

Badgers Mount

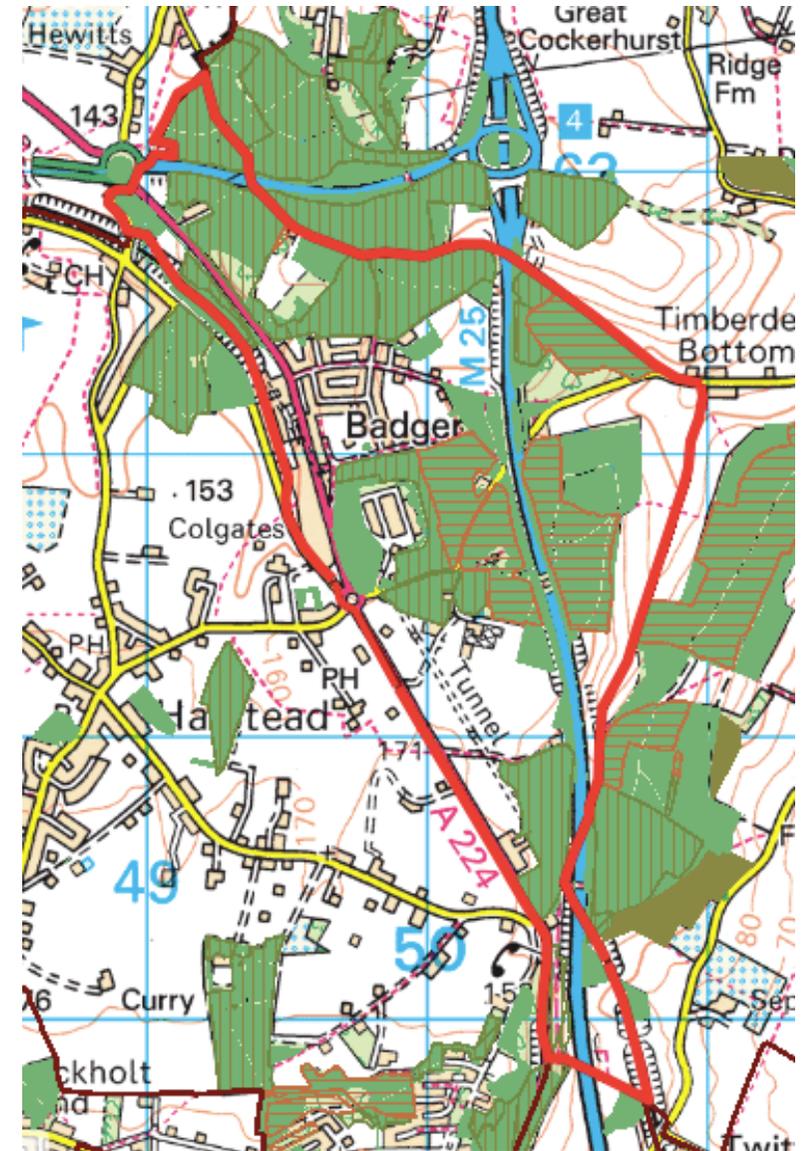
An Overview of Biodiversity in the Parish

The obviously dominant feature of the Parish is the extent of woodland, which covers around 65% of the the Parish. The vast majority of the woodland is ancient semi-natural woodland *i.e.* it has been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD. There are various woodland types, with beech and sweet chestnut coppice being particularly common.

Only a small proportion of the Parish is developed, and the remainder consists of open fields. Whilst most of these fields are likely to be agriculturally improved and therefore of limited wildlife value, at least some areas may be species-rich grassland on chalky soils, such as the field at the extreme southern end of the Parish. Any such examples would be of high value for nature conservation.

The Parish is likely to support a wide range of wildlife associated with the woodlands and the open fields. Dormice are likely to be present in the woodland, as are a range of bat species including some of the commoner species (pipistrelles, brown long-eared bats and noctules) and possibly some of the country's rarest species such as Bechstein's bats or possibly Alcatloe bats.

Slow-worms and potentially grass snakes are likely to be found around the woodland edges and around gardens and, although there are few natural ponds in or around the Parish, common newt species, frogs and toads may be present around garden ponds.



Roads and Wildlife

The impact of roads on wildlife varies, depending on the size of the road and the sensitivity of the wildlife in the adjacent area. Whilst road verges can sometimes be valuable habitat in their own right, the vast majority of ecological effects of road are negative for wildlife.

The primary effect of roads on wildlife is as a barrier to movement, both because of the physical prevention of movement (largely affecting small mammals) and because of road collisions with larger mammals *e.g.* badgers and deer. At Badgers Mount it is likely that some populations of species such as dormice, small mammals and reptiles will be isolated between the two major roads, and therefore more vulnerable to local extinctions (as their populations are not readily replenished from elsewhere).

Where roads are lit they also act as a barrier to the movement of bats - many species of bats are deterred from crossing major roads. The streetlights along the A224 through the Parish will reduce the ability of bats east-west into and out of the parish.

Road noise affects some species more than others. Dormice are found in sometimes very close proximity to roads - noise does not interfere significantly with critical aspects of their lifestyle. Birds however, which rely on sound as a key part of their lifestyle, have lower breeding density and lower species-diversity close to roads. This means some parts of the woodland, where there are roads on both sides, will have substantially lower bird activity than unaffected areas. This effect will be greatest at the southern end of the parish where the A224 almost meets the M25 - breeding bird densities here are likely to be much lower than in the more northern parts of the parish.

The deposition of airborne pollutants - particularly NO_x - from vehicle traffic also affects wildlife. Some habitats are more sensitive than others. Woodland on acidic soils, such as the sweet chestnut woodland in the Parish, is not especially sensitive to NO_x deposition. However habitats on calcareous soils such as woodlands and grasslands can be adversely affected.

In summary, the two major roads will be exerting a large influence on the wildlife of the Parish. Some of these effects can be mitigated, and further analysis of the situation would aid the prioritisation of such measures.



