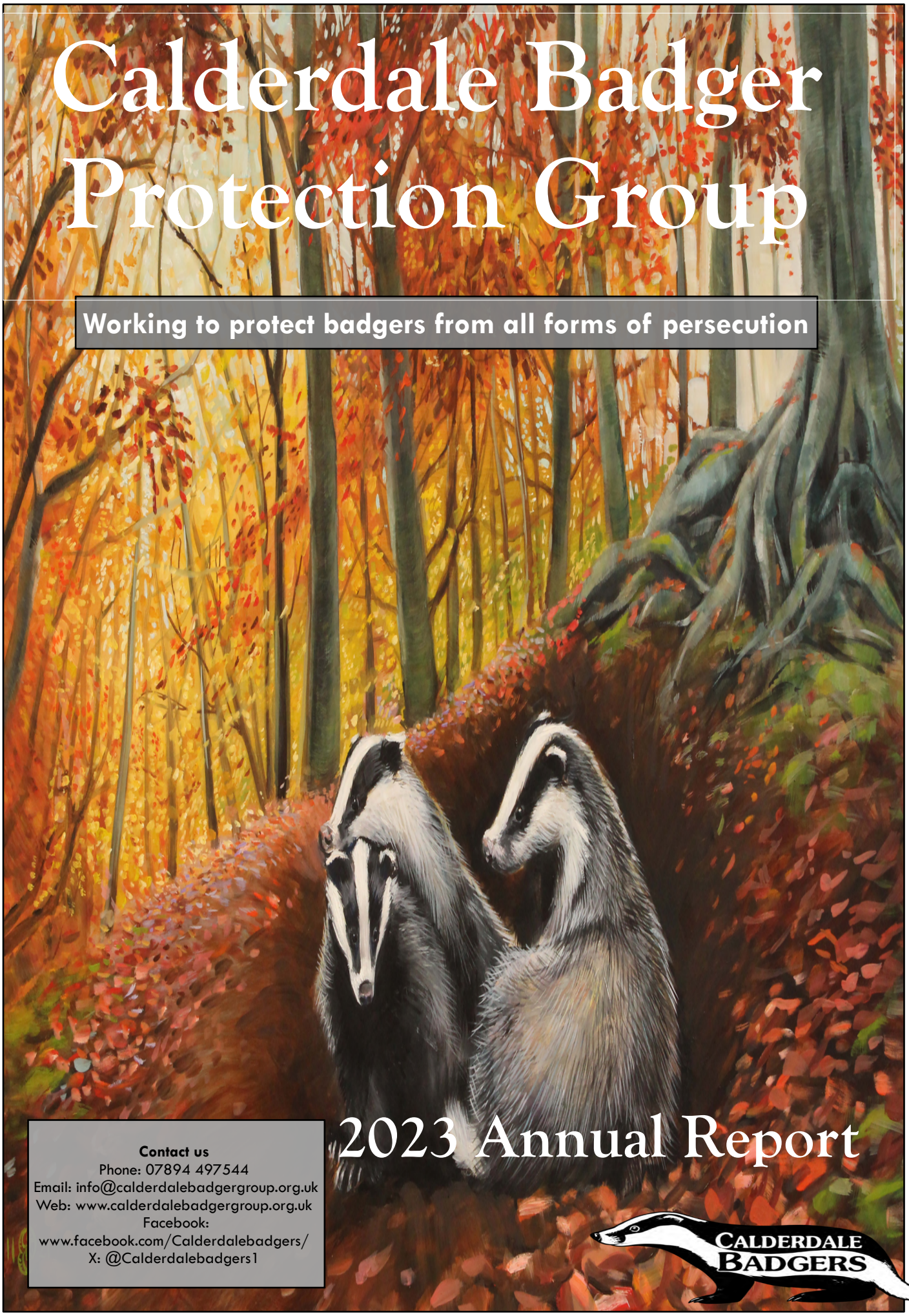
Calderdale Badger Protection Group

Working to protect badgers from all forms of persecution



2023 Annual Report

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CALDERDALE BADGERS

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report



Lobby of the Houses of Parliament organised by the Badger Trust



Snowy Sett Checking



Pauline Kidner, Rescue training

It's been a busy year for Calderdale.

