

# Technical Guidance Series



Chartered  
Institute of  
Ecology and  
Environmental  
Management

In association with



## Competencies for Species Survey: Badger



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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the knowledge, skills and experience required to survey, disturb or to carry out research works (hereinafter referred to generically as 'survey') for the badger *Meles meles* in a professional capacity. To be undertaking such work, CIEEM would consider attainment of the criteria outlined in this guidance to be a minimum for an individual to competently survey for badgers. The Institute aims to drive up standards in the ecological profession for the benefit not only of ecologists but also of the public.

This document does not provide guidance on the techniques to be employed in carrying out survey activities: references to published sources of guidance on survey methods are listed in Section 5.

## 2. Status

Badgers occur across most of Britain and Ireland and can be common or very common in particular parts, especially the south of England and the Midlands, and the south-west of Wales. Populations are threatened by development and road construction, leading to a loss of foraging area and increased numbers of road casualties, habitat loss and fragmentation, persecution and disturbance as a result of recreational activities. Despite this, badger population levels are thought to be increasing. Badgers are primarily protected for welfare concerns (e.g. in relation to badger baiting) rather than for conservation reasons.

## 3. Legislation and Licensing

### Legislation

Badgers are protected under the following legislation. This outline of legislation is not comprehensive and the appropriate legislation should always be consulted for a definitive list of offences.

COUNTRY	LEGISLATION GIVING PROTECTION	SCHEDULE OR ANNEX LISTING
England	Protection of Badgers Act 1992 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	n/a Schedule 6
Wales	Protection of Badgers Act 1992 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	n/a Schedule 6
Scotland	Protection of Badgers Act 1992 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	n/a Schedule 6
Northern Ireland	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	Schedules 5, 6 & 7
Republic of Ireland	Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended)	Schedule 5

### Licensing

The following Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations (SNCOs) are responsible for issuing licences to permit actions that would otherwise be illegal under the relevant legislation:

COUNTRY	SNCO
England	Natural England
Wales	Natural Resources Wales
Scotland	Scottish Natural Heritage
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Republic of Ireland	National Parks & Wildlife Service

A *survey licence is required*: where intrusive surveying (e.g. using remotely controlled cameras) may disturb badgers within setts.

A *survey licence is not required*: where setts are not damaged or badgers within them disturbed during surveying.

In the event that a badger is disturbed e.g. when undertaking a general visual survey, an unlicensed surveyor must withdraw immediately, unless they are in the presence of a licensed surveyor.

It is the role of the appropriate licensing authority to define the criteria for issuing such licences as may be required for survey work, therefore, attainment of the skills set out is no guarantee that a licence will be obtained; other criteria will need to be considered.

## 4. Knowledge, Skills and Experience

To independently and competently undertake badger surveys an individual would be expected to possess all of the following knowledge, skills and experience.

A surveyor needs to recognise their level of attainment along a continuum. Those without the breadth and depth of the knowledge, skills and experience that CIEEM consider a minimum, should always work with, or seek advice from, an adequately experienced individual.

### Knowledge

Individuals should have a knowledge and understanding of:

- a. conservation status;
- b. distribution;
- c. threats to populations, species range and species survival;
- d. badger ecology, breeding biology and behaviour;
- e. known ecological requirements;
- f. legal protection;
- g. licensing and permissions;
- h. current relevant guidance on survey methods and standards;
- i. survey methods used to survey for badgers and the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of these methods;
- j. range of factors that might lead to bias in the survey results, and false negatives;
- k. different seasonal factors affecting surveying (vegetation growth in summer can obscure setts and field signs, seasonal sett usage patterns can affect levels of sett occupancy, spring is best time for bait-marking surveys);
- l. sources of information on known occurrence and distribution of badgers (including NBN Gateway, local biological/environmental records and local mammal/badger group);
- m. metadata standards / data sharing; and
- n. health and safety issues associated with surveying for badgers.

### Skills

Individuals should have skills and experience enabling them to confidently:

- a. identify badger field signs accurately (setts, day nests, dung pits and latrines, faeces, paths, footprints, hair, scratching posts, odour, foraging signs);
- b. identify field signs associated with other species, especially foxes, rabbits, otters, dogs and cats;
- c. assess habitat potential for badgers;
- d. appropriately scope fieldwork;
- e. plan and implement sound scientific surveys;
- f. interpret and analyse survey data;
- g. take appropriate biosecurity precautions and procedures in relation to livestock and crops; and
- h. take appropriate health and safety precautions.

### Practical Experience

Most of the knowledge and skills set out in this guidance can effectively be gained from personal experience and training courses. Individuals are expected to have gained practical experience (in varying survey seasons) of:

- a. at least two accompanied (by a surveyor with experience of at least twenty sites) surveys of sites where the majority of badger field signs are present.

In the case of bait marking, an individual should also have experience of at least two accompanied (by a surveyor with experience of at least ten sites) bait placing and marker recovery surveys.

## 5. Reading

The following references are essential reading for those wishing to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to survey for badgers.

Delahay RJ, Brown JA, Mallinson PJ, Spyvee PD, Handoll D, Rogers LM and Cheeseman C L (2000) The use of marked bait in studies of the territorial organisation of the European badger (*Meles meles*). *Mammal Review* **30**: 73-87.

Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989) *Surveying Badgers*, Mammal Society.

Natural England (2009) *Interpretation of 'Disturbance' in relation to badgers occupying a sett*, WMLG16. Natural England, Peterborough.

Natural England (2009) *Guidance on 'Current Use' in the definition of a Badger Sett*, WMLG17. Natural England, Peterborough.

Neal E and Cheeseman C (1996) *Badgers*, Poyser Natural History.

Roper TJ (2010) *Badger*. Collins New Naturalist.

Scottish Natural Heritage (2003) *Best Practice Guidance - Badger Surveys*. Inverness Badger Survey 2003. Commissioned Report No. 096.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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