



The Clan

GBG Newsletter Summer 2024

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2024 GBG newsletter!

As spring transitions into summer, we're already hearing reports of badger cub sightings. ..

Mothers and cubs will now be venturing from the relative safety of the sett and exploring the surrounding environment. By 16 weeks, cubs will be displaying most adult social behaviours, such as scent-



marking and grooming. Our joy at news of cubs is tempered by the realisation that supplementary culling re-commenced on June 1st, however, and much of Gloucestershire is *still* subject to culling.

Huge dancing badger spotted on the Prom!

Reports of a 7-foot-tall badger roaming around Cheltenham



were found to be true(ish) when it was revealed that GBG's *HiyaBadger* (plus friend) had made a visit to Cheltenham's most recent Vegan Fair.

The pair were seen chatting to the public about all things badger in a bid to

raise awareness of the continuing need to stand up for this endearing and misunderstood animal and **end the cull.**

There were plenty of great photo opportunities enabling the duo to publicise GBG (and what we do), as well as lots of scope for *HiyaBadger* to sample plenty of delicious vegan treats...

GBG would like to attend more such events with our *Brock Shop* stall and already has **Vale Wildlife Rescue Summer Fayre** booked for Sunday July 7th. We're always looking for volunteers to lend a hand. If you fancy helping at fairs, let us know. Just contact: secretary@gloucestershirebadgergroup.org to register your interest and to get further details.

Gloucestershire Badger Group AGM 2024

We'd like to say a big thank you to those GBG members and supporters who attended our Annual General meeting in Cirencester in May.

The 2024-2025 committee elected at the meeting is as follows:

Chair Karen Wilson

Treasurer Mike Cheeseman

Secretary and Membership Secretary Jackie Rodway

Field Officers Cheryl Dyke, Madison Harrington, Yvette White, Shaun Morgan

Advisor Wendy Lea

Attendees were rewarded for turning up on a lovely sunny Sunday with a great presentation by **Pauline Kidner** from **Secret World Wildlife Rescue Centre**.



Pauline Kidner

What do Field Officers actually do?



Part of a large (and ancient) semi-rural sett

Our field officers play an absolutely vital role within the GBG team.

Taking calls from members of the public, they respond to a wide variety of badger-related issues. These can include anything from badgers in gardens, investigating reports of a young badger seen with a 'snare' round its neck (which

turned out to be the cub caught up in brambles with farming twine round its neck), fly-tipping on badger setts, to requests for advice with planning appeals, blocked badger setts, badger persecution and injured badgers.

Often calls come from schools and businesses needing badger-related help. ►

Last year, the field officers responded to 28 calls, twice the previous year's total. Dealing with such calls is more time-consuming for GBG field officers than you'd imagine. Firstly, it's really important to establish what has actually happened, and for this it's essential to have knowledgeable people across the county who are able to investigate directly and, if necessary, visit the person who has contacted GBG.

Investigating tree felling over an active sett, for example, can mean a visit to the site, meeting the landowner to discuss



Clues can be found anywhere!

the issue, speaking to the site contractors and workforce, putting up trailcams to establish if the sett is actually active, and sometimes contacting and involving local wildlife crime officers.

Having a good knowledge of the **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**, and of the guidelines around working near setts with machinery, is also crucial, as these might need to be discussed with the landowner, contractor or workforce, plus collecting the trailcam later and going through the footage... Enquiries about

how to deal with badgers in gardens are frequent, and increasing in line with the sheer number of new housing encroaching on badger territories across Gloucestershire. People often ask if badgers pose a threat to small children and how to stop them from entering gardens, or excluding them if they've already moved in. Advice usually focuses on badgers' legal protection as many people don't realise they can't be simply 'rehomed'.

A few years ago, field officers were called to a house which had been entered by a badger cub. The cub was discovered sound asleep under the sink in the utility room.

It had most probably become separated from mum in the woods behind the house and become disorientated. Sweetcorn and peanuts were used to tempt the cub out, but to no avail.

Eventually a local wildlife rescue centre rescued the cub using their specialist equipment. Once trapped and found to be injury-free, the cub was released by the field officer and then ran off, seeming to know exactly its route home!

The role of field officer is fascinating and rewarding. If you'd like to help respond to calls, full training will be given, including the chance to 'shadow' the field officers.

So, if you're interested, please contact secretary@gloucestershirebadgergroup.org for further details. We also now have our own badger rescue kit.

And to those members who already help in this way, a big, heartfelt THANK YOU!

Out and about



GBG sett checkers have been busy, as ever...



Some of those able to set up trail cams have been rewarded with footage of badger cubs (see above) or, in one instance, a glimpse of what looks like an erythristic badger. Such badgers appear ginger/blonde/sandy-coloured and this colouration is caused by a mutation, which results in the black colouring cells of their coats being replaced by 'red' ones. There have also been many reports



Lots of bedding here being 'aired'

of setts with heaps of bedding 'aired' outside, one of the signs that there may be badger cubs present!