We're a small borough, just ⅕ of West Yorkshire, but our steep wooded valleys and lush pasture are perfect habitat for badgers.

This year we've been busy, with more rescues than ever, a higher turnover of funds as we upgraded our equipment, more keen new members joining, and developments in our relationships with planning and the police.

We now have Instagram as well as Facebook and 'X', to reach more of the public and share the badger love, as well as spreading important campaign messaging against the badger cull.

The Badger Trust provided a grant to enable us to have the fabulous Pauline Kidner up from Secret World to put on rescue training, an excellent weekend that provided valuable updates as well as lots of opportunities to catch up with fellow badgerists from neighbouring groups.

A shout out to the Badger Trust, without whose support we would not be where we are today. They are a small but mighty team (we thank you!).

Apart from thanking all of the above, we need to thank our amazing volunteers, who trawl planning applications, liaise with planning authorities, deal with queries from ecologists, work with the police, go out sett checking, respond to badger related queries (day and night!), attend RTAs and rescues 24/7, create merch, stock shops with our merch, run our social media, attend stalls, do the background work, offer support, and who do it all with enthusiasm and camaraderie.

Lastly, we need also to extend a big thanks to all of the members of the public who support us through social media, by buying our merch, reporting badger issues to us, and who keep a watchful, protective eye on their local badgers. We couldn't do it without all of your eyes and ears.

We hope you enjoy reading a little about some of our adventures this year!



Calderdale's badgers – the reason we exist!



Waiting in the undergrowth, a cub resuce.



Sett surveying in the autumn



Buster at the vets.

Planning Review 2023

Badgers in the UK are covered by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and by Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to:

Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess,or cruelly treat a badger;

Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a badger sett;

Disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett. Disturbance could include digging or scrub clearance within 30m of the sett.

When seeking planning permission, survey reports and mitigation plans are required if:

There are signs of setts or badgers on the development site or nearby;

Historical or distribution records show that badgers are active in the area, or there is suitable habitat for sett building.

Report contributors:

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Lisa Wilkinson

Ian Cooper

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Edited and compiled by Peter Cooke.

Why do you do it?
We are often asked this question, usually with an accompanying shrug- We even ask it of ourselves at times. There are lots of answers but the best one I've heard applies to everyone in the Group, whatever we do.

"For the love of badgers".

If you are of a more formal, less sentimental frame of mind, then I'll quote from the recently released Badger Trust Guide on "Planning, Development and Badgers". "The sole purpose of reviewing a planning case is to try and protect badgers from harm and minimise any impacts the scheme may cause".

2023 has been a significant year for housing development in Calderdale as the effects of the Local Plan are starting to make themselves felt. The demand for housing means that more and more of the countryside that is home to our badgers is earmarked for building. And that will be a continuing theme in the years ahead. This has driven a significant change in our approach.

After a great deal of discussion and at times contentious debate and a great deal more work behind the scenes from the long-standing members of Planning Group, we have now shared limited amounts of our information with the West Yorkshire Ecology Service (WYES). This means that, for the first time, ecologists who approach WYES on behalf of developers are made aware of the presence of badgers. Previously, many developments have proceeded in the absence of any knowledge of badgers on site with potentially devastating consequences. As a result of the efforts of all our sett-surveying members over many years, developers can now use the information to help protect badgers. It is important to stress that specific information on sett location is not provided by WYES to developers so that badgers are protected from unwanted attention.

In the meantime, the unglamorous work of monitoring continues. We trawl through the huge list of planning applications submitted to Calderdale Council to identify those which might pose a threat to our badgers. And this is just the start. Once a potential problem is identified we review our data and often survey the site and talk to the people within the Council's planning services. This year our efforts have paid dividends- we have developed a relationship of trust and respect with the Biodiversity Team and the sharing of information has become a genuine 2-way process.

