

West Surrey Badger Group

NEWSLETTER No 66 AUGUST 2013

www.wsbg.co.uk



In this issue

News and reports
Our summer events
London's Anti-Cull March

The ePetition
National badger news
Future meetings



Member of the Mammal Society
and Surrey Wildlife Trust

Member of the Badger Trust

Registered Charity No 1100142
Patron David Shepherd OBE

Welcome to our new members

Adam Bloom
Lynette Powell

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Nick Nickells

Our Annual General Meeting was held on 21st May and attended by 25 members. Following my opening remarks, our Treasurer, Secretary and Field Officers gave their customary reports and they confirmed that the last 12 months have been very busy dealing with a wide variety of badger-related incidents and events. Many of these were fully reported in the newsletter, which has been published with colour for the first time and has been very well received.

The existing Committee was re-elected en bloc and we also welcomed Martin D'Arcy onto the Committee. He will be particularly involved with maintaining and updating our website. It was also mentioned that there is still a vacancy on our Committee, and that if anyone wished to consider filling it, we would be pleased for them to be seconded to attend Committee monthly meetings to get a feel of how we operate before being officially elected.

Permission has now been granted for the reconstruction of the Chantries badger

sett destroyed on Christmas Eve, and it is planned, in conjunction with the Fire Brigade, for the work to be completed in the very near future. Better late than never! However, the destruction would not have happened at all if those responsible had operated within their legal obligations.

After the disappointments last year of many sales events being cancelled due to bad weather, so far this year we have had very good results from those we have attended. We are proposing to improve the presentation of our display stand by acquiring an overhead banner and make use of the 'internet highway' to publicise our involvement in these events. We are also looking into improving our handout leaflets.

Finally, I hope you have all enjoyed our recent, long-awaited hot weather and remembered to put water out for 'visitors' to your gardens.

We look forward to seeing you at our autumn monthly Group meetings which are listed at the back of this newsletter.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Nigel Mee

Three months into the new financial year 2013-14 and the finances of the charity have started well. Rather like the weather for the English summer so far. Now I would not consider it prudent to try and make a correlation between weather and our finances but certainly good weather means we can make a presence at wildlife events with our sales stalls.

April is our main month for receiving annual subscriptions. Many supporters have annual standing orders dated for around this time. Our hardworking membership secretary Rodger has been hard pressed to keep track of what's what and as usual has done a great job. At this moment in time there are 162 members, and income from both subscriptions

and donations this year is just over £2,300.

At this time last year many events were being cancelled due to the wet weather or, where taking place, were not well attended. So the two events we have taken part in so far this year have been very successful in that we have had takings of nearly £350 (see page 5). We are also booked for another event at the end of July and it is a relief to not have the weather beating us down this year.

There have been a few small costs to pay which are recurring and expected, for example newsletter printing, postage, broadband and telephone. The only unusual costs have been £300 for tree maintenance work at the Ruxley site at Claygate and purchase of new stock for the sales stalls, neither of which were totally unexpected as such.

The Ruxley site is slowly being improved and any expenditure there is always carefully considered. The tree work was for safety reasons where the owner of a neighbouring garden had become concerned about overhanging branches. It was our responsibility to organise them being cut back, and something for which funds are reserved.

PLANNING REPORT

Dave Williams

Byfleet

The planning application for the building for a Romany gypsy family in Byfleet has been withdrawn, pending ecological reports. Apart from the large sett that we know about, the survey found a small active sett adjacent to the site, which should be safe if the planning is approved. There are still many objections.

Leatherhead

I surveyed a site in Leatherhead that contains many well established allotments, but unfortunately the land is wanted for houses.

Buying new stock is of course only going to happen when stock gets sold, so I see buying new stock as a good thing! Whilst I record the sales and the purchases separately in the financial books, when published in the final accounts for the year only one figure is shown – being profit, i.e. sales less cost of stock purchases. Hopefully never a loss! (For accounting buffs I should mention that the values of stock at the start and end of a year are also necessarily taken in to account.)

