

ISSUE

03

Winter
2010/11

Welcome to your quarterly newsletter

Happy New Year and welcome to the Winter 2010/11 issue of Scottish Badger: your quarterly newsletter from Scottish Badgers.

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. Special thanks goes to Steven Gregory who in this issue provides us with his final instalment detailing the trials and tribulations of setting up a badger camera ... on a budget!

We hope you enjoy the Winter 2010/11 issue of Scottish Badger and, as always, we very much welcome your contributions for future issues.

Elaine Rainey,
Editor

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(Photo: Tricia Alderson)

this issue's highlights

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Winter badger activity **P.5**

New badger group: Scottish Borders **P.6**

Lothian Badger Cam: lessons learned **P.7**

From the Chair - January 2011



Developing the theme of training (see Issue 2 Autumn 2010 Newsletter), we have been consulted by Forestry Commission Scotland about designing courses for training their staff members when applying for licences concerning work at or around badger setts.

This initiative was stimulated by Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) Licensing Department who oversee licence requests submitted to Government. It is a tribute to Elaine Rainey, our Development Officer, that our training courses have now been recognised as a robust platform enabling variations to be developed at relatively short notice. Recently we tested the competence of the new course with invaluable assistance from the head of SNH's Licensing team, Ben Ross.

I am pleased to report an extremely successful outcome from that initial course with all 16 candidates passing with flying colours. This is all the more gratifying when you bear in mind the challenge of tackling in just two short days not only intensive classroom training but an outdoor field craft event followed by a probing written exam.

Similar events will now be rolled out across Scotland (weather permitting) with an outcome that badger conservation will be

enhanced and awareness raised. We intend to develop similar training across the forestry industry and to accrue benefits for badgers nationwide.

The Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 came in to force on 11th March 2010. It is sad to relate that snaring incidents have not diminished. Current figures collated by Ian Hutchison, our Species Protection Officer, indicate that the number of cases reported are similar to earlier years. Bearing in mind that those are only the incidents we hear about, just think how many are unreported.

Please therefore be vigilant and report anything suspicious to Scottish Badger Cruelty line 0870 240 4832 or directly to the police. If the latter, be sure to make a note of the incident number to enable follow up checks until a conclusion is reached.

Needless to say funding is a perennial concern. Given current financial constraints, we have to become even more innovative if we are to maintain the exceptional quality of our two main areas of conservation work. These are training coupled with school education and crime coupled with development planning issues. There are tangible positive effects flowing from both areas and therefore it would be a serious setback should we need to curtail any of these important activities.

Roger Cottis,
Chairman

SB PROJECTS: Species Protection Officer

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Ian Hutchison, our Species Protection Officer, reports on his work over the past few months.

OPERATION MELES

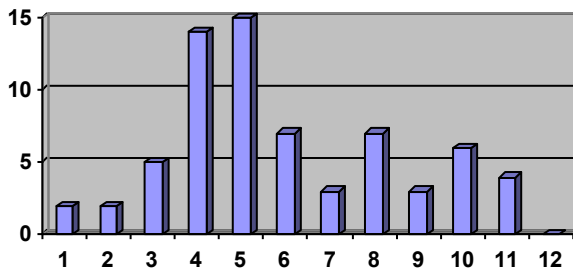
Well folks, the last nine months have flown by and the operation continues to gather momentum.

Although the incidence of reported crime is down this year, always good news, we are much better at recording it and following it through to completion.

The operation itself is now becoming wider spread and visits to the West Midlands, Somerset and Northern Ireland to brief local groups went down well.

If you need me to come and speak to you as a badger group or indeed as a member of any interested conservation group, please get in touch.

As things progress, we shall, as a



■ Scottish Incident data 2010

result, hopefully be getting a much more accurate picture of the amount of badger persecution around Scotland in particular and the rest of the UK.

Please remember that this is an Intelligence led operation and without good intelligence it will not progress as well as we might hope.

If you have any intelligence, please

ensure that you contact us and we can pass it on to the enforcement agencies for assessment.

Please let me know about all and any offences you come across no matter how minor so we can ensure they are logged and investigated.

**Ian Hutchison,
Species Protection Officer**

Planning News

Again things are moving swiftly along with our planning project. I reported our involvement with the Scottish Borders Council in the last newsletter and can inform you that after discussion we can now add both North Lanarkshire Council and Glasgow City Council to our partnership list involved in this project and although the latter authority has some final questions to be answered I hope before long they will be on board.