The year, of course, has not been free of difficulties and disappointments. No matter how much we try to protect our badgers, we can never be 100% successful. The damage to our environment is a complex and wide-ranging problem which is not restricted to our small part of the world. The successes we have enjoyed have been tempered by the failures. Housing development is not the only human threat. Badgers living in quarries have been a recurring theme in 2023. Many of the official approvals for quarrying have a long lifespan. Workings that have been disused for many years can become a haven for all sorts of wildlife. When quarrying activity restarts, the results can be catastrophic. Sadly, we are aware of one active sett which was destroyed completely. The operators of the quarry concerned acted legally and were probably unaware of the sett. Despite a good relationship with our local Wildlife Crime Officers, our eyes and ears cannot be everywhere. But this reality does nothing to stop us striving to do better and find new ways of working.

So, what will 2024 hold for us?

We will continue to develop positive ways of collaborative working with the Council's Planning Department, the Police and with Developers/ Ecologists where possible. Ecologists are now actively encouraged to request a data search directly with Calderdale Badgers. This will create both more work and potentially more income for us to use for the benefit of our badgers. Whatever the challenges 2024 throws our way we will continue to meet them **for the love of our badgers.**

Crime Report 2023

In 2023 we said goodbye to our Wildlife Crime Officer Matt Hamilton who moved to other duties in April 2023. Matt had been a great support to the group and was committed to tackling wildlife crime in Calderdale.

We were very fortunate to have had Matt replaced by WCO Tony Burn. Tony has been incredibly proactive and responsive to any concerns regarding actual or potential badger crime and has always responded in a very timely manner. We are incredibly grateful for his support and for the continued positive relationship we have with Calderdale police force.
We also continue to receive help from The Badger Trusts Wildlife Crimes Officer and Trainer, Craig Fellowes, who is always available for advice and support around any badger crime issues.

We have had a reasonably busy year with badger crime in Calderdale, with issues with quarries dominating the picture this year. Badgers appear very attracted to quarries in this area- Probably due to the ease of access to deep fissures and gaps in which they are able to establish setts.

Our first concern of the year in February, was for an abandoned quarry where we had previously established there were active setts. A large motor cross event was taking place in the quarry and the concern was that this could cause damage and disturbance to the sett. The police were called but were unable to attend while the event was in progress, but this was followed up by our WCO contacting the landowners.

Also, In February a blocked badger sett was discovered in anther quarry and again the police were informed and a crime logged.

An ongoing issue regarding a planning application in a quarry where badgers had been excluded under licence from Natural England but had returned to their original sett rumbled throughout the year, with our WCO taking an active interest in case any wildlife crimes were committed. Thankfully this didn't happen, and the planning group continue to be actively involved.

In May a member of public informed us of a badger sett in a working quarry and concerns that the sett was being damaged by excavation work. Members of the group attended and discovered a large active badger sett on a spoil heap in the middle of the quarry with part of the sett having been damaged. Our WCO attended promptly and spent considerable time tracking and talking to the quarry owners re their responsibilities and the law protecting badgers. He also arranged for the group to work with the quarry owners re understanding the law and badger setts, allowing the group to survey and monitor the site and in putting a 30 m barrier around the sett to protect it. As a group we would always want to work cooperatively with landowners to protect setts and this was a positive outcome for us and the badgers.



On left a sett situated in the middle of a quarry and on the right a sett that has been damaged on a farm

July brought another quarry to our attention. This quarry had been disused for many years and had rewilded with several active setts within it. The quarry had been sold and the new company were to begin mineral extraction again and had come in and completely cleared the site destroying the badger setts in the process. Again, our WCO was very proactive, contacting both the quarry owners and the council's planning department. As planning permission had been granted for mineral extraction to take place until 2046 there had been no requirement from the Planning Department for ecological surveys to be undertaken. PC Burns met with a representative of the council and a planning review was promised to look into the issue of ecological assessments being required if extraction works resume in formerly disused quarries.