All in all, during April through to time of writing in mid-July income has greatly outstripped expenditure, so the bank balances are some £2,000 greater than when the financial year started on 1st April. This has meant we are able to make our annual donation of £1,000 to Wildlife Aid at Leatherhead. Their animal hospital is so important to us when our field officers have picked up an injured badger, and the facilities are used by enormous numbers of people each year, not just by us of course.

Well, I do hope our supporters are continuing to enjoy fine weather this summer, and on behalf of the charity thank you as always for your kind generosity.

I found a small badger sett on the very edge of the site, where a zone could be left around it. However, it would be far better not to build on the site at all.

Camberley

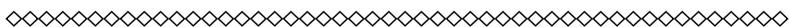
We are again having problems with an ecological consultant's report. This stated that in the particular Camberley area surveyed, there was no suitable habitat. Camberley has a high number of badgers, and indeed in the property next door there is a large ancient sett in exactly the same type of habitat.

Badger Trust Raffle

Please support the Badger Trust Raffle, to raise urgently-needed funds.



We have enclosed a book of raffle tickets which we hope you will be able to purchase and return with the money to Badger Trust.



Badger Trust Conference

We are pleased to announce that the Mid-Derbyshire Badger Protection Group will host this year's conference. It will take place at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, from Friday 20th September to Sunday 22nd September inclusive. Please go to badgertrust.org.uk for further details and to download forms.

If you are aged between 18-30 years, you can complete the Ed Goode Memorial Fund form to apply for a free conference place

OUR SUMMER EVENTS

by Nigel Mee



Field Studies Council, Juniper Hall

The West Surrey Badger Group has been represented by sales stalls at two wildlife events so far this year, with a third planned at the end of July. We are keen to have a presence at these events but it's not just a case of selling things. It's a great opportunity to meet and talk to people about badgers and their concerns for them, to educate children about badgers, to network with supporters and maybe sign up new ones, to interact with and learn from other wildlife, nature and environmental organisations, to meet old friends and make new ones, oh and yes hopefully raise a few quid . . .

SURREY WILDLIFE DAY, Juniper Hall, Dorking

8th-9th June

Beautiful weather, beautiful surroundings – see above – it was a lovely weekend. I forgot the sun cream, but fortunately didn't need it as we had a gazebo to put up and there was shade from a wall for it was hot and sunny all weekend.

The stallholders had some very interesting exhibitions of wildlife and nature and the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the Field Studies Council went well. There were snakes, spiders, chickens, birds of prey, a baby deer, plants, bats, snails, galls, tortoises, ferrets and fantastic wood craft demonstrations! We fitted in perfectly,

and whilst there could have been many more visitors to the event we had a constant stream of people asking questions, talking about badger matters and looking at our sales items.

Several local people said that the event had not been particularly well advertised and perhaps that's why the numbers attended seemed thin. Yet

the organisers had laid out a fine event including excellent refreshments and the site could easily have handled many more visitors.

Juniper Hall lies at the foot of Box Hill and is a very lovely building standing in a most pleasant valley.

I look forward to being there again next year.



Nigel Mee

WILDLIFE AID OPEN DAY, Leatherhead

7th July

Wall-to-wall sunshine and an excellent site made a really good day out. Last year this event was delayed and then cancelled. Torrential rain had made going ahead impossible on both dates. This year it could not have been more different.

We had a happy and vibrant crowd, interesting stalls and ongoing entertainment the Wildlife Aid way. There was a human-sized badger and a similar fox dancing about the place, which the small children loved, big queues to look round the 'hospital wards', archery, tombola, tea, cakes, burgers.

The event was very well attended

by visitors especially in the morning (perhaps due to a big tennis match final in the afternoon at Wimbledon).

This is such an important day for Wildlife Aid for fundraising. An announcer chatting away on the PA system told us that the charity costs nearly £1,000 per day to run and that there are over 300 volunteers involved in its running. It's a big organisation doing a really big and important job, dedicated to the rescue, care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and

orphaned wild animals. Established in 1980, the Wildlife Aid Foundation's veterinary hospital in Leatherhead, Surrey, deals with more than 20,000 wildlife emergencies every year. Their policy is to return every patient to the wild once they have recovered.

