



Welcome to GBG's Autumn Newsletter, in which we report on the group's Badger Rescue Training Session, our first group Setts Survey Sunday and take a closer look at Badger Crime. But first, a good news story...



Badger cub rescue!

Two GBG badger rescue volunteers were able to put their new badger rescue skills to use on September 16th after the group received a call from a member of the public to say a badger cub had become trapped at the bottom of some steps behind a shop in Dursley. The poor creature was too frightened to move and had been there most of the day. The rescuers were able to get the cub into a cat basket and, as it seemed unharmed, it was successfully released onto land adjoining the shop, where it ran for cover.

We hope the cub finds its clan and stays out of trouble in future!

We recommend contacting your local badger group in the first instance for help and a safe rescue. Your local wildlife

rescue centre or the RSPCA can also help. You can always call the Badger Trust on 01273 033440 if none of the above options are available.

It's best not to attempt a rescue unless you have had some training. You'll need a cage or carrier, strong gloves, a grabber or a net, a blanket and a stick (to gently probe the animal to see if it still alive). Badgers are strong animals with a dangerous bite!

Never just put them in the back of your car as they may just be stunned and suddenly become much more active while you are driving!

Local wildlife rescue centres and sources of help:

<https://www.rspcaoandf.org.uk/>

<https://www.valewildlife.org.uk>

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/injured>

The RSPCA sadly receive a call out every thirty seconds so it can be very difficult to get them to attend a call out, but just in case, their number is 0300 123 4999.

<https://www.badgertrust.org.uk>

Don't repost it, report it

#StopBadgerCrime

BadgerTrust.org.uk

Think badger-baiting is a thing of the past? **Think again!**

After road traffic incidents, badger-baiting is the most common reason nationally that badgers receive veterinary attention.

Reported incidents of badger baiting increased by 55% between 2019 and 2020. Social media is helping to organise badger crime of this nature and badger-baiting is currently popular among bloodsports fans, with violent videos being shared online and drawing in a younger demographic.

Of course, badger-baiting is by no means the only type of badger crime. The **1992 Protection of Badgers Act** made it an offence to damage, destroy or block access to a badger sett, or to disturb badgers in their setts. Badger crimes, therefore, can be broadly divided into two groups, malicious and negligent.

Typical examples of malicious crimes include sett interference, badger digging,

sett blocking, snaring, shooting and **lamping**. The latter involves the use of a high-powered spotlight to immobilise the animal which is then shot or killed by dogs, and is a growing trend in the world of wildlife crime. Perpetrators often believe they are doing the farming community a favour and it could be argued that this belief has been strengthened by the continuation of the badger cull.

Negligent crimes tend to be examples of sett interference as a result of forestry, farming and development. Farmers might plough over setts, whereas the Protection of Badgers Act recommends a protection zone of 30m should be observed when ploughing.

Other common negligent crimes include dogs entering and getting stuck in badger setts and trees being felled too close to a sett (the general rule is that felling shouldn't be closer than 20m away from a sett entrance).

It's the strength, courage and family loyalty of the badger that ensures it continues to be a target for wildlife crime. Under the Protection of Badgers Act, baiters receive a maximum term of 6 months in prison for harming/killing a badger, whereas the 2006 Animal Welfare Act ensures they can receive a 5 year sentence for inflicting suffering on

the dogs used in baiting. The law isn't robust enough to act as a deterrent to baiters and favours domestic dogs over wild, native badgers.

To help raise awareness of the wide variety of badger crimes and how to record and report them, why not come along to our training session?

BADGER CRIME TRAINING SESSION

**SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER
WOODCHESTER VILLAGE HALL**

Badger Rescue Training Day

In August, GBG was given a fantastic badger rescue training session by Debbie and Amelia from Oxfordshire Badger Group



The session began by exploring the various different types of rescues the group could expect to do, from road traffic casualties, cub rescues and snared badgers to badger- baiting victims. We learned the importance of having a rescue protocol and sticking to it, including being mindful of public and personal safety at **all times**.

Perhaps the most useful part of the session was getting to use the rescue equipment – a narrow-meshed cage, the grasper and the badger/pig boards. I'm pretty certain the stuffed toy badger we practised with was a lot more compliant than any real life badger would be, but we got the general idea!

Take-away messages:

- Don't assume a road traffic casualty badger is dead. Run a stick along the back leg; badgers have a reflex action whereby they curl their toes in response.
- It's really important to get to know your local rescue centres well.

GBG now has several members trained to undertake badger rescues and will be purchasing additional rescue equipment in the near future.

Badger Cull intensifies

Government aiming to kill 260,000 badgers by Jan 2024



The government still refuses to test badgers for bTB, yet the killing continues to accelerate. They have finally published this year's planned intensive badger cull 'kill targets' – despite culling having started again in August.

The government's stated aim is to 'remove' (kill) between 70% and 90% of badgers in each cull area and across most of the South West of England. In 'low-risk' areas, there is no upper limit.

As the Badger Trust feared, this year's licence data reveal that **up to 53,234 badgers could be killed this year**, meaning the total death toll for badgers in England is expected to surpass 260,000 since culling began in 2013.

