

BADGER

The badger loves to dig and, if in a hurry, can outpace a man with a shovel. It is a perfect shape for going underground. The legs are short and bowed, the body wider than it is high, the tail short, and the forefeet have large strong claws, ideal digging equipment. A badger den can be recognized by the oval shape of the entrance, 8-12 inches wide, and by the mound of earth outside which is often scattered with bones, fur, and rattlesnake rattles. The badger hunts rattlesnakes and, unless it is bitten on the nose, does not seem to be affected by the snake's venom. Near to the burrow there may be other oval holes where the badger has gone foraging.

The badger has a very keen sense of smell and can always tell when the owner of a burrow is at home. Occasionally it has been known to enter an empty burrow and wait for the owner to return. The badger hunts small mammals, ground squirrels, gophers, rats, and mice, which it captures by digging out their burrows. Sometimes it will kill a rabbit and may then hole up with the carcass, or may bury the extra food for later.

Like a cat, the badger buries its droppings and cleans itself frequently.

When it lives in areas close to man, the badger has become mainly nocturnal but away from inhabited areas it is often about during the day. It can swim well and even dive. On a hot day it likes to lie in shallow water to keep cool.

Adult badgers are solitary animals, they come together only for a short while in the late summer breeding season. The fertilized eggs do not attach to the wall of the uterus immediately so that the birth of the young is delayed until March or April. Two to five babies are born, blind but with a good coat of fur. Mother and babies stay in the birth burrow for about a month until the young are old enough to come out and follow her to a new home. Adult badgers change burrows frequently, even every night. The youngsters are weaned by June and in late summer go their separate ways.

Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