It means that we will have three local authorities signed up and although very closely linked geographically they are quite different in their land use. Scottish Borders is of course teaming with badgers in an area pretty rural with lots of dispersed towns and villages. North Lanarkshire is very urban but it too has many areas of green open land in which badgers live before interfacing with the towns and villages there. Finally Glasgow can be termed as fully urban with almost all land in use for commercial and housing use. Close scrutiny of a map will soon reveal however large areas of parkland and many green corridors in and out of the city. I hope to have a better understanding in due course but badgers still find suitable habitat to build setts and to corridors through which they move.

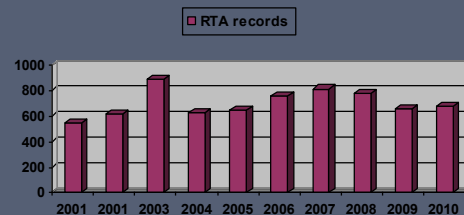
We are hoping that we can build on existing supplementary planning guidance and that in the end considering badgers as part of the planning process will come as second nature to developers and planners alike.

**Ian Hutchison,
Species Protection Officer**

Road traffic accidents

I would like to thank all those who reported road kills over the past year.

This continues to be a major problem for us with many animals dying particularly during the early spring. Over the past ten years we have been recording, 7608 badgers have been reported and details entered into the data set. We estimate that we still only hear about one third of the road kills and this means that potentially we have lost nearly 23000 badgers over the past ten years to road accidents, which is an average of 2300 every year.



Please keep reporting sightings to us on 01356 624851 or email ian@scottishbadgers.org.uk

SB PROJECTS: Development Officer

Elaine Rainey, our Development Officer, reports on her work over the past few months.

*** AN INVITATION TO EXPRESS INTEREST ***

*** New Level Two module ***

Scenes of crime, evidence gathering and court procedures

Are you interested in progressing your training with Scottish Badgers? Would you like to do your bit to help fight badger crime in Scotland? Have you already undertaken Level One Training and are now looking for a new challenge? If so, then why not sign up for our new Level Two training module: Scenes of crime, evidence gathering and court procedures.

The purpose of this new module is to provide YOU with the skills, knowledge and experience to get more involved in fighting badger crime. You will learn (a) what to do if you come across evidence of criminal activity in and around badger setts, (b) how to gather evidence should you be called upon to act as an expert witness, (c) about court procedures and you will get the opportunity to witness real life court proceedings in the presence of a specially-allocated mentor. The module also includes a one-day training course where you will have the opportunity to tap into the impressive knowledge and experience of Ian Hutchison, our Species Protection Officer.

We are offering this module at a **reduced introductory price of only £30**. This includes all training material, access to associated training sessions, allocation of a mentor to help you get to grips court proceedings, experience log, assessment and completion certificate.

To register, you will need to have completed Level One training with Scottish Badgers. For more information about this exciting new course, and to register your interest, please contact Elaine Rainey, our Development Officer.

***** We will be holding our first ever training course for this module in the Glasgow area in MARCH 2011. *****

Registered Badger Worker Training Scheme: Level One training and assessment days

Our Level One Registered Badger Worker training scheme continues to draw interest from across Scotland, with over fifty voluntary badger workers now having achieved Level One certificates.

We will be running further training and assessment days in Spring 2011 as follows:

Level One Training Day

Saturday 19th February 2011

Almondell Country Park, West Lothian

10am—4pm

This event is open to those registered for Level One training. Booking is essential as places are limited. To book your place, contact the Development Officer.

Level One Assessment Day

Saturday 5th March 2011

Edinburgh

10 am—4 pm

This event is open to those registered for Level One training who have built up the necessary logged surveying experience. To check your suitability for assessment, or to book your place, please contact the Development Officer.

REGISTER NOW FOR INTRODUCTORY OR LEVEL ONE TRAINING

To find out more, please contact the Development Officer who will be happy to advise on the best course for you.

FORESTRY

SNH-accredited badger awareness courses for forestry workers

As reported in 'News from the Chair', we are now running badger awareness courses for forestry workers.

The scheme has been developed to provide forestry staff with the relevant field skills and technical knowledge to develop and submit good quality licence applications to Scottish Government for standard forestry operations around badger setts.

We run two-day courses for conservation staff and those likely to be involved in submitting licence applications. This rather intensive course involves both field and theory assessment, plus a mock licence application scenario.

We also run one-day courses for operations teams (e.g. harvester and forwarder operators) and non-conservation staff with the aim of improving badger knowledge and highlighting the purpose and aims of the licensing process throughout the forestry sector.

In the future, we intend to offer our courses to the private forestry sector too.

COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS

New course in badger awareness

We are very pleased to have been asked to run badger awareness training this year for the Grampian section of The Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA).

The aim of the one-day training course is to provide rangers with an overview of badgers and the issues affecting them in Scotland. The training will include a fieldwork component looking for setts and signs and discussing badger crime and licensing issues in the field.

To find out more about our badger awareness training for countryside rangers, please contact Elaine Rainey, our Development Officer, by telephoning 01896 830 092 or by emailing elaine@scottishbadgers.org.uk.

All the latest news from Scottish Badgers and further afield.

OUR CURRENT FUNDING SITUATION

Your Trustees would have liked by now to be able to inform the membership of what exactly is going to happen in the next year but the position at present is only partial.

Elaine's post is safe for three years (in other words, a further two years), which is good news - funded mainly by SNH and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Ian has been working for 20 hours a week on funding from the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAW), basically running the Prevention side for Operation Meles for the U.K. He then works another 12 hours a week funded from other sources, of which the SNH grant in regard to Planning is part.

However, one of the Scottish Government's cuts has been to PAW Funding (although we have not been informed about this officially). The responsibility for the former PAW funding has gone back to SNH. Currently, we are awaiting the outcome of a new grant application to SNH, and might know by the end of January 2011. The other partners who funded us over the past year are also awaiting this outcome! So, I am afraid just waiting, however frustrating, is no different than with many other small environmental charities.

Assuming we hear before April 2011, we will certainly attempt to let the

Advisory Group members know by e-mail (you should be aware of these members).

Overall, the SB financial situation is becoming healthier. We now raise more money from donations, memberships and merchandising, just small ways in which all of you can help us. Furthermore, Elaine Rainey's efforts in training outside bodies are now starting to bear fruit because we do recover costs and gain a surplus from these activities.

**Eddie Palmer,
Vice-Chairman**

BOVINE TB IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) has predictably reared its head again in England and now again in Wales.

The English proposal, regrettably upheld by the Westminster Coalition Government, is to prevent bTB in cattle by licensing farmers to cull badgers using traps (and then shooting them) or by shooting free running badgers.

Since costs of these methods would be borne by the farmers, doubtless the Government finds them attractive. However it is probable this would be a false economy since peer reviewed science suggests a cull would be

counterproductive.

As reported in Newsletter Issue 2, Autumn 2010, the Welsh Government failed to convince the courts of the validity of a badger cull and yet they are continuing their attempts to legislate for a cull. Simultaneously they have made false claims in publications such as stating that culling can reduce bTB in cattle by 50% in six months. Our thanks go to Badger Trust for exposing this nonsense.

Proposals by both Governments suggest that hasty ill-considered actions by Ministers will have ruinous consequences. Fortunately research into a vaccine is well advanced in both badgers and cattle. It therefore essential that the European Parliament be persuaded of the urgent need to instigate licensing for a cattle vaccine. Strangely, they have resisted this to date.

So why are we preoccupied with the issue of bTB in England and Wales when we know that Scotland is free of this insidious disease?

Well, we are not complacent. We recognise the concerns of the Scottish farming community and are aware that it would be disastrous if bTB in cattle did pass to wildlife in general.

At all times we need to be supportive of every attempt to prevent its occurrence in Scotland and to keep abreast of developments which hopefully will lead to science based solutions independent of political pressure or prejudice.

**Roger Cottis,
Chairman**

LINKING UP WITH IEEM

On 16th October, Scottish Badgers ran a joint event with the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) at Auchincruive Estate, South Ayrshire.

The informal event was an opportunity to spend an afternoon looking at some of South Ayrshire's most impressive and ancient badger setts in some glorious surroundings while learning a little about badger survey skills.

On the day, a group of 6 enthusiastic badger spotters headed out into the beautiful autumn weather to look at some of my favourite badger setts and share experiences of badger surveys. Also on hand during the day was an ecological consultancy team from EnviroCentre who had recently conducted extensive badger bait-marking studies at the site.

The event went very well with some very interesting discussions on badger survey methods, mitigation measures and even badger crime, not to mention the opportunity for Scottish Badgers members to spend some time with representatives of IEEM, the UK's professional ecologist movement. Oh, mustn't forget that we also signed up some new members for the rapidly growing Strathclyde Badger and Mammal Group too!

**Steve Jackson-Matthews,
SB Trustee**

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 17th
September 2011

We will be holding our Annual Conference and AGM at Oatridge Agricultural College, West Lothian on Saturday 17th September 2011. Further details to follow in the next newsletter.

