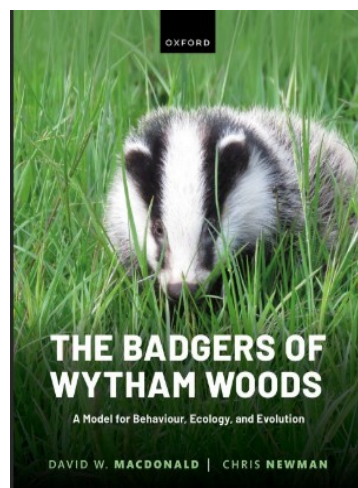
### Badger Watching

For anyone who needs a badger-fix, there will be a series of badger watching evenings in May at Wytham Woods in Oxfordshire.

### [Wytham Woods Events | Eventbrite](#)

This woodland is home to one of the largest and most studied group of badgers in the UK.

### [Badger Project | WildCRU](#)





## AGM

Our aforementioned AGM (or rather, Quadrennial General Meeting) will be on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April at Stratton Village Hall. Catch it while you can, as it appears - like the Olympics or a rare comet - to be on a 4 year cycle. We hope to get through the business briskly and then can have an enjoyable catch-up over afternoon tea to discuss all things badger.

