

Suffolk Badger and other Mammals Group



Jun 2011

Issue 5

Badger Cubs - At the Hide, and on the Internet.



Special points of interest:

- Suffolk Badger update
- Dormouse project - latest
- Ermine Stoats in Suffolk!
- Great news from the Margaret Grimwade Hide!
- Look out for Harbour porpoises!

AGM 2011

This years Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 15th October at Foxburrow Farm.

Please make a note of the date in your diary!

During the day we will be getting updates on Suffolk's Mammals, learning how to identify what has been nibbling nuts, as well as a visiting a fantastic location in the search for local wildlife and the tracks they leave.

Suffolk Badger Update

Adrian Hinchliffe

Hi All,

Its been another very busy few months, but thankfully some great news & stories to tell!

At the end of December, Badger's were in the local papers after a Twitter topic appeared regarding some allotments in Felixstowe. Our Badger surveyors were hot on the trail after the reported sightings & within days I was informed by Judith Hedges & Vivien Thomson that they had located another new sett. Thank you to all our surveyors, its a mammoth task to monitor the setts in Suffolk, but its very important. Please keep me updated with any sett records you have as you travel around the county.



We now have an updated "Badger Surveyors Handbook" which is designed to be an informative guide as well as keeping you safe.

During March we held another training session at Leiston Abbey farm which proved to be very popular & will be held again in the Autumn / Winter months.

Over the last few months I have received

a few calls regarding injured badgers, unfortunately despite best attempts, 1 died before arrival, 1 had to be euthanized & another died after several days in rehab after initially looking to be doing well. In May however, work Colleague Louise Hartshorn from Suffolk, found a Badger cub in the road just across the border in Wormingford, Essex. It had been run over by several cars, luckily the wheels passing either side of it. She moved the cub out of the road, but later found it had fallen back into the path of oncoming vehicles again, so she decided to take it home & gave me a call.

Ode to a Badger

By Samantha Lockey

Poor little Badger
Laid out in the road
Where would you be now
If that vehicle had slowed?

Looking so peaceful
Laid out on your side,
Would you be safe now
If that car had gone wide?

Did you die quickly?
I hope it was clean.
Was it a mistake,
Or was that driver mean?

I'll drag you away,
Though hell, you don't care.
You're now past the pain
From those wheels that tear.

Bear with me Badger
I see how you died,
Thrown up in the air
To land dead on your side.

Your body is cold,
Your spirit is free,
But blood soaks the road,
I just can't let you be.

I'll drag you away
To the grass near by,
There lay you quiet
'neath the wide open sky.

Please send in any Suffolk
Badger casualty records or
sett reports to:
adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk

Suffolk Badger Update

Adrian Hinchliffe

After force feeding the cub with fluids, we went to where the cub had been originally found & found 2 more cubs! Louise informed me a suckling sow had been killed there 10 days prior. All 3 cubs were taken to Judy Massie of the North East Essex Badger group where she stayed up all night rehydrating the cubs every hour. Her determination & willingness to give the cubs, which were severely dehydrated & just skin & bones, every chance, eventually paid off & within 36 hrs they were typical bouncing badger cubs (albeit a slight chest infection on the original cub) The cubs were

taken to "Wildlife Aid" in Surrey where they'll form a group of 6 to be released (after passing triple tests for TB) in the Autumn. They can be seen on the centres' webcam at www.wildlifeaid.org.uk.

Whilst on the subject of Cubs have you visited the Margaret Grimwade Hide this year? We have had sightings of 4 cubs -the first for several years. Margaret was always concerned that it



had turned into a "Bachelor pad" but on 6th of May, Trevor Stamp's group of visitors had the first glimpses of 3 amazing cubs which made theirs & many other visitors subsequent nights!

With the driest Spring across much of England & Wales since the early 1900's, wildlife has been suffering. Badger casualties have certainly soared as they forage further for food.

The badger obtains much of its water intake from its main food substance - the Earthworm. While the weather remained warm and sunny all through the spring, the earthworm retreated further underground, that is, apart from the lawns of keen gardeners, who by watering their lush green carpets, in turn encouraged the badgers and hence the number of complaints came in early. Another food source for badgers is the blackberry. A wide range of mammals such as dormice, hedgehogs & foxes; birds like blackbirds, bullfinches & chaffinches; & insects including butterflies, wasps and moths, all eat this fruit. Unless we get a lot more rain, this harvest for wildlife, although coming early, may well be not as plump and plentiful as normal.

It will be interesting to see how the weather influences the end of year stats for badger casualties, but the early figures have rocketed. The Badger will need to use more of its territory and adapt its omnivorous diet if its to build up its fat stores ready for the winter.