@scottishbadgers

Get the news as it happens with
Twitter

We are building up a modest but valuable following on Twitter, with the ability to provide our followers with information as it happens, as we hear about it. We are linked up to some wonderful people and organisations through Twitter. Sign up now to follow our tweets: @scottishbadgers

Snaring update ... PLEASE ACT NOW!

As a member of Scottish Badgers, you will have recently received a document outlining the current situation with snares in Scotland.

The Scottish SPCA, OneKind, and League Against Cruel Sports have proposed an outright ban on the use of snares. For some years Scottish Badgers took the position that we should listen to public opinion and observe objectively the practice of those who use snares in order to give them a fair chance of raising their standards in line with legal requirements. However, the rate of badger snaring incidents remains high despite the Snaring Order of March 2010. Badgers die, even in legally set snares. Hence, Scottish Badgers has moved to support an amendment seeking an outright ban.

The Wildlife & Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill is progressing through to stage 3 in later January 2011, when the amendment proposing a ban on snares will be lodged.

It is very important that MSPs receive (i) a full briefing on the facts about snaring and (ii) full postbags from the people of Scotland, so that they are in no doubt

about the will of the people. The time for this is now and through to late February.

You may want to take into account some of the facts included in the document sent out recently and if you are experienced with issues of animal welfare and/or wildlife conservation you may want to elaborate.

Your own experience has an important impact when writing to MSPs—e.g. about non-target animals caught in snares or the ineffectiveness of snares as a way of increasing the numbers of game birds, etc., available for the shooting industry.

THE MOST HELPFUL THING YOU CAN DO IS WRITE TO YOUR MSPs NOW WITH YOUR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES. No matter if you have written before – please do it again.

**Elsbeth Stirling
SB Trustee**

(Any views expressed here are my own. Readers will consider the facts and data sources and come to their own conclusions).

SB MEMBERS

All the latest news from our groups and members.

WINTER ACTIVITY OBSERVATIONS

Several members have contacted us recently with observations on how their local badgers have been coping with the frozen ground and deep snow of recent months.

Laura Weston had been using a camera trap at a central Edinburgh sett, as part of her work for environmental education specialists **Earth Calling**. The installation of the camera happened to coincide with some of the worst weather to hit central Edinburgh for quite some time! As a result, Laura's camera picked up no sign of badgers emerging from the sett for about six weeks!

Laura was beginning to think that the badgers had abandoned the setts (and that the cheeky foxes had taken over!) when the badgers finally emerged—just as the worst of the weather passed. Laura has managed to get some brilliant footage and is keeping the children (and us adults!) up-to-date via a blog on their website at www.earthcalling.org. Here's a sneak peak!



A **Ranger in North Lanarkshire** has noticed a similar lack of activity on his patch. Despite having reasonably easy access to animal feed, it appears the badgers had decided it just wasn't worth the effort! Effort was made, however, by the lucky social group who were furnished with a regular supply of peanuts from a local house! They were out most nights! That tells us something about the calorie content of peanuts then!

A member of staff at **Scottish Natural Heritage** was lucky enough to spot some firm evidence of a badger having emerged from below ground during the snowy weather in Fife. He came across a fine halo of dirt on top of the snow, in the vicinity of a sett entrance and accompanied by fresh badger prints. The badger had finally emerged from its sett and had partaken in a good old shake before setting off to forage! See the wonderful image at <http://ht.ly/3GiPC>

Chris Sydes from Midlothian has been keeping an eye on several local setts, at differing altitudes. It appears that none of the badgers emerged or ate for about six weeks because no dung or other activity was found above ground. Chris revisited the setts when the worst of the weather had subsided, observing an increase in activity, although some sites still had snow on the ground. He observed birds feeding in the fields that had become free of snow and therefore warm enough for them to access earthworms. Chris made an important point: that the sun has played an important part in getting the badgers back out and about and giving them access to their food once again. Some of the areas that didn't see much sun, such as flat fields or steep sided valleys, still had snow cover until very recently. So, the badgers in these locations had trouble accessing food for a much longer period.

WINTER ACTIVITY ctd.....

Our Chairman Roger Cottis details an interesting badger incident in the Northern Highlands.

'I was contacted by a person feeding a badger, which had taken up residence in his shed at a coastal location near Ullapool during mid December 2010 to early January 2011. He was concerned that it was trying to access his house using the cat flap and was worried that the badger might attack his elderly cats.

The badger, having moved in to the shed, had made a straw nest with multiple dung pits also inside the shed. We agreed for him to continue feeding the badger but beyond the shed, so as not to encourage the badger towards the house.

