

WARWICKSHIRE BADGER GROUP

SOME NOTES ON THE RECORDING OF BADGER SETTS.

Every known sett within the County of Warwickshire is recorded by physically marking the position on 1:25000 scale "Pathfinder" Series Ordnance Survey maps, using different symbols to indicate the type of sett - Main, Auxiliary or Outlier.

All setts are also recorded on our electronic database. The following four items are basic, essential requirements to help maintain an accurate and highly functional database :-

- 1) The **exact location** (normally to within 10 metres, using an eight-figure grid reference. (Eg - SP 2579/3694).
- 2) A **description of the location**
- 3) A count of the **total number of entrance holes**
- 4) A count of the number of **entrance holes in use**

Much additional information is held on the database. This includes signs of badger activity on and around the sett (latrines, paw prints, hair, bedding, pathways, scratch posts, etc), details of the habitat (vegetation, soil etc), ease of public access, the history of the sett and the identity of the landowner when known. If you can provide any of this then it will be most welcome too.

1 - The exact location

If you are conversant with the Ordnance Survey grid reference system, then please supply an eight-figure reference. Use of GPS equipment, if you have it, can be very helpful in this respect. Alternatively you can also use the **what3words** app on your mobile phone.

If you do not have GPS equipment and you are not conversant with the OS grid reference system and you do not have a mobile phone either then you can always supply a sketch plan of the area with the sett position clearly marked. However it is essential to remember that the recorder may have no knowledge of your area - as he mainly works with maps. So please include on your sketch any features which appear on the map so that the area can be positively identified.

The most useful features to put on sketches are:- **roads** (by name or number), **road junctions** (with arrows pointing to the roads destinations), **woods, copses and spinneys** (by name), **canals, railways** (in use or dismantled), **rivers, streams, or brooks** (by name) **farms and farm driveways, footpaths and bridleways, ponds, and hedgerows**. (Beware that many hedgerows have been removed but still appear on the maps though.)

When you have chosen the features to show on the sketch, then pace out or estimate the distance to one or more of them from the sett. The corners of fields or woods are good for this. Remember also to indicate North direction on the sketch - as this can save the recorder trouble.

2 - Description of the location

This can be invaluable in pinpointing the sett. A simple description will normally suffice. Examples are "Roadside bank and hedgerow on west side of road", or "In the south bank of a small pond under dense bramble cover", or "In south-east corner of small copse, 5 metres from south edge and 10 metres from east edge", or "In hedgerow at north end of field, 55 metres from north-east corner".

Include as much information as possible wherever you can. It all helps.

3 - Total number of entrance holes

This will usually give a good indication of the type of sett that you have found. A lot of holes would indicate a MAIN sett. (This can consist of any number of holes from seven or eight to a hundred !). About four or five holes could indicate it being an AUXILIARY sett, whereas one or two holes would usually suggest it is an OUTLIER sett.

4 - Number of entrance holes in use

When holes are in use they are normally clean from debris with "polished" sides and will usually have well worn pathways leading from them. If the ground is soft there could be paw prints visible and there is often bedding to be seen. This bedding is usually seen as a ball of grass and leaves with a trail of debris leading back from where this has been gathered from. Very often there may be freshly dug earth (spoil) around the hole entrance which has a path or channel through the middle of it where the badger has walked through. There may also be individual badger hairs in the soil if you look carefully enough. Look

also for parallel claw marks, (usually five), particularly where the earth has large clay content. These claw marks do also appear on branches laying on the floor near entrances where the badgers have clambered over them to get in and out of the sett.

Holes which are not in use are often partly filled with leaves and debris with grass and algae growing in and around them. There may also be cobwebs across the holes. Remember though that it only takes a spider one night to make a web and one windy evening to blow leaves and debris into an entrance hole.

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE SO ACCURATE ?

Because, despite the protection given to both badgers and their setts by the Protection of Badgers Act of 1992, they are still endangered by badger diggers, land development, and occasionally by landowners too. If a sett is being attacked or endangered then no time must be lost in informing the police and in giving them the location. (Dial 999 if the crime is being committed at the time, or 101 if you have discovered the crime afterwards. You can also call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 if you want your anonymity guaranteed). If the police are uncertain of the precise location they can contact us and we will provide the details from our database. Similarly we sometimes help the RSPCA, or rescue centres, if they have treated an injured badger which needs to be released near its' home sett. We are also often asked for information by Severn Trent Water, Transco, local authorities, and ecological surveyors when new pipelines are to be installed or development is proposed. This includes work on roads and railways. We therefore need our database to be both comprehensive and accurate to ensure we can help maintain the safety and well being of Warwickshire's badgers at all times.

SETT RECORDING TEMPLATE FORM

We have available a simple form for help in recording setts which is easy to follow and to complete. It is mainly a tick list. A blank form and a completed example is provided with your welcome membership pack. Use of the forms is preferred because the data is in a standard format. Prospective sett checkers can print off their own to complete as and when they want. If a form is not available then don't worry - we would sooner have information in any format than no information at all. Please feel free to refer to things like shops, supermarkets, garden centre, garage or filling station, factories or commercial activities, or

public houses by name when describing sett, (or casualty) locations. Although these are not shown on the OS maps held the recorder can refer to internet websites to help find locations.

WARNING

If you find a sett with all holes blocked do not under any circumstances try to open any up - the sett may have been gassed with cyanide-producing crystals which are lethal. There may be signs of white powder/residue near to entrances in such instances. TAKE ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCES - INFORM THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY AND LET THEM SORT IT OUT.

Steve Hawkes - May 2021