

Endangered Species and Spaces

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3.4 Badger: *Taxidea taxus* (Schreber)

Order: *Carnivora*
Family: *Mustelidae*

Status

Global Rank: G5
Provincial Rank: S2
COSEWIC: Not at risk

Provincial Listing: **Red list**



Distinguishing Features

Badgers are relatively large members of the weasel family. They have a stout body that is flattened (dorso-ventrally) with short ears, legs and tail. The small head is broad between the ears and tapers to a pointed snout. They are a grizzled grey in colouration with underparts creamy or buffy white. The head has a distinctive pattern - dark brown muzzle and crown is divided by a white mid-dorsal line. White cheeks and ears are trimmed with black, with a black crescent-shaped line behind the eye on each cheek. Males can weigh up to 11.4 kg (25 pounds). Females are smaller. (Banfield, 1974).

Distribution

Columbia Basin: Kootenay, Elk and Flathead valleys of the East Kootenays.

British Columbia: valleys of the central and southern interior as far north as Williams Lake. Recent sightings have been concentrated in the Kamloops area, the south Okanagan, and in the Kootenay, Elk and Flathead valleys of the East Kootenays and the Pend d'Oreille Valley.

Global: This species is widely distributed across south central and southwestern Canada, the United States and Northern Mexico.

Habitat

Badgers inhabit the bunchgrass grasslands and open ponderosa pine forests in valleys. In winter, they spend much of their time in underground burrows.

Threats

There are an estimated 300-1000 badgers in British Columbia and they seem to be declining in numbers. Loss of habitat, loss of prey, and human disturbances such as highway kills and landowner caused mortality, are the main threats to the Badger. Because of the large home ranges of Badgers, protected areas must be very extensive in order to provide any protection.

Biology

Badgers are solitary carnivores that prefer open areas and brushlands. They hunt nocturnally for prey such as ground squirrels and pocket gophers, although they will consume corn, grains, herbs, and wild grasses when prey availability is low. They each permanently occupy a home range. Males occupy a much larger range (up to 475 km²) than the females, and these ranges overlap during the breeding season. When inactive, especially in winter, Badgers have a much smaller range and spend most of their time in underground burrows. Breeding occurs in the summer, but implantation is delayed until December-February; two to five young are born in March-May. The young will disperse up to 110 km from the natal area during their first summer (Cannings et al. 1999).

Mammals

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