Unfortunately a near neighbour then lost several hens and two geese and the badger was seen to attack the last goose. Another near neighbour some days after was awoken in the very early hours to hear blood curdling screams and fearing for a pet cat rushed outside to see a badger with a black body and tail in its mouth heading away. No local cats were lost and from the size and description it is likely to be a mink that the badger had cornered and caught.

Now there is a thought that badgers might sort out the massive mink problem we face as the non-native invasive species heads ever northwards.

Then, slightly milder weather saw the last of the badger and all is quiet.

I await the next episode but in the meantime, if anyone has any problems with badgers they can be assured of a sympathetic response coupled with good advice.

We are here to help in a very positive way.'

SPOTTED: what you've found whilst out & about



plastic beads at the different main setts within the study area.

TOP SPOT: Mike Harris sent in the image below of a typical coastal badger sett, the like of which is very common along the northern and eastern seaboard of north Aberdeenshire and Moray.



Roger Cottis sent in the above image of a badger exposing bait marking beads. **Bait marking** is a process whereby the badger setts are baited above ground with food grade plastic pellets added to a suitably palatable mixture (e.g. treacle and peanuts). The plastic pellets are then 'deposited' in dung pits and latrines throughout the badgers' territory, allowing badger workers to determine the extent of that social group's territory. It gets even more exciting when there is more than one social group involved, thus requiring different coloured

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Whatever your badger story, we'd love to hear from you.

If you have any winter activity observations to add to the conversation, or any snippets of badger behaviour, field signs, photographs etc., please do get in touch.

By feeding in our stories from across Scotland, we can all learn more about Scotland's badgers.

And if you've seen some element of badger activity or field sign that you're having trouble interpreting, let us know and we'll do our best to solve the mystery!

SB MEMBERS

All the latest news from our groups and members.

EDINBURGH AND LOTHIAN'S BADGER GROUP TAKES ON THE BORDERS

John Ellis, Chairman of the newly-formed Lothian and Borders Badger Group, fills us in on the formation of the new group.

On 18th November 1995 the Edinburgh and Lothians Badger Group Constitution was agreed and since then we have strived to secure a fair deal for the badgers in our area—with some success I hope.

At that time there were a few Badger Groups in Scotland but sadly most folded for one reason or another. When the Borders Group ceased to operate ELBG, as the closest group, was occasionally called upon to assist Scottish SPCA, the Police or Estate Factors for various reasons. Considering the distances involved, sometimes it was difficult to find the time to respond instantly. This is always a problem with voluntary work because of family, work and other commitments.

We were occasionally asked—“why don't you take on the Borders”? In fact we were reluctant even to consider it because (a) we had no contacts down there, (b) it would have drastically overstretched us and (c) we would have been unreliable.

When someone from the Borders came forward suggesting they form a group, the question arose: should it be a new group starting from scratch or could it utilise the structure and facilities of ELBG? After discussions, it was decided that it made more sense to extend ELBG and at an EGM on the 28th October 2010, ELBG changed its name to Lothian and Borders Badger Group (LBBG).

Lately, the Border areas have been hit by wildlife crime and bodies including Scottish Badgers and L&B police

are keen to develop a presence there.

If anyone is interested in joining or assisting the LBBG there is much that can be done by you from surveying for setts to important monitoring of setts on your dog walking route. Training can be arranged for those who feel they need it.

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For further information about the work of the group in the Borders, please email borders@lbbg.org.uk
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STRATHCLYDE BADGER AND MAMMAL GROUP OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

SBMG held its official launch at Pollok Country Park on 10th November 2010. The newly-formed group are moving fast, with plans to tackle an ambitious survey of Glasgow's East End. Scottish Badgers is teaming up with the new group to run a badger survey training day for their members and volunteers in early 2011. After that, survey packs will be issued and the surveyors will be out in force in Glasgow's East End!

For more information on the group or to help out with the survey, please contact Steve at stevenjackson1@aol.com.



BADGER BLITZ EVENTS IN D&G

Over the last few months three Badger Blitz Events have taken place in Dumfries and Galloway. These have involved half a day training in finding badger signs and setts followed by a day surveying in an area that has few previous badger records. To date 37 people have attended training and 41 have helped with the surveys. We have covered 98 square kilometres on the actual events and a further 11 square kilometres during pre-event planning surveys. In total 75 badger setts were visited of which 45 were previously unknown to us.

As a longer term result of these events 16 new people have joined the Setts Monitoring Scheme and agreed to keep an eye a sett or setts near their home. We now have 52 monitors covering 156 setts but we have a very long way to go before we can achieve our goal of having every known sett visited at least once every three months. If you can help with this then please get in touch.