The Foundation's work is the focus of the popular TV series *Wildlife SOS* on Discovery Channel's 'Animal Planet' series. The founder of the Foundation is the environmental broadcaster and campaigner Simon Cowell MBE.

On 28th July, we'll be taking our stall to Tilford Rural Life Centre's 'RUSTIC SUNDAY' event, and I shall report on that in the next newsletter.

'Stop the Cull' ePetition breaks all previous records – and still has till September to run!

AMAZING! On 16th July 2013, the ePetition set up by rock star Dr Brian May to stop the cull broke all records. By the end of the month the number of signatures was a quarter million and rising. Yet still the Government is hard set upon killing badgers or, as it says, to trial "if shooting badgers at night" is an effective way of culling them! The aim is to cull 70% of the population of badgers in the designated areas, i.e. Somerset and Gloucestershire with Dorset as a reserve, then to roll the killing out across the country over the next 25 years.

Against public opinion of such a high magnitude and against scientific evidence that states that culling badgers will have no meaningful effect, the

Government is still pushing on with its plans. It is a meaningless act that will cost more money than it will save, and is the least effective way of reducing the incidence of TB in cattle. Professor John Bourne stated, "bTB is a cattle problem first: badgers come second". This whole business is merely offering farmers a carrot (or maybe more precisely the NFU who actually only represent 18% of British farmers).

So many well-known wildlife experts like David Attenborough, Simon King and Chris Packham have spoken out against the cull, believing it is the wrong route to take. Dr Brian May, who is not only a rock star but an astrophysicist, has given hours of his time researching and speaking out

against the cull and has met with MPs to make the case in a bold scientific way – offering vaccination for badgers, and as soon as possible for cattle, as being a far more effective and acceptable solution along with tighter bio-security and better TB testing of herds. But of course there are EU hurdles to cross before vaccinating cattle. Sadly the Government would like us to believe that this is years away. Surely this is something that should attract Government funding and be fast-tracked.

It was also Dr Brian May who pulled together many of the major animal charities to form the Umbrella Charity "Team Badger" that we are familiar with from the last newsletter.

Sadly, at the moment all these protests appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Secretary of State for the Environment, Owen Paterson, and the NFU seem hell bent on killing badgers despite all the evidence against it being

an effective and financially viable solution.

It's sad that I have to write this report, after so many people have signed the ePetition. I just hope that if even more people sign the Petition and object to the cull, then progress might be made. That or an unlikely quick change of Government!

The Petition closes on 7th September, so if you haven't signed it yet – FOR BADGERS' SAKE DO SO NOW – at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/38257>

Also WRITE TO YOUR MP, or better still go to see them at their surgery. Tell them of your dissatisfaction in view of scientific evidence etc and ask them to support the alternatives.

As a Badger Group WE MUST DO ALL WE CAN TO STOP THIS HAPPENING.

Pat Williams . . .

. . . with a very heavy heart

Three cheers for Derbyshire

On 23 July, the *Derby Telegraph* published this:

"Badger culling will be banned on all Derbyshire County Council owned land and support will be given to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's vaccination programme.

"The decision was announced today after considering scientific evidence that suggest culling badgers actually increases the spread of TB. It is also feared that allowing culling on council land would promote illegal badger baiting and worsen the problem in Derbyshire.

"Councillor Anne Western, leader of Derbyshire County Council, said: 'Culling

is not only cruel but it is bad news for our farmers who are more likely to get infected herds of cattle. I hope that the government follows our lead and listens to the science that says culling is bad for our countryside."



Nigel Mee

The London Anti-Cull March

by Nigel Mee

THIS WAS A BIG DAY for anyone opposing the government's strategy for a badger cull to get out and show their feelings in a gathering and walk organised by 'London Against the Badger Cull'. It was held on Saturday 1st June, this being the first day that the test culling of badgers could legally begin in designated areas of Gloucestershire and Somerset.

It met and left from The Tate Gallery by the Thames and ended at St James Park. Speakers included Brian May, Bill Oddie and Virginia McKenna.