August brought issues with another working Calderdale Quarry where the owner was reported to have made threats to get rid of badgers from the quarry and had started to fell trees near an active sett. The police were informed and our WCO went to discuss these issues with the quarry owner and advise him of the law relating to badgers.

Golf courses often have issues with badgers damaging the fairways and greens and are often less than happy to have setts on their courses. We had a report from a golf club member that the greenkeeper had been threatening to get rid of badgers from that club. Our WCO very helpfully attended to discuss this and whilst the greenkeeper denied his comments it allowed the police to have a conversation about badgers and their protection by law.

We had one other issue of a sett having been damaged by a farmer removing stone from an old quarry site on his land. This had not been intentional and when visited buy the police the work stopped immediately, and the badgers have since re- established their sett there.

Sophie's Hotline Week!

Being one of three people who currently hold the badger emergency hotline has led me to some interesting, sad, hopeful and very strange situations. No one call is the same, and it's always good to be prepared with the right questions and advice in mind.

One week in the beginning of 2024 saw us receiving six calls altogether.

Firstly, a very early morning call at 4am, from the council out of hours team to a RTC. They informed us that although the badger had sadly died the caller had stayed there with their hazard lights on to prevent the badger being repeatedly hit by vehicles. It was a dual carriageway and I was really worried about their safety! I was thankful to arrive to the scene to find it was a kind police man who had called it through. He had his flashing lights on so all was safe. He really didn't want the badger to come to any more damage and also wanted to spare other road users the hazard and upset of encountering the poor thing. I arrived within 20 minutes and talked the policeman through how we assess for suspicious injuries and how to respectfully lay a badger to rest. The policeman left with our card and some knowledge of what to do in future, should he encounter a badger again.



An unfortunate end for this little creature

The next morning and another call comes in shortly before 4.30 am. The kind person was already familiar with what to look for, and confirmed the poor badger had already passed away but seemed to be an RTC. A quick assessment of location showed that the badger was in the zone of Huddersfield & District Badger Group so this information was passed on to them to assess. We work closely together, often receiving calls to one another's group areas and therefore sharing information and offering emotional support.

Our third call of the week regarded some potential damage to a badger sett where clearance had begun for building. It's so helpful to receive information on cases like this as we rely on public knowledge of often remote areas to gain information, we could not help badgers without kind wildlife lovers looking out for the safety of badgers in their areas. Referring to our group members, always there to help with queries, I was able to share information with our planning group and they investigated to ensure badgers were being protected & that the landowners were following the laws in place to protect badgers. Our local wildlife crime police often help in these cases too. Our fourth call was about a badger found in a garden sadly passed away. The caller was upset, and also concerned about letting their pet dog out in the garden. We offered advice and support and I met with a new volunteer, attended to remove the badger, assessing her for any signs of suspicious wounds. As the garden was by a busy road, it appeared she may have had a knock from a vehicle and bolted into the garden where she sadly died. It's always a very sad job to have to deal with, although it reminds us how beautiful they are up close. We admired her beautiful long claws and very muscly forearms built for digging those important homes. One of the most crucial things we check are for lactation- we need to be sure that there are no hungry Cubs waiting back at the sett for their mum. However this female appeared young and was not lactating. She was carefully and respectfully laid to rest in the nearby woodland where signs of other badgers' activity showed that perhaps other members of her clan may get the opportunity to come to the realisation a family member- mother, sister, daughter or aunt will not be coming home.◦ The fifth call was from outside of our area, an injured badger still alive but unconscious and injured by the roadside over 80 miles away. I had to get clarity on the badger being alive as the majority of our calls are for deceased badgers. The caller was very upset and hadn't taken their mobile phone with them on their walk so had run to a neighbours house to call for help. I advised what to do next and who to call, all whilst keeping safety in mind. The area was rural and with no local badger group so I had the task of trying to find the best help available. A badger experienced volunteer attended as soon as possible. However in the darkness the badger had disappeared. It's never nice to have an unknown ending but being aware that everyone involved had done everything they could to help, makes people's kindness very inspirational and humbling.◦ Call number six was for a sadly deceased badger local to my home. I was able to attend quickly but soon learned from some dog walkers that poor badger had been there a while. She was able to be assessed and our records updated- we knew of no setts very close to the location but lots of signs of badgers. Assessment of this female gives us valuable information about possible unrecorded setts in the area so we can add it to our list of places to explore. This female wasn't lactating but had she been, knowing where the nearest sett is would have been really important if any cubs needed our help. Finally my few weeks of holding the badger emergency hotline are over. I have recorded all the details on our systems and with the Badger Trust and then deliver the handset to the next volunteer. It's always an interesting time holding the hotline but can be mentally challenging, too. We aren't obliged to physically visit the calls that come through- It all depends on which area our Group members live and who can attend soonest. This week was unusual in that there were three in my area. Often, it's just a case of taking details and passing on information. I'll now enjoy a few weeks off until my turn comes along to be a hotline holder again.

