

Badgery Science Fun 12



Helen and Joe were off with a guide to watch badgers at the Durham Badger Group hide. They were told earlier to wear clothing that wouldn't rustle as they made their way through the woods and fields. Their guide explained that badgers have a fantastic range and power of hearing, and the slightest noise would frighten them. Then they might see nothing!



When they arrived at the hide, it was still daylight, and the badgers hadn't emerged from their sett. They quietly unlocked the door and went inside.

The children were amazed to see that the floor was covered with thick carpet - two layers! It even extended about 30cm up the walls! "Wow," said Helen, "we'll be warm and cosy in here tonight."

Their guide explained that the carpet was not really for their benefit, but for the badgers. As it was soft, it absorbed any movements that might make a noise. (It was up the lower wall in case anyone kicked out whilst watching the badgers.)

What happens to the floor when someone walks on it? **The wooden floor vibrates.**

Can you think how the sound of someone walking on the wooden floor would reach the ears of the badgers?

The vibrations of the floor move the air around it. The vibrations travel through the air to the badger's ears.

Helen became excited when the new cubs emerged. She tried to stand up and lightly kicked the wooden wall of the hide. One badger looked up for a moment, but went back to foraging. Why might it have been worse if Helen had kicked the wall harder?

A harder kick would have produced a louder sound. (Larger vibrations)

After a while the badgers settled and the children were able to get a good view of the family. They could still see their ears twitch if a strange sound came to them over the night air. When they left, they made sure that the badgers had gone, and that they were very quiet. The guide explained that *the welfare of the badgers*



was most important. Never go badger watching on your own!