Due to other political rallies occurring the same day in the same Westminster area, the anti-cull walking route was very much dictated by the police, but those present did not let it stop them loudly voicing their opinions backed by the sound of hunting horns and whistles. Badger masks, human-sized badgers, badger outfits of all types, cute badger dancers, and with everyone in the

colours of black, white and grey, it was an impressive crowd that this writer would guess at around 2,000.

It wasn't just badger groups attending. Organisations represented included newly formed anti-cull groups, hunt saboteurs, humane organisations, animal charities, wildlife and welfare groups, vegetarian societies, as well as badger groups from as far afield as Devon, Yorkshire and Gloucestershire and in between – including your very own West Surrey Badger Group.

Everyone present seemed to have a shared mutual awareness that suddenly they were discovering "no, we are not campaigning alone on this – we have today become part of a much larger movement". At times it was quite emotional.

We of West Surrey gathered under the fantastic and beautiful banner created by Vanessa and David Boulwood. It simply read "STOP THE CULL" with "West Surrey

Badger Group” along the bottom. It was a banner one was proud to walk under. Brilliant work guys, well done!

The arguments around the culling of badgers to reduce the incidence of bTB in cattle are well documented elsewhere and the Badger Trust has an excellent leaflet summarising the main facts. For further information please get in touch with anyone at WSBG (contact details are on page 15).

The following are extracts from a report on the BBC website which covered the March:

The licence to cull badgers in Gloucestershire and west Somerset has come into force enabling 5,094 badgers to be killed.

The government is trying to find out if night-time shoots of free-running badgers will result in them being killed in a humane way.

Ex-Queen guitarist Brian May, who led the rally, said the cull would not make “life any easier for farmers”, adding: “We don’t believe it will work.”

Farmers believe badgers spread TB and have led to rising numbers of infected cattle being slaughtered every year.

Groups of farmers in the two pilot zones have been given licences to conduct culls using trained marksmen

to shoot the distinctive black and white creatures.

The cull can take place over any continuous six-week period until 1st December.

Campaigner Paul Hornsby said: “Yes I live in a city, but I have a family of foxes living in my back garden and I believe it’s their world too.”

Hundreds of people – and some with their pets – took part in the anti-badger cull rally.

During the rally, which was attended by an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 people, May also renewed calls for ministers to change their mind about the cull.

He said: “The great bit of new information is it has now been demonstrated that the cull cannot make economic sense. Up to 5,094 badgers can be culled in the two pilot cull zones in west Somerset and west Gloucestershire. It will lose the taxpayer money rather than save it. That was really the last shred of reason that you could give for this cull going ahead. It is a very good time for Mr Cameron to reconsider and withdraw from this monstrous cull, in the public interest.”

He also delivered a near-250,000 signature petition to Downing Street

calling for the cull to be scrapped.

The government argues that the cull is necessary as part of efforts to stop spiralling numbers of outbreaks of TB in dairy and beef herds, which led to 28,000 cattle being slaughtered in England last year. Without action, infection and costs will continue to soar, it is claimed.

“What we’re trying to see in these pilot culls is whether it can be done humanely, safely and efficiently.” (Farming minister David Heath)

A YouGov poll released on Friday showed 34% of people oppose a cull, 29% support the measure, while the remainder did not know or had no strong feelings.

[Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-22730938> on 12/07/2013.]

The following is an extract from the London Against the Badger Cull website:

“I think the most interesting observation was made to me by a senior politician who said ‘fine John we accept your science, but we have to offer the farmers a carrot. And the only carrot we can possibly give them is culling badgers’.” (Professor John Bourne, Chair of the Independent Scientific Group)

[Source: <http://www.londonagainstthecull.org.uk/> on 12/07/2013.]

The West Surrey Badger Group contingent at the March



Nigel Mee

Diane Abbott tells Commons that culling has given the green light to persecution

THE NUMBER of people prosecuted for cruelty to badgers has almost doubled in five years, new figures suggest. The data, obtained by Labour MP Diane Abbott, showed 58 people were prosecuted in magistrates' courts under the Protection of Badgers Act in 2011 – up from 30 in 2007.

Ms Abbott said pro-cull campaigning had given a “green light” to those carrying out crimes such as badger baiting.