Perspective of a New Member





Members day out – new members learning about badger surveying and sett checking skills.

I joined the Calderdale Badger Protection group in November 2023 and am still learning the ropes; in this short time I've been kept remarkably busy. To date I have attended and supported two brilliant training sessions (Secret World Wildlife Rescue and Rehab and Badger Trust Wildlife Crime), mapped/monitored several local badger setts (including getting my head around the app!), attended and recorded a badger RTA (RIP my friend), assisted two craft fair stalls and started work to develop a stockpile of badger-themed crocheted items for eventual fundraising.

I've thoroughly enjoyed many vaguely badger-related social events including wild swimming in badger-adjacent beauty spots and badger chat at our local sauna pop-up!

Networking opportunities abound and I've been thrilled to discover intersections within the group relating to my other keen interests including arts and crafts, wider animal rescue, local history and rewilding opportunities. I've made brilliant new friends (united in our love of badgers!) and already feel like a warmly welcomed member of the group.

My experiences so far have highlighted exactly how true Margaret Mead's statement really is: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." This group is the perfect example of putting varied skills sets and personalities to use to support our local stripey friends in a variety of thoughtful and dedicated ways. It's helped to restore my sometimes-waning faith in humanity and our ability to achieve great things for the benefit of all – especially those who need protection to thrive.

Badger Bathers

So back in February 2021 a few of the (fool) hardy women in the group who sshared a love of, or were keen to experience, wild swimming decided to form a little sub group known as the 'Badger Bathers'.



Bracing dips for hardy volunteers!

The Badger bathers grew in numbers and in 2023 , EIGHT , brave, bonkers, women from the group met regularly to swim or dip in the icy waters of Calderdale's many reservoirs. Whatever the time of year there is guaranteed to be rain and strong winds! Most of us manage to swim through winter and it gets very cold here in West Yorkshire! Usually with a long hike to wherever we're going to swim and an audience of sheep or cows.

We have a laugh, we squeal and swear entering the water, we splash about, we encourage each other and support each other, share cake and hot tea. Doesn't seem to have much to do with badgers? Well, we have discovered some of our most remote moorland setts while hiking up to a dipping spot. We often talk about things that are happening in the group, things that need doing, make plans.

So much of what we do in the group can feel hard and difficult-the number of road fatalities we go to, the impact of badger crime, the impact of planning and development, rescues that don't have good outcomes....
So swimming together makes us feel good, gives us energy, helps us manage some of the more difficult stuff, it brings us together and we have FUN.

Our Rescues: 999 for badgers!

