

What do badger burrows look like?

Digging is very important in the life of a badger. They catch much of their prey by digging, and use underground burrows for shelter. Badgers spend most of the daytime sleeping in a burrow, and they may have several dozen burrows throughout their entire home range, sometimes returning to one they have stayed at before, and sometimes digging a new one. They nearly always dig their burrows along an edge of some sort and prefer sandy slopes to dig in.

Badger burrows are the most important reports we receive so learning to recognize and report them is a great way to help with the research.

A typical badger burrow is about 30cm (1 ft) wide, with a large fan of excavated dirt at the entrance. Badgers dig with a “breast-stroke” movement, which means that the entrance of the burrow is usually wider than it is tall. Also, a badger’s claws often leave long scratches on the inside walls of a burrow. Coyote and fox dens are usually taller than they are wide, while groundhog burrows tend to be smaller and very round.



Burrows are wider than they are tall, with a fan of excavated dirt



Claw marks on inside wall due to “breast-stroke” digging



A burrow with a large dirt pile on the edge of a corn field

What does a badger look like?

Though badgers can be very distinctive, identification isn't always that easy!



Black and white facial markings go lengthwise from front to back



Their tail is the same colour as their body, and not usually noticed



Badgers have a very “flattened” stature: **wide body and low to the ground**



A raccoon has longer legs, horizontal facial markings and a very obvious and **striped tail**

Ontario Badgers



Badgers live here!

Southern Ontario is home to a small population of American Badgers. These rare, native carnivores are members of the weasel family and are among the most elusive animals in the province! They are mostly active by night, tend to avoid people, and wander over large areas. In fact a single badger's territory can easily be several thousand acres! They feed mainly on small animals, such as groundhogs (also known as woodchucks or gophers), mice, chipmunks, frogs and insects. They spend their nights hunting along the weedy and grassy edges of fields, forests, and meadows, and sleep in burrows during the day.

We know very little about badgers in Ontario and even their population size and distribution remain a mystery. Researchers have been starting to investigate these unique animals to answer some important questions about the types of habitat and prey they prefer, and how they fit into the agricultural landscape of southern Ontario.

We need your help!



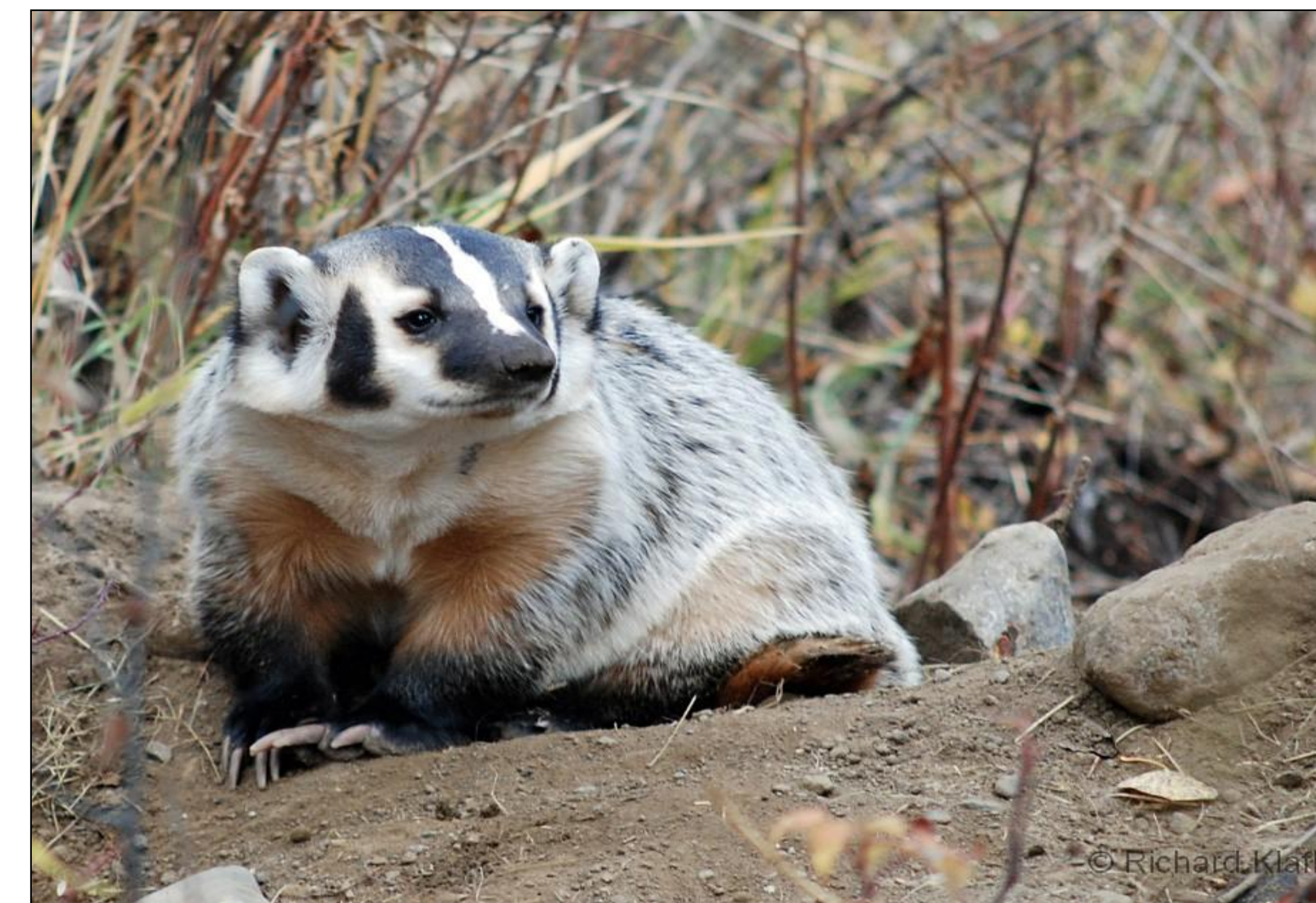
Finding badgers is the hardest part of studying them. Reports from farmers, landowners, and other people who live in southern Ontario have been instrumental in putting together a better understanding of the badgers here. But we still have a long way to go! It is only with the sightings and reports of the people like you that we will be able to learn what they need to thrive.

