Doveside Badger Report

Final Report

November 2018

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Revision history

Revision Ref/Date	Amendments	Issued to
13/11/2018	Final Report	The Garganey Trust

Contract

This report describes work commissioned by The Garganey Trust. Darren Whitaker and Mairi Gillis of JBA - Consulting carried out this work.

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Purpose

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Carbon footprint

JBA - Consulting is aiming to reduce its per capita carbon emissions.

Executive summary

JBA Consulting has been commissioned by The Garganey Trust to undertake a Badger *Meles meles* Survey at Doveside and Wombwell prior to implementation of the 'Wings Across the Ings' (WATI) Project, which involves habitat creation and enhancement.

The survey was completed by Darren Whitaker on the 9th October 2018 for the purpose of identifying any Badger field signs. Doveside is located south of Darfield, South Yorkshire, and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SE 41215 03901. The Wombwell Wetlands site is located immediately south of Doveside, centred on NGR SE 41594 03457.

It was noted that there was one potential Badger excavation found near the eastern boundary of Doveside. This hole was found to be disused by Badger with no Badger field signs present within the vicinity.

This report details the field signs found around Doveside and the location of the excavation, along with recommendations regarding the findings.

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Abbreviations

CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species
JBA	Jeremy Benn Associates
NGR	National Grid Reference
RPA	Root Protection Area
WATI	'Wings Across the Ings' project

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

JBA Consulting was commissioned by The Garganey Trust to undertake a Badger *Meles meles* survey at Doveside and Wombwell prior to implementation of the 'Wings Across the Ings' (WATI) Project, which involves habitat creation and enhancement.

The location of the project, in context with the local landscape, is shown in Figure 1-1 below. Doveside is located south of Darfield, South Yorkshire, and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SE 41215 03901. The Wombwell Wetlands site is located immediately south of Doveside, centred on NGR SE 41594 03457, and Bulling Dike flows along the north and north-easterly site margins. Habitat in the area was mainly composed of arable grassland, hedgerows and deciduous woodland with extensive stands of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) found within the locality.