The government said unlicensed killing of badgers was “unacceptable”. Responding to the figures, a spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: “Any killing of badgers without a licence illegal and unacceptable.

“If anyone has any evidence of that occurring, they are strongly encouraged to report this to local wildlife crime police officers to deal with.”

Two trial badger culls, aimed at tackling the spread of tuberculosis (TB) in cattle, are set to go ahead in Gloucestershire and Somerset.

They had been postponed late in 2012 because of fears they could not

be carried out effectively, but were approved in February after final licence conditions were met. A reserve pilot is also to be prepared in Dorset.

The figures, revealed by Ms Abbott in an answer to a Parliamentary Question, showed that prosecutions for crimes including badger baiting have risen each year since 2007 – with only a minor dip to 48 in 2010 from 50 in 2009. Speaking in Parliament, Ms Abbott said the rise was “alarming”, stressing she believed “this kind of cruelty is barbaric”.

“We’ve got to send the message out that this kind of thing is wrong. The laws are clear so we need to talk about why these incidents are increasing,” she said.

The Labour MP added she was “concerned that there are gangs of people, sometimes with dogs, who think this is a macho thing to do. The problem is that some of the campaigning on badger culling has given a green light to this kind of attitude to our wildlife.”

Labour has opposed a badger cull, arguing it will cost more money than it would save, put strain on the police and could even cause TB to spread.

Trunk road helps thousands to get the message



These pictures show why people stopped by a busy trunk road to knock on the door, asking what they could do to help the fight against badger culling and whom they can contact, writes *Debbie Bailey of High Peak Badger Group*.

INSPIRED after my trip to Parliament with my 74-year-old dad for the debate last year, on the train journey home we decided to up the ante. My dad lives in Furness Vale along the very busy main A6 road from London to Carlisle adjacent to the Buxton to Manchester railway line. Thousands of people pass by each day – an opportunity too good to miss.

Our idea was to see if we could beg, steal or borrow some placards to put in his garden! We went to see an old friend of my dad’s who owns a hardware yard to see if we could get some plywood. I mentioned that it was for the Badger Trust and what it was for, and after a little feminine persuasion he let me have it for cost price.

The next day I paid the local Paint

Master warehouse a visit, pleading poverty and said what I needed the paint for. This time I did even better: they let me have everything I needed FREE. People can be so good if they recognise it’s for a good cause. The next week my dad, my other half and I set about making three boards, painting two white with writing in black and we painted the other black with white lettering.

We have had so much great feedback, and have advised people to write to their local MPs, to tell their friends and family to do the same, and to go online and sign the No Cull petition. I am also approaching the local newspapers for them to do yet another story.

Now my local MP has said he has had many letters sent from around the area. Result!

Evidence and witnesses vital

Many serious crimes against badgers have gone unprosecuted because of lack of evidence. EVIDENCE is the word

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) must observe clear guidelines as to whether it allows a case to proceed to court. Opinion between the CPS and the police can differ.

The burden of proof in criminal cases means the prosecution must prove its case, while the accused do not have to prove their innocence. Furthermore, the CPS has to be sure that any case will have at least a 50-50 chance of

success. After all that, the magistrate, judge or jury have to be satisfied of the defendant's guilt 'beyond all reasonable doubt'. Quite a series of hurdles to jump.

That is why all suspicious incidents have to be logged, dated, and witnessed and the scenes of the suspected crimes left absolutely undisturbed. Police should be called immediately.

Anyone suspected of being criminally involved should not on any account be approached. They are probably the most dangerous species on the planet.

Blue "poison" a false alarm

Members of Warwickshire Badger Group were worried when they found piles of peanuts mixed with iridescent granules – almost identical to poisonous rat bait – in a large active sett near a walkway.

The police were notified and Natural England sent one of their poisons team to investigate. Happily it turned out to be a false alarm; ecologists doing badger survey work for the controversial HS2

railway project were responsible.

The granules turned out to be tiny pieces of grey plastic, which the badgers eat along with the peanuts and subsequently expel into latrines. This provides information about routes and distances travelled by the badgers.

The local group were not warned about the surveys, and were surprised to find that these 'tracer' pellets were quite different from the ones they use.

