



# Badger survey

The badger is widespread in Britain, including in the south east. This nocturnal, omnivorous mammal sleeps underground in extended family groups. It is a common road casualty, and the subject of controversy among gardeners and farmers. It is often persecuted despite being protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Badger digging is not a big issue in this area at present, but has been recorded.

These social animals live in a group of holes called a set (or sett). During March and April of this year, PW&HG carried out a survey for badger sets through the parish of Plumpton and part of East Chiltington. The survey was based on personal knowledge and comment from local people, and information from the Sussex Branch of the Badger Trust (BTSB) and from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SBRC). In all, 12 people participated in five survey sessions, plus some other exploratory recce or follow-up visits.

The idea was to locate all the sets, record their position and, using a standard recording sheet, record a range of information about the size (number of active holes) of each set, its habitat and other features relating to its occupation.

Over 25 potential sites were checked (and all the potential downland areas of Plumpton were scoured) – followed by key data consolidation and verification meetings (in the Plough or Half Moon!). We found 16 active sets, five abandoned sets, two sites where we could only find active latrines, and two sites where badgers had been reported but we could find only evidence of rabbits.

We reckon that the survey was complete for Plumpton, although we are now waiting for winter when it will be easier to follow up on one or two further leads. Five recorded sets that we had information for were in the far reaches of East Chiltington and didn't get checked (no pub?) and, indeed, a large part of East Chiltington was not covered – any volunteers, any local knowledge?

There are, of course, some sensitivities about badgers and information on their whereabouts. So, we will not be publishing a detailed map, but I can

say that the main concentration is at the south end of the parish associated with the chalk, there is another band of lesser concentration across the middle of the parish, and they are rather thin on the ground at the north end of the parish. A few of the more well-known sets were not as active as we expected or had been abandoned, but were perhaps more than replaced by a number of significant sets that seem to be of fairly recent origin. One site first recorded in 1973 was still going strong.

All the data will be retained by the group and copied to the SBRC and BTSB.

Tony Hutson  
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