This unscientific onslaught is now pushing badgers to the brink of extinction in long-established cull areas, despite the fact that badgers are not tested to establish whether they have bTB or are a risk to cattle. All cattle slaughtered are proven to have bTB; with badgers, no tests are undertaken.

Cattle are 800 times more likely to pass bTB to badgers than badgers to cattle – according to a recent government study in Northern Ireland.

Government proposes 'extreme badger culling' consultation

The government plans to consult on even more extreme culling. Despite a pledge to end badger culling in 2025, the government is expected to consult on 'Epidemiological Culling', where shooters will kill 100% of badgers in an area, based on (as yet unspecified) "epidemiological evidence".

Again, instead of focusing on more effective cattle-based measures, badgers remain the scapegoats for a poorly-controlled cattle-spread disease.

Peter Hambly, Executive Director of Badger Trust, commented:

"The local extinction of badgers is happening right here, right now. 260,000 badgers represent over half of Britain's badger population – there has never been an assault on nature like this over a decade in our history.

The government won't even test the culled badgers – they know most wouldn't even have bTB. Every cow slaughtered has the disease, but with badgers, it's so different."

In response to the ongoing onslaught of the badger cull, the Badger Trust is now urging affiliated groups to raise the profile of their opposition to the cull. Local groups are being advised to:

- Campaign and protest in town and city centres
- Leaflet the public about the cull
- Write to their local MPs demanding an end to the cull

- Get the press involved in activities such as night patrols

Gloucestershire Badger Group is in the process of planning local protests and will be organising a letter writing campaign. Watch out for further details on the website and in GBG emails.

For details about night patrols, contact the GBG Field Officers.

Cub hunting



One rural ‘pastime’ which has a devastating impact on badgers, as well as the foxes it targets, is hunting.

Late summer and early autumn is cub hunting season, a hunting practice not widely known about for reasons that will become evident.

Many GBG supporters are actively involved in fox as well as badger protection and we asked one of them to write a brief article about cub hunting.

This is a cruel pastime that usually takes place from the end of July through to early autumn, once harvesting is complete. Cubbing, often referred to as “Autumn Hunting” by the hunters, is a form of fox hunting that specifically targets fox cubs. The difference between cubbing and fox hunting is that cubbing targets smaller areas. For instance, the hunters typically surround a wood, covert, copse or maize field for long periods. The huntsman puts the hounds through the wood and the ‘field’ of riders stands still around the wood, to





stop the foxes escaping. They inform the huntsman when a fox is sighted by making loud sounds and saddle slapping to scare the foxes back into the wood to be killed. The huntsmen make 'brr-brr' noises to flush out the foxes. Very often, the parent foxes will try to lead the hounds away from the cubs and ultimately be killed themselves.

Meets take place early morning around 6am when the scent is strongest. As the sun rises, the scent deteriorates in the heat. Some cub hunts take place early evening. Then meets start to get later towards the main season of fox hunting.

Cubbing usually has fewer riders than during the main hunting season. The hunts try to keep it low key, as it is the most blatant type of hunting and it is obvious that they are not laying a trail. The riders even wear special tweed jackets called 'rat-catcher'. Later in the season, their jackets are changed according to the hunt's traditional colours.

Hunts know where the foxes are in the

vicinity and usually feed them to keep them in the area. Some will have food and water left out for them near artificial earths in the woods where a fox family may be living.

Terriermen, farmers and gamekeepers

keep the hunt masters and huntsman informed on where families of fox cubs are living.

“the parent foxes will try to lead the hounds away from the cubs and ultimately be killed themselves”...

This all happens to train the young hounds to kill foxes, as this does not come naturally to them. The older, more experienced hounds accompany them whilst out and the huntsman teaches them how to follow the horn and voice calls. They try to teach them not to chase non-target species such as deer, but there are often casualties. The young foxes will learn to run for their lives when they hear the sound of the horn, thus ensuring the hunt has a good chase later on in the season.

Any hounds that do not perform to 'acceptable' standards will be shot.

GBG's first Sett Survey Sunday



The GBG survey team putting their best foot forward



No (badger) hair left unturned!

On Sunday September the 3rd, eighteen volunteers assembled in a pre-arranged location, pausing for the obligatory boot pics before setting off in 3 groups to survey the area for signs of badgers

It was a bright, sunny day but that didn't stop there being rather greater quantities of mud underfoot than most of us had anticipated. The terrain also had a few surprises in terms of super-steep hills, but the surveying team went about their task with cheerful enthusiasm.

Surveying and fieldwork activities include being on the look out for badger tracks and runs in the grass and vegetation, spotting the distinctive dung pits that form badger latrines and looking for badger setts.

The activity yielded some very good results, with a couple of previously unknown setts, showing signs of recent badger activity, being discovered. Several latrines complete with badger poo confirmed that badgers were certainly present and active in the

area. These findings are extremely useful for badger protectors out in the field, as this was an area many were previously unfamiliar with.

On the lookout for badger tracks and runs in the grass and vegetation, spotting badger latrines and looking for setts

The bad news is that the area was discovered to be heavily game-kept. This is the sad reality for badgers and in fact virtually all of Britain's wildlife, with areas of countryside perfectly set up to support badgers being appropriated for so-called "country sports".

GBG would like to thank all the fantastic volunteers who came along that day. We'll be organising more survey days in the future so why not come along and give us a hand?