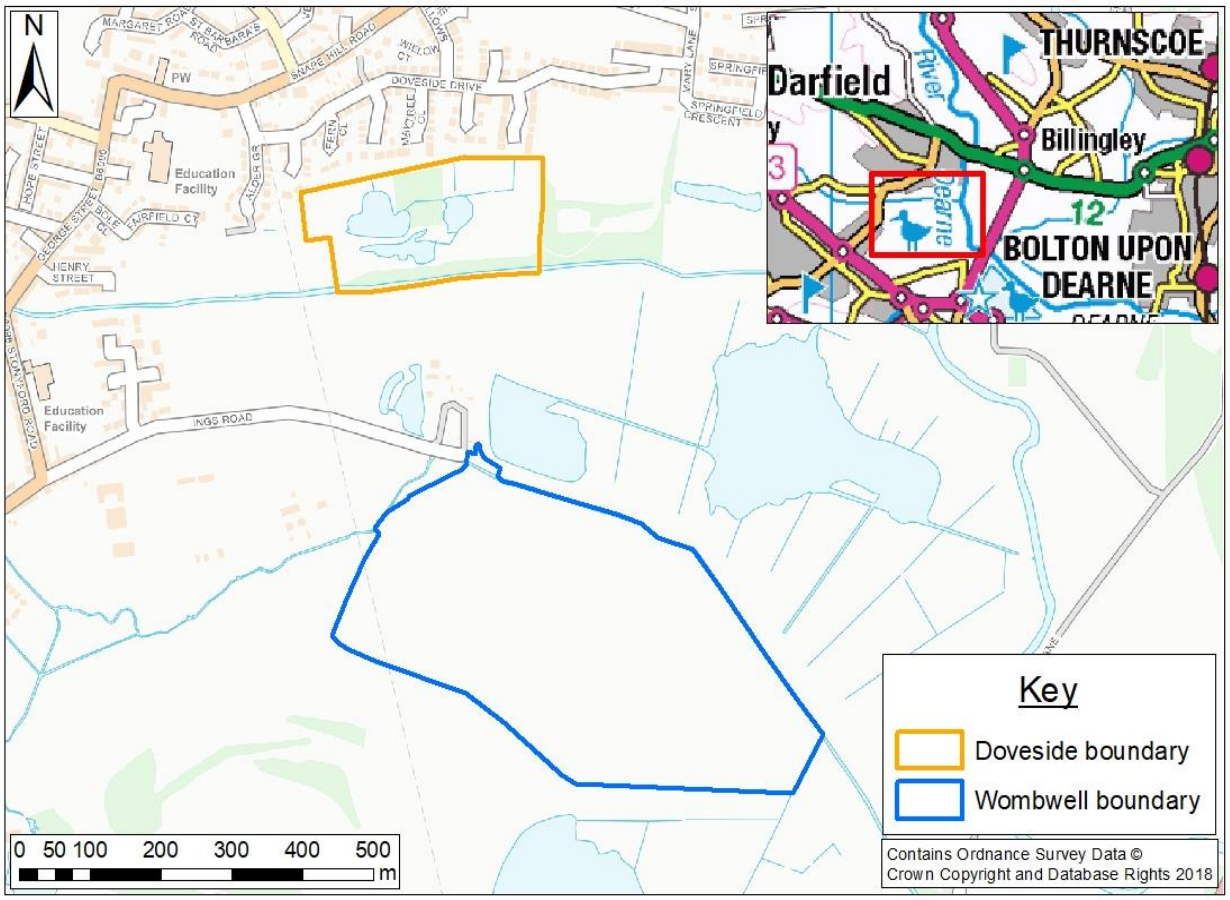


Figure 1-1 – Site Survey Boundaries

1.2 Legislative Context

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This legislation principally arises from animal welfare issues (rather than on the basis of nature conservation grounds). The Act makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill or injure a Badger.
- Capture a Badger.
- Intentionally cause disturbance to a Badger when it is occupying a sett.
- Intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to Badger setts, or any part of one.

If a project is likely to interfere with a Badger sett, a relevant licence (i.e. that allowing interference from drainage purposes and/or to prevent damage) must be sought from Natural England to allow the activity to proceed lawfully, following implementation of an appropriate mitigation strategy. However, there are restrictions on interfering with a Badger sett that need to be considered, specifically relating to timing and methodology of the interference. Sett closure should be avoided in the breeding season (beginning of December to the end of June) and physically moving Badgers by capture and release for development is prohibited (Natural England, 2014).

2 Methodology

A survey was undertaken on the 9th of October 2018 by JBA Ecologist Darren Whitaker. The survey area included the Doveside and Wombwell areas of the WATI project that are shown in Figure 1-1.

The survey area was searched for signs of Badger activity and the presence of any field signs were recorded. All sett entrances found were recorded and assessed for level of activity (Table 2-2). An assessment of the classification of any setts found was also made (Table 2-1). Site photographs are found in Appendix A.

Table 2-1 Criteria for assessing sett classification

Sett	Comments
Main	Several holes with large spoil heaps; well used paths between entrances and to the sett.
Annexe	Several holes, less than 150m from main sett. It may not be in use all the time.
Subsidiary	At least 50m from main sett; no obvious well used paths. May only be used intermittently.
Outlier	Few holes, little spoil outside. No obvious paths connecting to other setts and only used sporadically. May be used by foxes and rabbits.

Table 2-2 Criteria for assessing sett activity

Activity	Comments
Well used	At least one of the following: Well-worn entrance; freshly excavated soil; bedding material; footprints in spoil.
Partially used	No evidence of recent use; Leaves or twigs in entrance and/or mosses and other plants growing in or around entrance.
Disused	Partially or completely blocked by debris.

3 Results

3.1 Badger Field Signs

Within the deciduous woodland located to the southeast of Doveside, one sett entrance was recorded. No other entrances were recorded during the survey. The entrance found was recorded on a map (Figure 3-1) and assessed for the level of activity (Table 3-1) based on field signs.

