

# AMERICAN BADGER

*Taxidea taxus*



**Condition: Unknown**

**Trend: Unknown**

**Confidence: Low**



## WHY IS THIS RESOURCE INCLUDED?

The American badger may be found in larger patches of grasslands and coastal scrub habitats (i.e., treeless areas) on Mt. Tam. This species is an important indicator of the health of grassland ecosystems and connectivity. Their preference for open or mostly open landscapes, combined with their secretive, shy nature may make them more sensitive to human impacts. The badgers of Mt. Tam are part of a larger, connected, population complex extending to Point Reyes and Petaluma. Maintaining this badger population complex is very important because large forest tracts isolate Marin County badgers from badger populations to the north and east.

These upper-level predators prey upon small mammals, and may be considered a keystone species, as in their absence, their prey species may occur in higher than normal densities. They are also considered an important ecosystem engineer thanks to extensive and powerful digging associated with creating burrows for denning and when searching for prey. Their actions help aerate soils, churn up the seed bank, change soil moisture levels, increase diversity of plant species near dens, and provide shelter for numerous species including the burrowing owl, lizards, insects and other invertebrates, and amphibians.

## OVERALL CONDITION

Designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as a sensitive species, the American badger was historically persecuted by ranchers and is vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and habitat loss, vehicle strikes, and rodenticide exposure. Trapping and predator control have also been factors in its decline. The current status of American badgers on Mt. Tam is unknown, although the mountain has areas of suitable habitat. Remotely triggered cameras from the Marin Wildlife Picture Index Project (MWPIP) and Lucas Valley Open Space Preserve have detected badgers and the MWPIP cameras will continue to provide badger distribution and abundance data to assess its status. The cameras on the Lucas Valley Open Space Preserve lands are located a short distance north of the Mt. Tam area of focus, and the badgers detected there are a part of the larger Marin County badger complex.

## DESIRED CONDITIONS

The desired condition is that American badgers are present in all suitable grassland and coastal scrub habitat patches in the One Tam area of focus.

## STRESSORS

**Habitat Loss, Fragmentation, and Development:** American badgers are sensitive to habitat fragmentation and development because they require larger patches of grassland or coastal scrub habitats. Currently, the loss of grassland habitat and conifer encroachment is reducing their habitat within the protected lands of Mt. Tam. Vehicle strikes are also a significant threat to American badgers, and could be a factor on roads in the One Tam area of focus.

**Past Land Uses:** Historically, ranchers likely trapped American badgers to reduce livestock risks from their burrows. They also may have impacted prey populations for species like California ground squirrels.

**Rodenticides:** American badgers are susceptible to secondary exposure to rodenticides.

## METRICS AND GOALS

| Metric  | Condition Goal(s)   | Status   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Metric 1</b><br>Wildlife picture index for American badgers  | Information from the MWPIP for American badgers is stable or increasing   |   |
| <b>Metric 2</b><br>American badger presence in suitable habitat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>American badgers are detected at all camera locations in grassland or coastal scrub habitat patches greater than 1,000 acres</li><li>Maintain at least six suitable grassland and/or coastal scrub habitat patches of greater than 1,000 acres; this goal is based on the estimate of 6,700 acres of grassland and coastal scrub habitat in One Tam area of focus, and that female American badgers require at least about 1,000 acres for their home range</li></ul> |  |

## INFORMATION GAPS

**Inventory Data:** We lack adequate American badger inventory data for the One Tam area of focus.