The involvement of the National Scenic Area Ranger's Team in the first two Badger Blitz Events and the Langholm Moorland Initiative in the third has also created good links with both these groups and we hope to build on these in the future. I would like to thank Ian Brown the N.S.A. Ranger and Dr Cat Barlow of the Langholm Moorland Project for all their help with setting up and running the Blitz days and of course a very big thank you to everyone who took part.

More Badger Blitz events are planned for October and November 2011 so please watch this space.

Andy Riches, SB Advisory Group

COMENIUS GROUP



At the end of September 2010 groups of students from Finland, Sweden, Poland and Italy arrived at Lockerbie Academy for a week of environmental studies under the British Council organised Comenius Programme. During their stay they helped to create a nature trail and leaflet and visited a number of badger setts. They were particularly interested in the levels of legal protection that badgers are afforded in Scotland.

Andy Riches, SB Advisory Group

SB Meet: who we are and what we do...

In this new feature, SB Meet, we will be introducing the movers and shakers in the badger world ... well, in Scotland at least! In the first instalment of SB Meet, we profile Laura Glover, Borders Coordinator for the new Lothian and Borders Badger Group.

MEET: LAURA GLOVER

I have been employed in animal welfare and wildlife crime for the past ten years, but have a lifetime of interest in wildlife, in particular badgers and hedgehogs!

I first became aware that I could actually make a difference, albeit a small one in the scheme of things, when I joined the RSPCA (NE England) as an Inspector in 1999.

On returning home to Scotland, I joined a cat rescue and then the National Wildlife Crime Unit where my wish to get more involved in the fight against badger crime became stronger than ever.

The Scottish Badgers website led me to believe that they were looking for a co-ordinator in the Borders, and that's the reason I am now writing this profile!

I live in a fabulously scenic part of the Borders and although I haven't found 'my' sett yet, it's definitely my goal for 2011!

.....
To get in touch with Laura about helping out in the area, contact Borders@lbbg.org.uk.
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Setting up a badger camera (on a budget!).

In this final instalment, LLBG member **Steven Gregory** talks us through the trials and tribulations of setting up a badger camera.



In the last Scottish Badgers newsletter, I told the tale of the birth of the camera systems that myself and other Lothian and Borders Badger Group members have built for the purpose of, or I should say, in the hope of monitoring local badger clans with the aim of learning more about the happenings at individual setts and other interesting locations within the territories of our badgers.

The success or failure of badger filming depends on a number of factors, some of which are under the control of the people setting the equipment and some over which we have very limited control. The first limiting factor is your reason for filming that particular location in the first place. If your mission is simply to collect footage of badgers and badger behaviour then obviously you will want to go to a location where you know that badgers are present.

For the artist...

It is very helpful if those badgers are accustomed to human activity as you will be able to make repeated visits to the sett without disturbing your subject. For that reason urban setts and those in locations like country parks and popular dog walking sites tend to have badgers which will largely tolerate your equipment and your presence around the sett.

Unfortunately these are also the setts at which your camera equipment is most likely to be discovered by members of the public! This may seem like a problem but we have set up our cameras in some very busy places, including Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh and they have come to no harm. At a far more remote site outside of Edinburgh, with no visible footpaths, one of our camera systems met a violent end and ended up stuffed down the badger sett that it was monitoring. It seems that the man who uses that wood as his allotment took offence to us encroaching on his territory! Happily the footage from that night was recoverable and produced some lovely video of badgers making their way toward a proposed development site and later—a dramatic soundtrack of an angry man seeing to the camera's demise!

The other issue at "people friendly" setts seems to be badgers suffering from a major peanut habit! Badgers that see peanuts regularly don't seem to spend as much time at the sett if there are no peanuts left. It is very tempting to use bait to ensure that your camera is visited, but many hours of badgers eating peanuts do not make for interesting viewing. If you want to capture "natural" badger behaviour it is better to film without bait and to choose the locations for your cameras carefully.

If you can, visit the sett in the morning, so that your scent has time to fade before the evening and take a really good look at the surrounding areas. Filming areas like grooming pits, scratching posts or places used for bedding collection may shorten the amount of badger footage that you

obtain but will give you a much more enjoyable film once edited. Knowing the sett well means that even if you have to set up your equipment in the evening shortly before emergence you will be able to spend as little time at the sett as possible.

For the ecologist...

Of course, you may want to use a camera system to assist in proving the presence of badgers, either at a disputed sett or places that badgers are making use of, such as paths or crossing points on roads. For these you have less choice with regard to the security of the camera and you have to decide whether the importance of the information gathered outweighs the value of the equipment at risk. Persuading someone else to provide a financial guarantee for the equipment would be ideal, but it is virtually impossible to get recording equipment left unattended insured.