Table 3-1 Sett entrance locations and activity assessment

Sett type	Location	NGR	Activity
Outlier	Doveside Woodland	SE 41388 03897	Disused

The sett entrance found within the woodland was deemed to be an outlier hole as no other entrances were identified in the surrounding area. The entrance appeared to be currently disused by Badger, due to the absence of any relevant field signs (e.g. fresh spoil, bedding material, hairs or footprints) and the presence of twigs across the sett entrance.

No sett entrances were found within the Wombwell survey area. No foraging activity or latrines were present within the woodland or the adjacent arable fields, which provides further evidence of Badger absence in the immediate area surrounding the disused sett entrance.

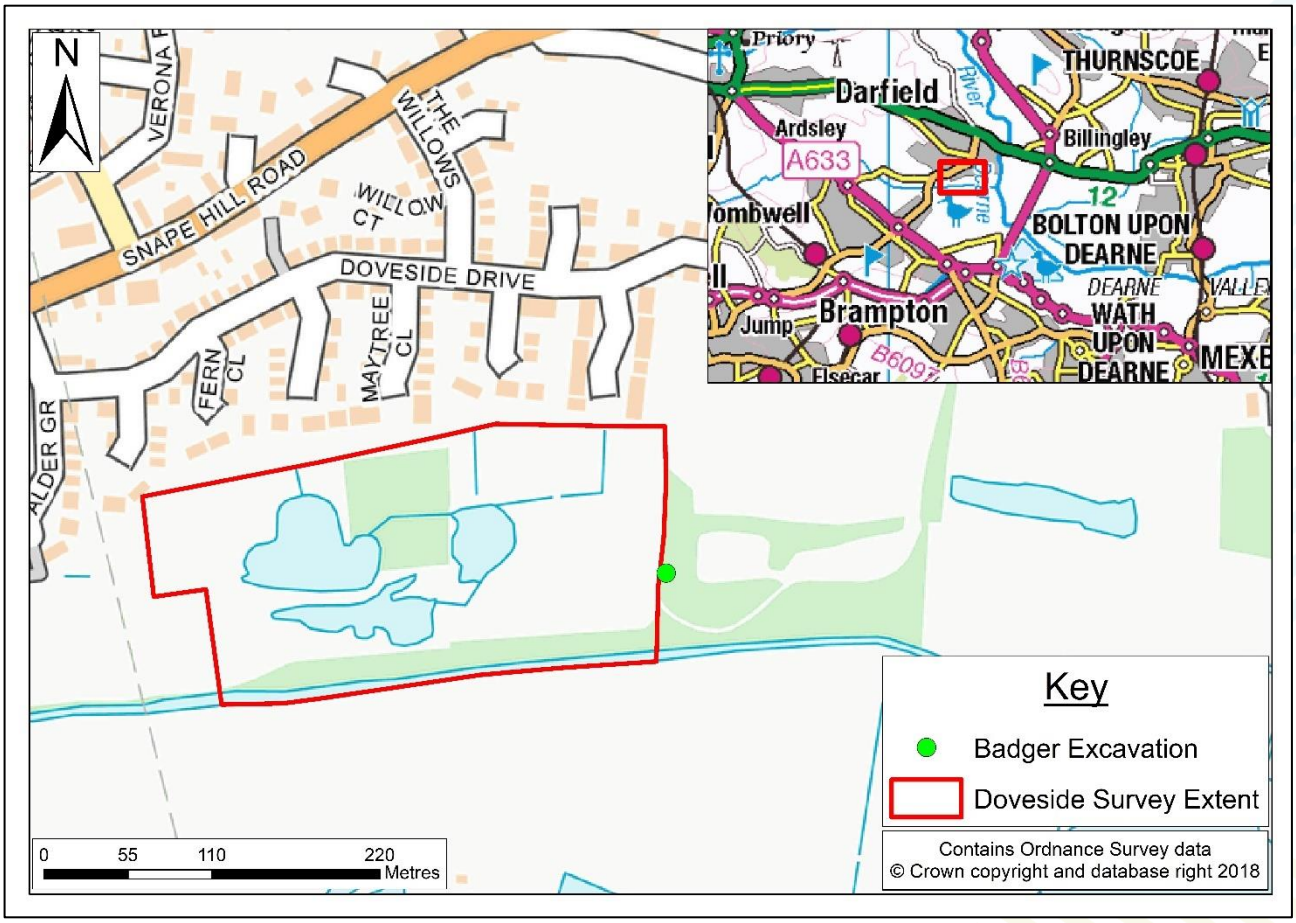


Figure 3-1 – Badger Excavation Location

3.2 Other Field Signs

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* field signs were recorded in the arable field adjacent to the west side of the wood (Photographic Plate 3) and Rabbit droppings were recorded surrounding the Badger excavation found within the wood (Photographic Plate 4). Fox faeces and one mammal track (Photographic Plate 1 and 2) were also found during the survey.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Within the survey area, lots of mammal field signs were identified, however no field signs of current Badger activity were identified during the survey. The survey identified the location of one disused Badger excavation within the deciduous woodland on the eastern side of the Doveside survey area.

The identified sett entrance showed evidence of being used by Badger previously due to the large amounts of spoil present outside of the entrance. The lack of any fresh bedding or fresh spoil, and the presence of twigs across the sett entrance provide evidence to suggest that Badgers are no longer using the sett entrance. Rabbit droppings were found outside the sett entrance and fox faeces were found within the survey area, which suggests that Rabbits or Fox *Vulpes vulpes* may be using the sett.

