TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WYOMING SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

Biology No. 100 (Revised) January 1986

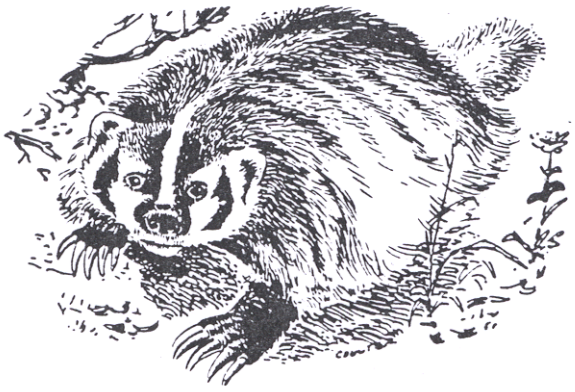
Subject: BADGER*

General
The badger (Taxidea taxus) is a semi-fossorial mammal of open prairies, meadows, and parks.

Food Requirements
The badger is carnivorous and primarily nocturnal in its feeding habits. They are not commonly found in areas where burrowing rodents are absent. Ground squirrels (Citellus spp.) and meadow mice (Microtus spp.) are among the favored prey species in Iowa. The presence of badgers in South Park, Colorado, was related to the presence of Richardson's ground squirrels (Spermophilus richardsoni) and deer mice (Peromyscus maniculatus). One study stated that ground squirrels are a staple food throughout the year.

Other food eaten include snakes, rabbits, birds, eggs, lizards, insects, snails, honey bee larvae, and carrion. Nests of ground nesting birds are destroyed on chance encounters, and both eggs and young are eaten. Badgers are powerful burrowers and either dig for rodents or hide in enlarged ground squirrel burrows with the opening partially blocked in order to ambush squirrels entering the burrows. Young badgers may rely on ground-dwelling prey until they are able to dig for burrowing rodents.

Water Requirements
No specific water requirements were found in the literature.



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*Information taken from Ecoregion M3113 Handbook and Habitat Suitability Index Models, Wildlife Species Narratives (literature searches), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various dates between 1978-1984.

Cover Requirements

Badgers are most abundant in open grassland, sandy fields, or pastures. One study reported that badgers prefer grasslands that contain some sagebrush. They are solitary and chiefly nocturnal, although they are frequently seen in mornings and late afternoon. Badgers live in deep, long burrows which they dig themselves. One female badger in Minnesota was known to use 46 dens. Other badgers studied in Minnesota used one den on any day, but different ones on consecutive days. Most dens had a single entrance with a large mound of freshly dug soil in front. When occupied, the den entrance was generally partially plugged with loose soil. Most of the dens used only once for resting were similar to the many other burrows dug by badgers, apparently for feeding. Many of the dens that were reused appeared to have had much previous use. Soil consistency at den sites ranged from clay-loam to almost pure gravel. Soils with coarse gravel or stones inhibit burrowing. Badgers do not hibernate in the southern portion of their range although activity and home range utilization are apparently reduced during the winter in northwestern Utah.

Reproductive Requirements

Badgers are monogamous and mate in mid-September. Natal dens are located from 2 to 6 feet (.6 to 1.8 m) below the ground surface and are often dug near the base of a hill or on an elevated plain. Most nests are lined with grass. There is a single entrance, often plugged when burrow is occupied.

Special Habitat Requirements

Badgers in Colorado are most numerous in areas with loose, loamy soils, and a high density of burrowing rodents. One study found badgers from lower elevations to alpine zones.

Interspersion Requirements

Home ranges of male and female badgers were 1,480 acres (573 ha) and 602 acres (237 ha), respectively, in Utah with the home ranges of the males overlapping those of the females. The proportion of home range utilized varied seasonally and was characterized by substantial differences in denning habits. The badgers covered large areas and never used the same den on two consecutive days during the summer. In the fall, the home range decreased along with the number of dens used. A single den in a 5-acre (2 ha) area was used in the winter. In Utah, badgers remained in the same burrow for more than one day significantly more often during the winter and early spring than during the rest of the year. Badgers may emigrate to a new area in response to food shortages or disturbances.

Special Considerations

The most limiting factor for badgers is probably the density of burrowing rodents.