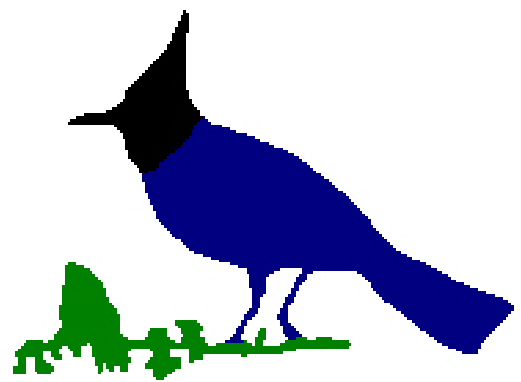


Nature Notes

Badgers in the Park



A few lucky persons have seen a badger in the Sunflower Hill area of the Kimberley Nature Park. The oblong entrances to their dens are much more easily located! The bunchgrass, Ponderosa Pine habitat on these hillsides is where badgers find the conditions they require for both food and den. This species is Blue Listed in British Columbia (Species of Special Concern) and requires management attention for its specialized needs. Since 1967, it has been illegal to trap or shoot badgers in BC.

North American Badgers (*Taxidea taxus*) are among the largest members of the weasel family. They are stout, shaggy animals with distinctive black and white facial markings and a short tail. They get their



North American Badger Photo: USFWS

names from the black “badges”, surrounded by white fur, on each of their cheeks. They weigh about 6 to 14 kilograms and are between 65 and 90 centimeters long. Badgers are well adapted for digging to obtain prey or to make protective burrows, and spend a lot of time underground.

The badger’s diet consists mainly of burrowing mammals like ground squirrels and pocket gophers. Animals that might take refuge in a burrow such as a snake or hare or chipmunk are also eaten. Badgers are opportunistic in their feeding habits and mostly forage at night. Dens play a central role in the ecology of badgers. Food storage, birth sites, and resting during the day all occur in the den. A den may be used for several years in a badger’s home range. If the habitat is good, these ranges may be about 4 square kilometers in size.

Badgers lead a solitary existence except for brief encounters when mating and for females raising the young. Breeding occurs in summer when adults are most likely to be active but the egg is not implanted until the following spring so food is abundant when the young are born. An average of two kits are born in a litter. After about 11 weeks, juvenile badgers begin to disperse in search of suitable home ranges of their own. This is the time of highest mortality for badgers as they face starvation, highway traffic crossings, and predation by Golden Eagles or Coyotes.

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