Drunken badger stops traffic

A badger found apparently dead on a road in north-western Germany had gorged itself on over-ripe cherries and had staggered out into the middle of the road blind drunk.

Police said the cherries had fermented in the badger's stomach and the fruit had produced alcohol. The badger was also suffering from another consequence

of inebriation – diarrhoea, which was studded with cherry stones.

Officers prodded the animal with a stick and shooed it off the road and into a nearby meadow to sleep it off.

The episode raises the question of whether badgers have hangovers, and what this one's wife said when he finally arrived home!

FOR EMERGENCIES CALL:

Your local Police Station / 999

Surrey Police Wildlife Crime Officer 0845 125 2222

Wildlife Aid, Leatherhead 0906 1800132

(website www.wildlifeaid.org.uk)

RSPCA 0300 1234 999

Member of WSBG Committee

NEIGHBOURING BADGER GROUPS

East Surrey 0208 660 9827

East Hants 01420 87366

West Sussex 01243 825804

Mid Sussex 01342 870320

Binfield, Berks 0709 2234377

Herts & Middx 01992 589152

BADGER TRUST

0845 828 7878

Website www.badgertrust.org.uk

WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP

P.O. BOX 67, GUILDFORD, SURREY GU3 1YR

Website www.wsbg.co.uk Tel/Fax 01483 811989 E-mail wsbg@wsbg.co.uk

Chairman Nick Nickells 01483 570733 nick@nickells.plus.com

Treasurer Nigel Mee 01428 605398 nigel.mee@btconnect.com

Secretary Dave Williams 01483 811989 dave@wsbg.co.uk

Membership Secretary Rodger Munt 01276 29456 rmmunt@btinternet.com

Field Officer Dave Williams 01483 811989 dave@wsbg.co.uk

Other Committee members

Peter Eggleton 01428 607731 peter@plustrue.freemove.co.uk

John Whitaker 01306 730733 jandhwhitaker@waitrose.com

Pat Williams 01483 811989 pat@wsbg.co.uk

Jacqui Christmas 07840 777749 jacqueline.christmas@virgin.net

Martin D'Arcy 07941 496187 mwfda@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor Clare Windsor 01483 418048 clare.windsor@waitrose.com

15 Tuesley Corner, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1TB

WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP

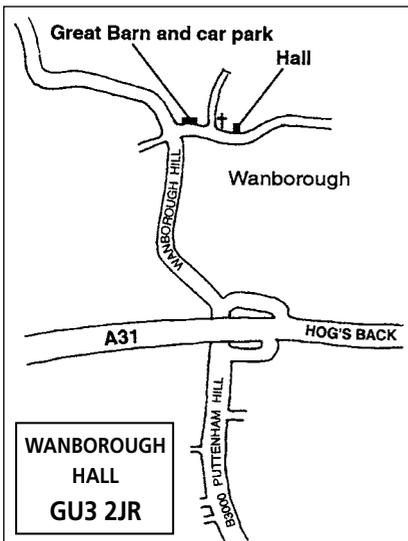
EVENING MEETINGS

Tuesday September 24
FERRET RESCUE SURREY

As you can tell by the name, this group is very active in rescuing and re-homing these lovely small animals, which get lost in the countryside when being used to control rabbits. Ferrets make very nice pets, and we hope some will come along to see us.

Tuesday October 22
THE FOX PROJECT

The Fox Project has been established since 1991, under its founder **Trevor Williams** who is our guest. He will tell us about the organisation and the many changes it has undergone, and will describe some of the successful rescues and releases of these beautiful creatures. The Fox Project has received several awards for its work.



All evening meetings start at 8pm and are held in Wanborough Hall unless otherwise stated.

This is just off the A31 Hogs Back.

Take the B3000 exit (from Guildford it's the first exit) and follow signs to Wanborough. At the bottom of the hill turn right (sign-posted Great Barn and Church).

The car park is on the left next to the Barn.

Walk up to the hall, just beyond the church.



The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of West Surrey Badger Group.

Permission must be sought from WSBG before reproducing any material from this newsletter.

Printed on recycled paper by Imprint Colour – www.imprintcolour.co.uk

© WSBG, 2013