On a less positive note, there have been a few reports lately of setts which appear to have gone missing – that is, they've just completely disappeared. Checkers



Empty field once home to another now-vanished sett have gone to a sett site visited a year or two back, only to find it has mysteriously vanished.

While we can't be certain what's happened, we do know that one of the missing setts, located in a culling hotspot, was last seen with the corn freshly mown down around its contours at the start of the intensive cull period. It's always upsetting to go sett-checking in a beautiful rural location and find a once-very-active sett overgrown, abandoned or even absent.

After years of culling, this is the stark reality: a native and loved species is vanishing from its prime habitat.



Save badgers. Save nature.
Protection not extinction

General Election 4th July 2024

Government future badger cull plans on hold?

Thank you to all those who braved the problematic and confusing *Badger Control Consultation* and managed to submit a response by the May 13th closing date.

Following Rishi Sunak unexpectedly calling a general election for July 4th, these badger control plans are now **on hold**.

So badgers have a temporary reprieve, but it may be premature to heave a collective sigh of relief, since this flawed consultation document may well resurface for consideration by any

incoming government after July 4th.

This would be disappointing to say the least. The consultation is widely regarded as a 'sham' amongst badger groups, not only based on poor science and badly-written, but also launched in a very short consultation period – four weeks rather than the usual twelve.

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You can't help feeling DEFRA was keen to exclude the general public from having their say on this issue.

Tom Langton and the Badger Crowd have been working hard to get the consultation

delayed. On May 16th, Tom sent a judicial

review pre-action protocol (PAP) to the Secretary of State.

DEFRA's subsequent response was that it is "continuing to analyse consultation responses with a view to putting proposals for a decision on this policy to the incoming government after the election".

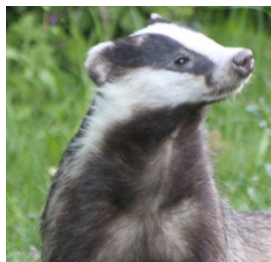
So, it looks like they're going to challenge the claim that the consultation was unfair. The latest developments seem to suggest that nine unnamed cull licences just issued by DEFRA are, in fact, new,

and have been authorised *before* the responses of the cull consultation have even been collated. Whoever forms the next government, as individuals and badger groups, we need to send out the message loud and clear:

END ALL BADGER CULLING NOW!

In the meantime, we can contact our MPs and prospective candidates, asking their position on the badger cull, and demanding an end to this pointless cull.

The Badger's Year



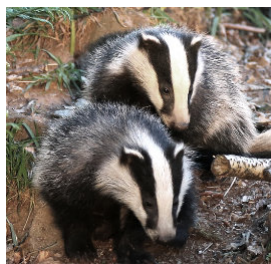
JANUARY

Badgers are underground most of the time. Sows are pregnant and some give birth.



FEBRUARY

Pregnant females give birth to two or three cubs. Boar badgers travel over territories looking for females.



MARCH

Badgers more active when more food is available. Sadly, more badgers killed on roads. Cubs still dependent on mothers.

APRIL

Badger's favourite diet of earthworms is plentiful and cubs may explore sett entrances. The sow makes sure they stay close to the sett.



MAY

A good month to watch badgers as they emerge more often and can be seen in daylight.

JUNE

Cubs are weaned and will know their territory. They are able to forage on their own or with the group. Badgers often sleep in day nests above ground.

JULY

In dry weather, badgers will become very hungry and some will starve. Cubs are growing fast.



AUGUST

Badgers are very busy digging and extending their setts. Their diet will extend to cereal crops but they prefer earthworms.

SEPTEMBER

In late summer and autumn, badgers may eat wasp grubs, insect larvae and fruits like blackberries, apples, cherries and acorns

OCTOBER

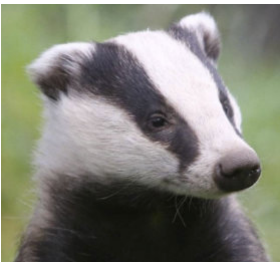
Badgers will be trying to put on weight for the winter. They will be managing their sett tunnels by bringing in fresh bedding material such as dried grass, hay and leaves.

NOVEMBER

From November, badgers are less active as food is harder to find.

DECEMBER

Badgers sleep more. This time is important in the badger's breeding cycle. Sows can mate anytime of the year but fertilised eggs do not implant until winter.



DATES FOR THE DIARY 2024

- **RESTORE NATURE NOW MARCH AND PROTEST** 22 JUNE, LONDON
- **GENERAL ELECTION** JULY 4
- **BADGER TRUST SYMPOSIUM** JULY 6
- **VALE WILDLIFE HOSPITAL SUMMER FAIR & OPEN DAY** JULY 7