The other consideration with this type of filming is that if the presence of badgers is disputed then it is likely that any badgers present are less accustomed to the scent of humans and the strange things that humans leave around their home.

Working mainly in Edinburgh, it has occasionally been very easy to forget the affect that our human pong has on the badger clan. At one sett near Edinburgh airport where the badgers seem rarely to come across humans it was clearly evident from our first videos that the badgers were very aware that we had been there shortly before emergence. They were not at all comfortable with it.



We already knew from previous experience that badgers regard the box containing the battery and recorder with utmost suspicion and for that reason we have long cables which allow us to keep the boxes a good distance from where we are actually filming. In order to improve our results with that particular sett, using three cameras we visited the sett in the early morning and set them outside the sett looking inwards. We set these by walking around the sett at a distance, never walking across the sett. In the evening, we returned only to the boxes which were located away from the cameras to turn the systems on. Despite these precautions the first badger we filmed still had a good long sniff at the air, pointing his nose at the camera in an accusing manner before going about his business.

Interestingly, on one occasion, we did leave some peanuts at that sett and despite being filmed walking past them the badgers didn't seem to recognise them as food and indeed, totally ignored them. It seems that they are not a universal badger bribe!

Unintended interactions...

Setting the cameras at badger height provides a very pleasing badgers' eye view but it is a good idea to use care when choosing a mount for your camera. On one visit to the Botanics in Edinburgh I mounted the camera on a very convenient elder close to the sett. The elder had a nice horizontal branch—perfect for hanging the camera from.

When your chosen tree is just right, but is copiously covered in badger scratch marks, it is probably better to choose a different tree! I had, of course, mounted

the camera on the sett scratching tree. This resulted in my camera receiving a fairly vicious beating from two enthusiastic badgers who either decided their legs needed a good workout, or that the strange scent polluting their scratching tree had to be scent-marked to death.

Luckily the camera and cable survived unscathed but those botanics badgers had an unexpected effect on my next filming excursion. Unlike the boxes which hold the recorder and battery, badgers tend to take little notice of the camera itself, presumably because they are quite small and mounted above badger head height. However, on this particular night, the badgers were very interested in the camera, greeting it with much sniffing and broad-faced sternness. Of course, after its night on the scratching tree, it smelled strongly of badgers from far away—certainly not acceptable in any respectable badger territory! A new rule of cleaning the camera if badgers come into contact with it was made.

Cameo roles...

Although badgers have been the intended subject of most of the filming I have been involved in, I have to admit to pointing my camera at bats and water voles on occasion! Leaving a camera out over night will result in footage of whatever else lives there also.

The most common animals trying to get in on the action are foxes and mice. Foxes usually seem to respect the badgers' authority and leave the scene shortly before the badgers arrive on the scene.

Mini-beasts are always good fun. Spiders like to crawl across the camera and in infra-red light look like giant, glowing aliens. Moths look like fireflies and you wouldn't believe how big the slugs of Edinburgh are at night!

When attempting to see what, if anything, was using the underpasses on the new M9 extension we filmed some of the biggest looking rats I've ever seen, but alas no badgers. Those rats did have me worrying about whether I'd properly washed my hands before lunch though...

And finally...

It is worth remembering that, while it is very disappointing to record a night's worth of video and discover that you have no stripy-faced action whatsoever, when you are studying wildlife a negative result is just as important as a positive one. In these situations it is perfectly acceptable to substitute your victory coffee and cake for a morale boosting coffee and cake as you make plans for your next session.



(Picture captions)

One: by choosing where to film carefully you can capture badger interactions, like mutual grooming.

Two: this badger decides that standing on three legs will help him identify the suspicious smell.

Three: not impressed with the smell of badgers from another territory.

RESOURCES: Books, products, research

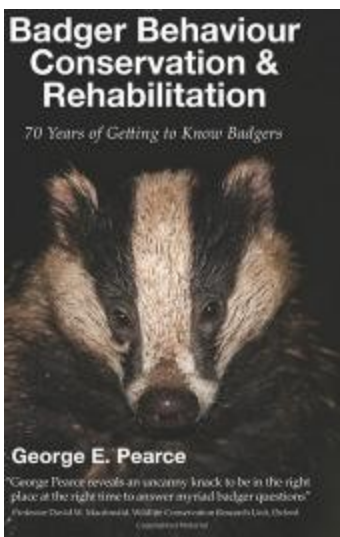
IN THE JOURNALS

Variations in badger sett microclimate: differential cub survival between main and subsidiary setts, with implications for artificial sett construction

In 'RESOURCES', we review the latest badger-related books, products, websites and research.