To report burrows, roadkills or badger sightings call the Ontario Badger Hotline toll-free

1-877-715-9299

Or visit us online to learn more

www.ontariobadgers.com



- About the size of a raccoon
- Short and stout, with a wide and “flattened” body
- Black-and-white striped face
- Body is mostly gray-brown
- Powerful front legs and claws for digging
- Prey on small animals like mice, groundhogs, chipmunks and frogs
- Solitary animals except when raising their “kits”
- Mostly nocturnal and highly nomadic
- Burrows are usually wider than tall, with lots of dirt in front and claw marks on the inside walls

How do we study badgers?

1. Public sightings. Your reports and sightings are the most important part of badger research. Every call or email to us contributes something to our understanding of badger ecology. Reports of burrows are particularly helpful as they can provide the best confirmation of badger presence, and fresh burrows often have badger hair near them that we can collect for DNA analysis.

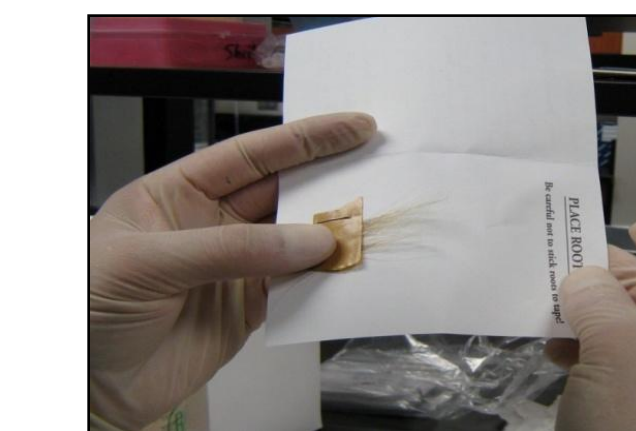


Sightings of badgers can help us narrow our search, and even badgers that have been killed on the road can provide incredibly valuable data. Every part of this project depends on us finding badgers, and we cannot do that without the help of people like you.

2. Radio-telemetry. Badgers are live-trapped and outfitted with a radio-transmitting implant. The transmitter sends out a series of “beeps” that a biologist with a receiver and antenna can use to track the badger's movement. We can also use motion-sensing cameras at badger burrows to learn more about their behaviour.



3. Genetics. We can collect hair from the entrances of fresh burrows or by using a “hair snag” device in the burrow entrance that will collect a sample of hair if a badger returns to that burrow.



We can analyze the hair to determine the DNA fingerprint of an individual badger and learn about their population health and even movement by recording when and where certain badgers are detected.

4. Wildlife forensics. By identifying the unique chemical signature in a badger's claw and comparing it to chemical signatures in the local soils, we can determine what kind of habitat an individual was living in during the time the claw was grown. Since claws are grown over a period of several months, they act as time-capsules that allow us to backtrack movement and diet. Using claws, we can learn about the lives of recently road-killed badgers and even mounted badgers in museums and private homes that are several decades old!

