



For immediate release

American badger sightings wanted for the Columbia Valley

February 28, 2022

Did you know that there are American badgers living in the Columbia Valley? Southeastern British Columbia is the northern extent of where American badgers live. Unfortunately, the American badger is an endangered species and needs our help!

Badgers have stocky and flattened bodies with short, powerful legs. As few as one hundred mature badgers live in the East Kootenay region. Here they are vulnerable to being wiped out from increasing threats like roadkill, the loss of open habitat needed, and urban development. But, together we can work to keep them living here for generations to come. There is a new project supported by the Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners (CWSP) that is currently taking observational reports from the public - recording all badger roadkill sites, dens, burrows, and dead or alive sightings.

Leading project biologist Rachel Darvill states, "We are interested in knowing where American badgers are using dens in the Columbia Valley, especially where areas of high suitable badger habitat overlap with public crown land. These areas can be conserved through various regulations, but first we need to identify where those important areas are."

Badgers have large home ranges with hundreds of different burrows per individual. The burrows have an entrance that resembles a large elliptical hole, often with a mound of dirt at the entrance. Badgers often change locations daily and reuse burrows from year to year, making it important to ensure that unoccupied burrows are not destroyed. Badgers use dens for denning, foraging, resting and as a source of shelter.

"We are also interested if any badger denning and burrow sites are found in areas that we have already designated as wildlife corridors (through Kootenay Connect) that are important to other large ranging species like grizzly bear and elk," says Darvill.

"It has been shown that soil and prey availability are the key defining features or requirements for badger habitat," says Darvill. Their primary food source in our region are Columbian ground squirrels (which are often locally referred to as gophers). "Like badgers, Columbian ground squirrels also live in burrows, and at first glance it can be confusing to distinguish these holes from the ones badgers make," says Darvill.

Do you know where a badger lives, where a badger hole exists, or have you seen a badger in the Columbia Valley before? If so, please let us know by contacting the CWSP with your observations at badgersightings@gmail.com. This project is a partnership with Kootenay Connect and is financially supported by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) through the Canada Nature Fund with equal matching funding from local partners.