Holly is named after the vet nurse who managed to muzzle her so that the vet could give her a thorough check. She was reported to us at 2am, through a contact in street cleansing at the council, as dead in the road, but minutes later we were called by a member of the public who had seen her head moving. When our responders arrived she was curled up at the side of the road. She was taken to the vets, checked and then on to rehab for a few days R&R. She recovered quickly in the quiet warmth of the rehab barn, eating them out of house and home!

A week later we were able to take her back and release her next to where she was found. It's a steep, fast, busy country lane, but there was a clear badger path by the road into the field next to where she was found, and she headed straight up the field towards a sett we know about. One of our volunteers left a camera up at the sett, and a couple of nights later, she could be seen alongside another badger, safely foraging near the sett.
Where she should be, back home with her clan.



Badger watch at a member's house.

One of our rescue successes this year was Buster. Buster was named by the police, who stayed with her until we arrived, as she was next to a busy road. They named her Buster, assuming she was a boy, and the name stuck! She was trying to poke her head into the drainage pipe at the bottom of the wall, searching for the comfort and safety of a burrow. She was rescued and taken to the vets, then on to rehab. Initial fears about a limp led to a prolonged stay in rehab. But after a few weeks Buster was trashing the barn and clearly recovered enough for release. We had some anxiety about the release, as she was found on a busy road, and as an adult badger needed to be returned to the exact spot she was picked up from, on her home turf. After advice from Secret World Wildlife Rescue and Somerset Badger Group, we released her where she was found, but at 3am. We had volunteers hidden behind cars with sheets ready to pop up if she tried to cross the road into traffic!

On the night, we're pleased to report a textbook release, as she ran off into a garden and the scrubland beyond. Run safe Buster!



Bingo, a cub who sadly didn't make it.



Buster at the vet.

Sadly not all of our call outs have happy endings. Two of the badgers we took to rehab did not make it. One, Betty, had a neurological problem. Another, a cub, was partially sighted, and had a leg fracture that could not be healed. We know that only half of badger cubs make it through their first year, but had he been left at his sett, which was near dog walking paths, Bingo could well have suffered terribly before he died. We can only take comfort from the fact that we know that these two were given the best chance, and were able to go peacefully, not suffering.

You can see footage of all of our rescues on our facebook page.



Holly, on her way to rehab.

Badger Road Traffic Accidents 2023



… One of too many.

A road traffic victim …



Sadly in 2023 we lost more badgers on our roads than in 2022. In 2022 we lost 63, in 2023 we lost 78- an increase of 15. Of course, these are only the badgers we are aware of- the actual count is probably somewhere between 10 and 15% Higher. The area we cover is quite large, spanning from Brighouse in the east across to Todmorden in the West.

We have dedicated members who go above and beyond to get to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and gather lots of useful information when attending them. Firstly, we never assume that the badger is dead- We check it to be sure, as it could be unconscious or suffering from concussion.

Then we assess the body to be sure the cause of death is an RTC and nothing more sinister, log all the relevant information and take photos. Where possible, we lay the badger to rest peacefully out of sight and let nature take its course. After we have done this, we add all the information onto our Calderdale Badger App and report it to the Badger Trust who do a countrywide survey of RTCs. Additionally, we check if the deceased badger is a female, especially in early spring, as we need to know if she is lactating- if this is the case, it's of great concern as there could be starving cubs back home. If so, we try to find the sett she has come from and set up cameras to watch over it or sit and wait in relay teams for the cubs to surface looking for mum.

Financial Report for 2023, and lots of thanks!



Christmas merch!

Over the course of 2023, we have had a productive year, raising money but also spending to update our equipment. We bought two of the large primate nets, having seen them in action in the well publicised dramatic rescue on the railway bridge by the Secret World team. They have already proved useful for us in several rescues. A big expense was vet costs - £606.57, with a total of four live injured badgers taken in over the course of 2023, and subsequent follow up visits. We thank Donaldson's and our 24 hour responders for their dedication.



