

OGB: Ten Point Guide to badger watching

Under the Protection of Badgers Act (POBA - 1992) it is an offence to disturb a badger or interfere with their setts. Take care to be very respectful of the environment when badger watching. If you come across signs of possible sett interference or wildlife crime report it to the police and obtain a crime number (see below).

COVID-19 Update: It is important to avoid passing COVID to wildlife. Badgers are potentially susceptible to the virus. If sett watching take COVID precautions and keep 2m or more away from the sett.

- 1 Locate and survey the badger sett. See if it's active before proceeding, to save later disappointment, e.g. check for signs of fresh bedding (usually straw, maybe leaves, bracken) left outside the main entrance at the end of the mound of freshly dug earth, fresh dung located in nearby dung pits, paw prints, hairs, claw marks on nearby trunks of trees etc. A trail camera may be helpful.
- 2 Obtain permission to watch from the Landowner if necessary.
- 3 Assess sett complex beforehand to find the best points to watch the main or active entrances. Good vantage points include sitting up a tree or sitting on the ground and leaning up against one. This hides your silhouette, reducing your chances of being detected and also reduces back-ache!
- 4 Stay downwind, so that the Badgers don't detect your scent. (Don't wear perfume, aftershave or smoke!). This lessens the chances of the Badgers smelling you and retreating back down the sett or else trotting off as soon as they emerge. This may mean changing your chosen position on the day, depending on the direction of the wind. Best if you can be above the sett entrances i.e. on top of a bank, so if the wind changes while you are watching, and gust round the site, your scent still rises up and away without detection. Probably best to position yourself 10m or so away to start with. Stay 2m or more away at all times. Hides are unnecessary and may attract other people's attention.
- 5 Wear warm clothes that don't rustle, the duller and darker the better. Balaclavas help keep out the cold and midges. Wear, or take with you, insect repellent- especially so in July and August.
- 6 Take a box of matches (to check wind direction), binoculars (8 x 56 work well at dusk), camera (for those memorable pictures and slides), notebook and a torch (to see your way home). A cushion or chair to sit on might be helpful). N.B. A red filtered torch will not disturb Badgers. You will also need to take COVID-19 precautions below*.
- 7 Plan to arrive roughly an hour before dusk, when the Badgers are most likely to emerge. May and June are good months to start watching, you may have the added bonus of seeing cubs - which if present tend to make the adults come out early to get a break from the "kids". If you can stick the cold, February is good for courting behaviour.
- 8 Once positioned, try to keep still, making as little noise as possible. Resist temptation to talk or even whisper to your companion(s).
- 9 After you have finished watching, leave quietly and discreetly.
- 10 Keep a record of what you find and see. If you find a new sett report it to OGB !

Please also see:

- Sett survey report form – OBG_030
- Wildlife crime reporting – OBG_034
- Badger Trust guidance for the public and those who regularly feed badgers in their garden <https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/guide>

Change Log

Not applicable – first version