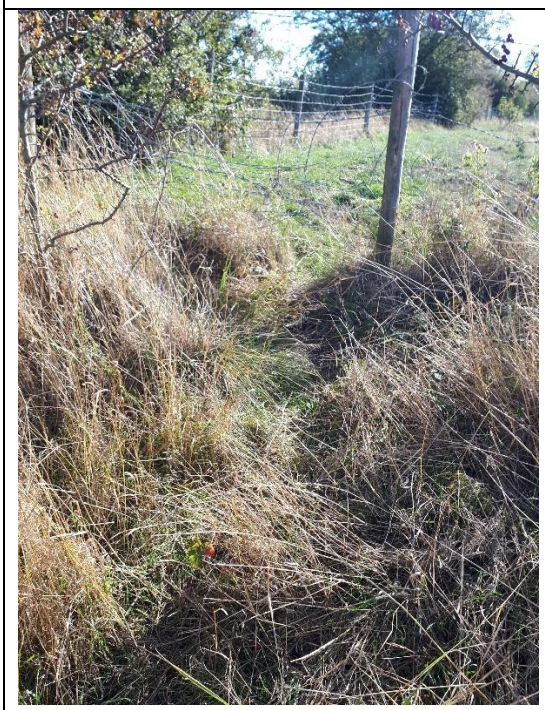
4.2 Recommendations

The proposed works at Doveside should not impact upon the disused Badger sett entrance as it lies out with the Doveside site boundary. As the sett entrance was assessed as being disused and there were no evident fresh Badger field signs, there should be no risk of disturbing any Badgers using the sett entrance. However, as a precaution, the sett entrance should not be obstructed in any way to allow free passage of any mammals using the entrance.

As part of the Arboricultural Method Statement, a Tree Protection Plan was included which provides details of Root Protection Areas (RPAs) in the Doveside area. The RPAs identified for the Hawthorn hedge and Area 4 on the eastern boundary will require a fenced area which should cover the location of the sett entrance and therefore avoid any unnecessary disturbance of the sett entrance.

Appendices

A Site Photographs

Photograph	Comments
	**Photographic Plate 1:** **Mammal track** **NGR:** SE 41773 03193 Mammal track located running underneath the fence
	**Photographic Plate 2:** **Mammal track** **NGR:** SE 41767 03200 Mammal track located running underneath the fence

	**Photographic Plate 3:** **Rabbit Burrow** **NGR:** SE 41690 03212 Rabbit burrow found in the arable field adjacent to the woodland
	**Photographic Plate 4:** **Disused Sett Entrance** **NGR:** SE 41388 03897 Disused Badger sett entrance with evidence of Rabbit activity in the form of droppings found within the woodland.

References

Natural England (2014). http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605105957/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/badgers.aspx [Accessed 12 November 2018]

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