REVIEW

'Badger behaviour, conservation and rehabilitation: 70 years of getting to know badgers', George Pearce, Pelagic Publishing, 2010, 175pp., £24.99.



I ordered this book because of my interest and passion for badgers and wasn't sure what to expect. On opening the package the cover of the book made me smile. There, looking back at me, was a dewy eyed, wet nosed badger face and thoughtfully designed with the black background and white writing staying in line with the badger's trademarks. The introduction outlined the author as a farmer's boy who grew up to realise wildlife played an important part in the countryside and embarked on a mission to learn, understand and conserve it. This dedicated man has written and produced a detailed book which covers his personal journey alongside badgers and their behaviour, legislation, authority, developers and conservation.

I found the book full of examples of his experience, easy to read, interesting and enjoyable to the point it made me chuckle or gasp and even at some points thinking—"Och ... this can't be true"! In support of his written work there is a lovely selection of photos in chapter six justifying everything he had experienced. I especially loved the story **Marooned: a bundle of badgers** and the photo of 9 badgers

huddled together up a tree is brilliant (photo gallery pages 90-91).

The book is structured well with the author putting across his thoughts and findings up for discussion. These include Bovine TB and modern farming techniques amongst other issues and the question, "Is it the badger that is the problem or is it the development?" I know what I think.

A must read for anyone who has an interest in badgers.

It's a snip at £24.99 (discount to Scottish Badgers members—£19.99).

Jackie Clark
Chair
Strathclyde Badger & Mammal Group

A recent study by **Kaneko et al.**, published in **International Journal of Ecology**, monitored the internal conditions of the setts of five social groups during the breeding season, February to July, in 2004.

Sett temperature showed much variation throughout this period, although sett humidity remained relatively constant.

Microclimate was least stable during the period between February and April i.e. the time of year when cubs remain entirely below ground.

However, the main sett studied demonstrated a much warmer and more stable temperature regime than did associated satellite setts.

The study postulates that the energy budget of reproducing females could be affected by even small temperature fluctuations, militating for optimal sett choice.

Interestingly, the study also looked at microclimatic data from two artificial setts and found them to be markedly inferior in terms of thermal insulative properties.

This suggests that man-made setts may need more careful consideration in both thermal and spatial setts network in each territory to adequately compensate the loss (e.g., destruction due to development) of a natural sett, especially as a breeding den.

Badgers on the Web ...

DOWNLOADS

For those new to badgers, we would recommend visiting the Scottish Natural Heritage website, where you can download the 'Naturally Scottish' series booklet entitled 'Badgers'. At only twenty pages long, this booklet nonetheless provides a good overview of badger biology/ ecology and dips into badger problems such as badger baiting, sett digging, bovine TB, etc.

If you would like to know more about badgers and development, SNH's 'Badgers and Development' is a

good starting point. The purpose of the document is to provide an overview of badgers and development and the associated laws, specifically for planners and developers. It is also a useful aid for badger enthusiasts who are encountering development issues in their local area.

For those interested in badgers and forestry, you can download Forestry Practice Guide no. 9: 'Forest operations and badger setts' from the Forestry Commission website. This is slightly out-of-date now but still an interesting read.

Contacts & Events

Your essential SB contacts, plus all the news on forthcoming events



(Photo: Tricia Alderson)

Coming up in the Spring 2011 issue

Focus on badger baiting

Badgers: scent essentials

Best badger book reviews

SB news and project reports

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

• Sat 19th February 2011:

Registered Badger Worker
(Level One) training day, West Lothian

• Sat 5th March 2011:

Registered Badger Worker
(Level One) assessment day, Edinburgh

• March 2011:

Level Two crime module training event. Date t.b.c.

• 15th—17th April 2011:

The Mammal Society Easter Conference, Nottingham

• 21st—29th May 2011:

Scottish Biodiversity Week

• Sat 17th September 2011:

Scottish Badgers Annual Conference, West Lothian

• 2nd—3rd November 2011:

IEEM Conference: Tools for rebuilding biodiversity, Liverpool

• Wed 9th November 2011:

IEEM course: Badgers—survey, exclusions and mitigation, North Lanarkshire

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SB on the web

Find out more at: www.scottishbadgers.org.uk
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Please get in touch with Elaine for further advice on whom to contact about any of the above events.

If you would like to advertise your badger-related event in our newsletter, contact Elaine. She will be happy to help you out.

