



## Tips for Badger Watchers



A badger comes out from its sett. Will it stay out so that you can watch it? Or will it detect you and go back in?

The main thing to remember when you go badger watching is that badgers are usually frightened of people. This is because badgers have been hunted and cruelly treated by people for hundreds of years. So if a badger thinks that there are people about, it stays in its sett. This means that if you try to watch badgers at their sett, and the badgers know you are there, you probably won't see much of them.

So how might the badgers know that you are at their sett, trying to watch them? And how can you make sure that they don't know you're there?

Well, look at the photo above. It shows a badger emerging from its sett. Imagine that this badger is coming out of a sett that you are watching. What is it doing? It is looking, sniffing and listening for signs of danger. If it sees you, smells you, or hears you, it will go back in. So what you have to do when you go watching is to make sure that the badgers don't see you, smell you or hear you.

### **Making sure the badgers don't see you.**

The badger's eyesight is not very good. It can't see colour, and can't see details very well. It can see shapes and movements though. So, to avoid being seen:

- Don't wear bright clothing. This will make your shape stand out.
- Don't stand too close to the sett. The closer you are, the easier it is for the badgers to see you.
- Do stand or sit where the badgers won't see your shape against the sky.
- Do keep still. If you move around, the badgers might see.

### **Making sure the badgers don't smell you.**

- The badger's sense of smell is very, very good! However, it's not too difficult to make sure that you are not detected by Brock's nose:
- Don't walk over the badger sett or on a badger path. The badgers will be able to smell where you have been, and this may frighten them off.
- Don't stand or sit in a place where the wind is blowing from you, towards the sett. If you are looking at the sett, and you can feel the wind on your back, then the badgers will smell you when they come out.
- Do stand or sit in a place where the wind is NOT blowing from you, towards the sett.
- Even better, stand or sit in a place where the wind is blowing from the sett, towards you. (If you are looking at the sett, and you can feel the wind in your face, that's just right!)

### **Making sure the badgers don't hear you.**

The badger's hearing is also very good. If the badgers are going to detect you, it will most likely be because they hear you. So it is very important that you keep as quiet as possible when you are watching badgers. Keeping quiet isn't too difficult, but there are so many ways you can make a noise without realising it! Here are a few ideas for keeping quiet on a badger watch:

- Don't wear a waterproof coat or jacket, or waterproof trousers. These tend to make a noise whenever you move, and this will frighten the badgers. If you need to keep warm, wear an extra jumper, or a fleece jacket – these are quieter.
- Don't take packets of sweets to eat while you are watching - opening plastic bags and taking wrappers off sweets or chocolates will make a rustling sound and scare off the badgers.
- Do try to sit or stand in a place where you will have a good view of the sett, and where you will be comfortable. If you have to move later because you are uncomfortable, or because you can't see the badgers properly, the badgers may hear you and go back underground.
- If possible, don't walk on twigs, over dry leaf litter, or through long grass. If you do, you will make a lot of noise. Try to walk where the ground is bare, or where the grass is short.
- If you take binoculars to watch the badgers with, take them out of their case *before* you get to the sett. If you take them out while you are there, the badgers may hear you.
- Don't talk when the badgers are out, or even while you are waiting for them to come out!
- Do enjoy talking about what you have seen, after you have left the sett!

It is important to remember that the things we have told you are not just for when you are at the sett watching the badgers. You also need to be careful when you approach the sett before the watch. Sometimes, badgers are out before you get to the sett. This means that you must be as quiet as possible even before you arrive at a sett, just in case. You don't want to ruin your badger watch before it has even started!

You should also be as quiet as you can when you leave the sett. You might think that once the watch is over, you don't need to worry any more. If you frighten the badgers now, it doesn't matter as you are going home anyway. Think again! Is it fair to frighten the badgers, just because you have finished watching them? If you scare the badgers when you leave, they may go underground and stay there for some time. This means they have less time to go looking for the food they need to survive. So please think about the badgers, and leave the sett as quietly as you can after your watch.

So, now you know the basic "rules" of badger watching! If you go on a badger watch, and if everybody follows these "rules", hopefully you will have a good time, and see lots of badger activity.

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