This year the Suffolk Badger Group invested in a remote camera device. The Pro Stalk unit supplied at Discount to us from Gardenature will be very useful. It has already been used to monitor an injured badger in rehab, placed out in the field to monitor sett usage and also to investigate a theory on Otter activity. Sometimes we get complaints about “our” badgers digging up peoples gardens, they do this as they forage especially during dry periods in the year, but sometimes the Badger is not the culprit, the remote camera is a useful tool to prove this.

gardenature
WILDLIFE CAMERA SYSTEMS

“Gardenature” have very kindly agreed to give our members a 10% discount off any of their wild-life / nestbox camera systems (excluding accessories and other products).

(<http://www.gardenature.co.uk/>)



They say the early bird catches the worm - Well, Sheila Taubler caught this early Badger at 0445 am from her window, catching not worms, but hovering up the bird food! Do you have an interesting story / comment / picture with reference to a mammal? If you could kindly send them in to me then they may well appear in the next edition of the newsletter. AH

(adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk)

Harvest Mouse Project - By Martha Meek

The harvest mouse project has been a great success with much learnt about the species over the last few years. The field work is now finished and the project is being written up for the funders (PTES and Chadacre trust). Field visits found harvest mouse nests at over 79% of all the sites visited plus skeletal evidence in 35% of all the samples of owl pellets. The project has shown that harvest mice are more common in well connected sites and are not always present in isolated sites even where the habitat is ideal – this reinforces the living landscapes message that many species need a well connected landscape to survive. The highest numbers of harvest mice nests were found in well connected wetland habitats such as river valleys, grazing marshes and estuaries. High numbers of nests were also found in wild bird and game cover plots containing millet. Full results from the project will be available in autumn.

Have you seen an Ermine Stoat in Suffolk?

Arthur Rivett was very fortunate earlier this year to not only see one, but also to capture it on camera, as it quickly departed with its prey!



Arthur Rivett

There have been a few instances of reports of Ermine Stoats over the years which include locations such as Lakenheath, running beside the river Deben at Ramsholt, Lackford and even Alton water before the reservoir was flooded. It is not unusual the further south of the country you go, for the ermine coat to be incomplete, as shown in Arthurs photo. Let us know if you spot one!

The Stoat is related to the Badger being from the same family - Mustelidae. It has, like most Mustelids, large scent glands. Rather than digging its home like the Badger it will often use the homes of its rodent prey, using the fur and skin to line its nest chamber. Other locations can include piles of logs, or cracks in walls and gaps in rocks. The home of the stoat is known as a Den.

Harbour Porpoise off the Suffolk Coast?

By Alan Miller

How many times have you been sea watching hoping for a rare gull, skua or petrel & a harbour porpoise comes into view! If you look at the number of records held by SBRC & the Sea Watch Foundation it would seem this is a rare occurrence with only one sighting since 2007.

However, talking to birders, although harbour porpoise are seen regularly it's seems that no one thinks to submit records.

At less than 2 metres in length it is the smallest and most numerous of the cetaceans found in north-west European continental shelf waters. They have a short, blunt head without a prominent beak and rarely leap from the water, which helps distinguish them from dolphins.

The North Sea harbour porpoise population is thought to number around 280,000 animals but they have suffered a noticeable decline since the Second World War. Most of the animals washed up have been killed by coming into contact with ships propellers but many others are drowned at sea through being trapped in fishing nets. Increase in shipping and continued pollution particularly oil are a constant threat to the population.

A healthy porpoise population is a good indicator of a healthy sea & the Wildlife Trusts have a campaign to inspire people & ensure the seas resources are sustainable. 'The North Sea, Our Living Sea' is supported by 12 Wildlife Trusts including Suffolk Wildlife Trust, see www.northseawildlife.org.uk

Currently, there are a number of local threats to our marine mammals: further off shore wind farms are planned, as are two new nuclear power stations and the ever present oil tankers anchored off shore. All result in increased shipping & the potential threat of pollution. Without continuous records of our marine wildlife to inform decisions being made by planners & ministers, they will only have the evidence supplied by a few snap shot surveys with which to make their determinations. As with land based surveys, weather & seasons will vary as will the results. Continuous recording will give us data to enable protection measures to be put in place.

If the seas are healthy for cetaceans, who are one of the top predators, then it will support all other life forms, including birds.

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Suffolk Mammal Group are keen to receive records of harbour porpoise both past and present

Next time you are noting a Sabine's gull flying past Southwold and at the same time a porpoise is swimming by please submit both records to SBRC or alternatively email the porpoise record to alan.miller@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that all subscriptions are now due. If you wish to continue to support the Suffolk Badger & Other Mammals Group, and receive newsletters, complete the slip below and return it together with a minimum donation of £5.00 to (cheques made payable to "Suffolk Badger group") Martin Hancock, Treasurer, Suffolk Badger & Other Mammals Group, c/o SWT, Brooke House, Ashbocking, Ipswich, IP6 9JY or bring it along on the day of the AGM.

Name.....

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Post code..... Email address.....

Donation.....

Thank you.