

Spotlight on Species



American Badger: Grassland Gliders Going, Going...

Latin name: *Taxidea taxus jeffersonii*
(BC sub-species)

Conservation status: Federally listed as Endangered. **RED** Listed in BC (endangered or threatened).

What is a Badger?

Badgers are members of the Weasel family, related to wolverines, otters, martens, and minks. There are seven species of Badgers in the world such as the African Honey Badger and the Indonesian Stink Badger. In North America there is one species of Badger.

What do they look like?

Badgers have a white stripe that runs down the top of their head, from the tip of their nose all the way to their shoulders. The black cheek patches (called “badges”) are how badgers get their name.

Badgers are stout, shaggy animals that look “flattened” because their hair is short on their backs and long on their sides.

Baby badgers are born in the spring. Young badgers stay with their mothers until late August, when they leave home and try to find a home range of their own. This is a very difficult time in the life of a badger.

Female badgers give birth to one to five furry, blind kits, whose eyes open after four to six weeks. In B.C. the average litter size is 1.4 kits.

Badgers need rodents to eat and isolated areas to dig burrows, sleep and raise young.

Badgers are mostly nocturnal and hunt at night.



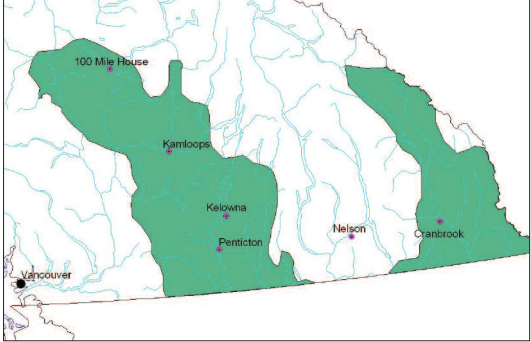
Badger photos by Phillippe Verkerk



Dick Cannings photo

Where do badgers live in British Columbia?

The grasslands and dry forests of the Thompson, Okanagan, Boundary, Nicola, Cariboo, and East Kootenay regions. Badgers are at risk! Less than 300 badgers are thought to live in our province now.



A Fragile Habitat

How do badgers live?

Badgers live in burrows up to 9m long and 3m deep (that’s roughly the size of a big school bus). The entrance to the burrow is football sized and has a large pile of dirt on the doorstep.

Badgers live a solitary existence, spending time together only during mating and when kits (badger babies) are still dependent upon their mothers.



Helen Davis Photo

The Badger: an Okanagan (Syilx) Story

Story told by Martin Louie in 1972, retold by Richard Armstrong in 2007

Hi, my name is **yÁYiÁYutxn** (sharp claws). The **syilx** (Okanagan Indians) say that when I run across a field I look like I am floating just above the ground. Some **syilx** would say to their young ones, especially the clumsy ones, or to the ones that tended to drag their feet when they walked, that they should be more like me, and they would refer to my ability to seemingly glide or float over the ground even though I have huge long sharp claws. Some **syilx** people say that I do have the ability to float over the ground, it is the only possible way I would be able to get close enough to **skYukYiyauta·x** the ground squirrel to catch him.

I live mostly where I can hunt my favourite food, **skYukYiyauta·x**. I also like mice, gophers, and occasionally marmots. Coyote and I sometimes hunt together because he also likes the same foods that I do. My special hunting trick that I like to use, is to plug all but one of the ground squirrel’s entrances. My “sometimes” hunting buddy Coyote stands guard at one of the many closed entrances and if **skYukYiyauta·x** tries to escape, Coyote will get him. There were many of us in our **yÁYiÁYutxn** clan and we were spread out all over this country. However, in the **syilx** territory (Okanagan Territory) our numbers are at a scary all time low.



Please Don’t Badger Me!

Why are badgers and their grassland home endangered in British Columbia?

Grasslands are found in areas that are too hot and dry for forests to establish. They are characterized by bunchgrass, wildflowers, shrubs such as antelope brush, sagebrush and rabbit brush, lichens and mosses.

Most of our species at risk are found in the grasslands of the province. In many cases species are in trouble because of the loss or fragmentation of their habitat due to human activity.

These include: urban development, agricultural expansion, highways and roads cutting across habitat, off-road vehicle recreation and invasive weeds.

In the early 1900’s, badgers were widely persecuted because they were considered an agricultural pest.

Many badgers die each year trying to cross busy highways, roads, and railway lines.

FUN FACTS

Did you know...

- 🦨 The badger is the fastest digging animal on earth, and the strongest for its size? Apparently, the badger digs so quickly that digging can be considered one of its forms of locomotion! They can dig up to a metre deep in a minute!
- 🦨 The badger is one of the only carnivores that burrows and eats other burrowing animals? It is the only true burrowing predator in Canada, and serves an important role as a controller of rodent populations.
- 🦨 The burrows abandoned by badgers may be used for nests by Burrowing Owls (which are also endangered), or as homes by a variety of other species including rattlesnakes and gopher snakes?

What you can do to help badgers and grasslands

- ✓ Report badger sightings and burrow locations to 1-888-223-4376
- ✓ Protect habitat where badgers and burrows are known to occur
- ✓ Watch for Badgers and other wildlife crossing roads and highways
- ✓ Recognize badgers as important for rodent control and tolerate ground squirrels as their main food source
- ✓ Stay on established trails, roads and routes
- ✓ Avoid introducing and spreading invasive weeds For more information, visit www.rdos.bc.ca and www.weedsbc.ca
- ✓ Learn more about Grasslands and the Best Management Practices associated with grassland protection www.bcgrasslands.ca

Sources: www.bcgrasslands.org, www.badgers.bc.ca

Kit’s Activity: Find badger words

L	S	E	L	I	N	E	V	U	J	B	A
O	P	E	N	F	O	R	E	S	T	S	D
C	H	C	N	G	I	O	R	T	R	U	G
O	A	O	E	D	T	V	M	S	O	B	R
M	B	S	M	R	A	I	I	I	T	S	A
O	I	Y	B	E	N	N	N	L	A	P	S
T	T	S	U	H	R	R	G	D	D	E	S
I	A	T	R	P	E	A	R	E	E	C	L
O	T	E	R	O	B	C	N	R	R	I	A
N	V	M	O	G	I	S	D	G	P	E	N
I	G	I	W	T	H	H	E	R	E	S	D
L	A	N	R	U	T	C	O	N	E	S	S

Answer in next edition

Answers to questions from the last edition of Spotlight on Species:

1. cat
2. badger, burrowing owl and western rattlesnake
3. no toads do not have warts; they have glands
4. the tiger salamander is a silent predator. There are no known sounds.

The “Spotlight on Species” program promotes awareness of species at risk and local conservation initiatives. For more information call 250-492-4422. This program is supported by Environment Canada: Habitat Stewardship Program.



OKANAGAN
SIMILKAMEEN
CONSERVATION
ALLIANCE



Environment
Canada
Canadian Wildlife
Service

Environnement
Canada
Service Canadien
de la faune

The South Okanagan-Similkameen is home to one of the greatest concentrations of species at risk in Canada. Our conservation efforts work to maintain this unique natural area that has one of the greatest concentrations of species diversity in Canada. Strong community support and involvement help create a positive balance between wildlife requirements and human needs and aspirations.



South Okanagan
Similkameen
CONSERVATION PROGRAM