Supporting the Badger Trust anti-cull campaign

We would like to thank our members for turning up in good cheer and staffing stalls at the various events we attended. Other thanks are owed to Happy Dog House UK, whose generous donation in 2022 was put to good use buying a drone. This is an invaluable piece of kit to enable searches over difficult or otherwise inaccessible terrain, and we thank Philippa for her hard work fundraising for us.



Wildlife Extravaganza

Special thanks is also due to Tod Almighty in Todmorden, and Pennine Provisions, Weighsted and The V&A in Hebden, all of whom have stocked our merchandise and helped raise valuable funds.



Blackshaw Head fete

Many people have been generous with their time and skills. Of note is Fran Lloyd, a local artist, who painted our Christmas card, "Stargazing", featuring four badgers gazing at a starry night over Stoodley Pike. These cards were incredibly popular, and we had to have an extra print run!

The Badger Trust provided a grant through the Clare Hammicott fund, enabling us to put on a Badger Rescue and Rehab training weekend in November. Pauline Kidner from Secret World Wildlife Rescue in Somerset travelled up and the response was fantastic.
The knowledge and experience she has shared has been invaluable.



PAWS Christmas fair

The accounts are attached. Despite a busy year we have ended up with a profit of £1,318.74. That was only possible because of the hard work and dedication of our members who have created crafts, staffed stalls, stocked shops, publicised events, and to all of our supporters who have bought our merchandise and sent out our Christmas cards, so a big thank you to you all!

CALDERDALE BADGER PROTECTION GROUP

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023

Accounting period 1 January to 31 December

Bank Account - Opening Balance £10,444.50

Funds for specific purposes:

- Vaccination Fund £5,888.06
  Although we are not currently vaccinating as a group in Calderdale, this money was raised for vaccination locally, and changes expected in the government bTB response means that we may need to be able to start to offer vaccination at short notice. Therefore we have agreed to retain the fund, as the amount we would need to be able to start up a project if required. This will be reviewed annually, or sooner if needed.
- Emergency/Rescue Fund £1,012.32
- General Funds brought forward £3,544.12

Income	**Expenditure**
Member Subscriptions £729.00 .	Cost of Merchandise £985.13 .
Member Donations £163.00 .	Stall Costs £70.14 .
Other Donations £460 . (Inc £225 vet)	Badger Trust Subscription £200 .
	Insurance - £565.53 .
Card Sales £622	Postage - £6.00 .
Tod Almighty Sales- £444	Train travel - £153.72 .
Craft Sales - £389.40	Donation to Cumbria Badger Vaccination Project - £214
Rehab training grant £700 .	Rehab training costs – £977.38 (room + Pauline + Air BnB + hot and cold drinks) .
Rehab ticket sales £1410.01 .	Equipment - £1,261.21 (Drone, nets, board, Camera and locks, rescue kits) .
From Cash Tin - £1500 .	
	Vet costs £606.57 .
	Crime training room deposit £14 .
	Zoom £106.53 .
Total Income £6,417.41	Total Expenditure £5,160.21

Income less Expenditure £1,257.20

BANK ACCOUNT Closing Balance £11,704.70

Paypal Account

Opening Balance - £1557.31

Income		Expenditure	
Merch sales and donation	£277.50	P.Champion (owed for 2022 insurance)	£314.70
Total Income minus expenditure	-£37.20		

PAYPAL Closing Balance - £1520.11

Cash in Hand

Opening Balance £414.17

Income			Expenditure	
Member Subscriptions		£20.00	Transferred to Bank Account	£1500
Merchandise Sales/stalls	£1355.88			
Talk donations		£53.00		
Refreshments at training	£166.65			
Total income		£1595.53		

INCOME minus EXPENDITURE = £95.53

CASH TIN Closing Balance £509.70

TOTAL FUNDS – bank, Paypal and cash:

- 31/12/22 - £12,415.77
- **31/12/23 - £13,734.51**

Outstanding Liabilities -£100 Derbyshire Against The Cull donation back to Cath

TOTAL Surplus in 2023 - £1, 318.74