

BADGER

The Latin name for the badger is *Meles meles*.

Badgers are big, weasel-like animals that are commonly found in Europe, North America and Asia.

Badgers are mammals with thickset bodies, long blunt claws used for digging, sharp teeth and powerful jaws. They are heavily furred and distinctly marked, with a robust grey body, short tail and black-and-white face pattern. The shaggy hair of the badger provides protection against stings. They have perineal glands, which emit a foetid odour.

The European badger is up to 90cm long. It lives in underground burrows in woods and forests, known as '*setts*', which may become very large with several entrances; these are rarely located in gardens, but the animal frequently visits to pass through or find food. It is almost entirely nocturnal, returning to the sett during the day.

The badger spends the winter in the sett and in spring the female bears two to six furless and blind young. The young come above ground at about 8 weeks and are weaned at 12 weeks.

The badger eats fruit, roots, beechnuts, eggs, young birds, frogs, snails, worms and insects. It also feeds on honey and on the larvae of wasps and wild bees.

Their pelts used to have considerable value as furs, and the hairs were used in the manufacture of brushes, but they are now a protected species in Britain.