

stark ecology ltd



The Badger is closely related to the Otter, Stoat, Weasel and Pole cat



Badgers like to build their setts into sloping ground in woodlands, often under Elder trees in diggable soils. This is also a good environment for their main source of food- earth worms. Badgers also eat insects, roots, fruit/berries and occasionally baby rabbits or frogs.

A Sett is a system of underground tunnels and chambers which the Badger group live in. They are important as they provide shelter and protection for the badger throughout the year. There are several types of Sett; the Main sett which is occupied all year round and is used by the dominant females to have their young- often has 50-100 entrances, an Annexe Sett which is close to the main sett and is quite well used, a Subsidiary sett which is not in continuous use and has no obvious paths leading to it and an Outlying sett which has 1 or 2 holes and is used sporadically.





Badgers live in social groups of up to 14 adults and in general there are more females than males due to a high male mortality rate. Not all females breed- only the 'dominant' ones do, the non dominant ones tend to be smaller and have more scars due to fighting. Male badgers of each group are territorial and mark the boundaries of their territory with scent glands. Badger latrines are often found along the edge of the groups territories. Most cubs are born during February and mating generally occurs from February- September. Often the resident male and the dominant females will mate but it has been known for badgers from different groups to move in with each other to mate.

Badger setts are often situated on top of valuable land that is wanted for development and in the past Setts were destroyed without thought. Fortunately the law and the public are becoming more aware of badgers and their habits. It is currently against the law to willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, to attempt to do so or to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. There are certain guidelines which have to be followed when a Sett is required to be shut down; An Ecological survey must be carried out to assess the importance of the Sett in question and the impact any action will have on the badgers. A license must be gained from the Natural England. The badger Sett must be closed in a certain way with the assistance of trained personnel often using methods such as a 'one way gate'.

The path that was surveyed was Chiselden to Marlborough railway path. It was surveyed by the ecologist from Sustrans in Jan 2012. In June 2012 I carried out a badger survey of the route.

There were a number of setts along the whole route of different status, some showed signs of activity while others were out of use. Some entrances might have to be closed down for works to take place. If Setts are active at the time of the work a licence will be required from Natural England

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M. Bovis is a slow growing, aerobic bacterium that is responsible for the onset of Bovine TB in cattle. The bacterium is trans-species meaning that humans can contract TB from the bacterium but it is quite rare in this country.

Badgers get a lot of bad press from this disease as they excrete the bacterium and pass it on to cattle through exhaled breath, urine, excrement and pus. This means that as soon as one animal in the herd has it, it is likely to spread resulting in the farmer having to cull all animals testing positive. However this is not a one way system, cattle are just as able to pass the bacterium onto badgers and infect the badger family and in turn onto other badger populations.



Solutions to the TB epidemic are being explored such as the controversial badger cull and the development of a vaccine for both badgers and cattle. Both of these solutions have limitations and disadvantages as well as positives and it will take a considerable amount of time to find a solution that is both cost and time effective, while remaining as humane as possible.