

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

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AMERICAN BADGER  
Family: MUSTELIDAE  
M160

*Taxidea taxus*  
Order: CARNIVORA                      Class: MAMMALIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Uncommon, permanent resident found throughout most of the state, except in the northern North Coast area (Grinnell et al. 1937). Most abundant in drier open stages of most shrub, forest, and herbaceous habitats, with friable soils.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Badgers are carnivorous. They eat fossorial rodents: rats, mice, chipmunks, and especially ground squirrels and pocket gophers. Also eat some reptiles, insects, earthworms, eggs, birds, and carrion. Diet shifts seasonally and yearly in response to availability of prey.

**Cover:** Badgers dig burrows in friable soil for cover. Frequently reuse old burrows, although some may dig a new den each night, especially in summer (Messick and Hornocker 1981).

**Reproduction:** Young are born in burrows dug in relatively dry, often sandy, soil, usually in areas with sparse overstory cover.

**Water:** No data found.

**Pattern:** Suitable habitat for badgers is characterized by herbaceous, shrub, and open stages of most habitats with dry, friable soils.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Active yearlong. Nocturnal and diurnal. Variable periods of torpor in winter (Long 1973).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Non-migratory. Area used during winter smaller than at other seasons.

**Home Range:** Home range estimates vary geographically and seasonally. In Utah, Lindzey (1978) found fall and winter home ranges of 5 females varied from 137-304 ha (338-751 ac). Those of 2 males varied from 537-627 ha (1327-1549 ac). In Idaho, Messick and Hornocker (1981) found that home ranges of 7 adult females and 3 males averaged 160 ha (400 ac) and 240 ha (600 ac), respectively.

**Territory:** Little information available. Family members may share the territory of a female (Seton 1929). However, males generally are solitary, except in the breeding season (Messick and Hornocker 1981).

Reproduction: Badgers mate in summer and early fall. Gestation period varies from 183-265 days, including delayed implantation. Embryo implants about 45 days prior to birth. An average litter of 2-3 (range = 2-5) born mostly in March and April (Long 1973). A few females may breed in first yr. Males not mature sexually until second yr. Badgers 11-15 yr. old have been reported (Flower 1931, Jackson 1961, Long 1973, Messick and Hornocker 1981).

Niche: Badgers are highly specialized fossorial mustelids that help control small mammal populations. Somewhat tolerant of human activities, however predator control using indiscriminate trapping and persistent poisons causes extensive losses.

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.