

BBC

Wildlife

with Mark Carwardine

PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

#6 In the garden: badgers

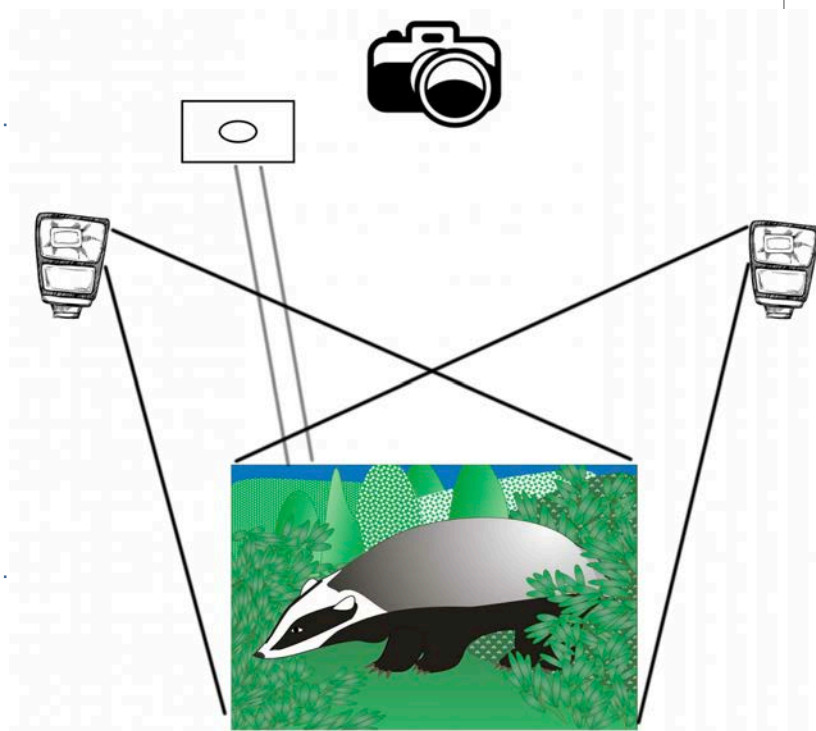
THE SET-UP

What you will need (using a remote camera)

- Camera and wide-angle lens
- Flashgun x2
- Wireless trigger or transmitter x2 (see the notes below)
- Wireless receiver x3 (see the notes below)
- Tripod
- Ground spike x3 (basically, extendable metal poles with a giant screw at one end to drive them into the ground, and a ball head at the other end to attach a camera (or flashgun, trigger or PIR [passive infrared] sensor)– try www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk)
- Fully charged batteries

What you will need (using a camera trap)

- Everything listed above (except one of the wireless transmitters/triggers)
- Waterproof housing for the camera (try www.camtraptions.com)
- Flashgun covers x2 (try wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk)
- Wireless PIR motion sensor (try www.camtraptions.com)



Wireless triggers and receivers

Wireless triggers consist of two pieces: a receiver which attaches to the hot shoe on top of your camera, hooking up to the electronics with a small cable that fits into the side of the camera; and a transmitter that stays with you wherever you are hidden away (in camera trapping, the PIR sensor effectively acts as a transmitter). When you want to take a shot, you simply press the button on the transmitter (which is roughly the size of a key fob) and the camera fires remotely.

Wireless remote triggers work using two types of technology to communicate between the transmitter and the receiver:

- **Infrared (IR) beam.** IR remote triggers tend to be cheaper, but they don't have as great a range and they require direct line-of-sight (if something is blocking the path to your camera, the trigger won't fire the shutter – a sure way of missing critical shots).
- **Radio frequency (RF) link.** RF triggers tend to be more

expensive, but they have a greater range and do not require direct line-of-sight.

The choice of wireless systems can be quite baffling and include manufacturers' own releases (Canon, Nikon, Olympus etc) as well as third-party systems. I know some people prefer to stay with their own brand, but they tend to be rather pricey. Personally, I use three different makes (all of which work really well and use RF):

- Camtraptions, which have a range of up to 120m.
- Pixel Oppilas, which have a range of up to 100m.
- Hahnel Combi TF, which have a range of up to 100m.

Many photographers also swear by PocketWizards, which have a longer range (though, if you buy one of the high-end models, you do pay an awful lot for the privilege). You can also trigger some cameras using an app on your phone, enabling you to see the image, adjust the exposure and so on. Bear in mind that these tend to have a maximum range of 10 metres or so.

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THE SETTINGS These are a good starting point – try these settings, do a couple of test shots, and then tweak them as necessary:

Camera

Put the camera in manual exposure mode. Then set 1/250 sec or 1/200 sec shutter speed, depending on the flash synch speed of your camera (check in the manual); f16 aperture, to give plenty of depth of field (you're more likely to get the badger in focus); and ISO 200, to minimise the amount of noise in the darkness). Put it into single shot mode so that it takes one photo every time you release the shutter (or the badger is detected by the sensor). And, finally, set the lens to manual focusing and focus on the point where you expect the badger to break the sensor beam (or where you expect it to be if you're shooting with a remote camera).

Flashgun

Put the flashgun in manual mode and dial it down to 1/8 power. Many flashguns allow you to zoom the angle of the light, to get different effects. For this particular shoot, mine were set to 105mm to focus the light in the centre and make a frame of darkness around the badger(s).



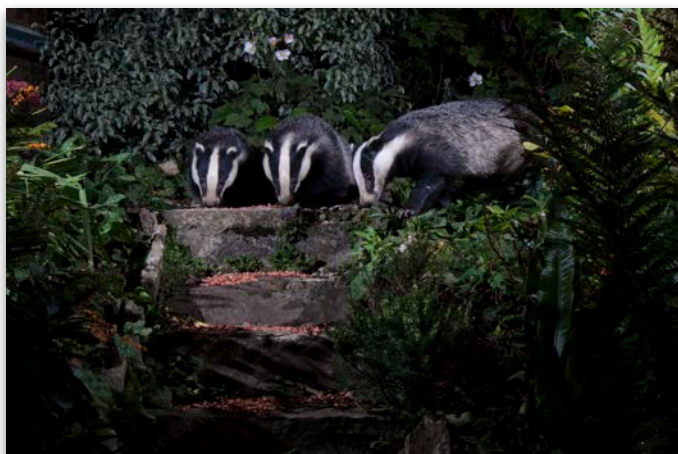
Settings: 1/250 sec, f16, ISO 200, with an EF 16-35mm f/4 lens (manual mode)

Transmitters (triggers) and receivers for shooting with a camera trap
 (based on [Camptraptions](#) equipment)

Put the transmitter into the camera hotshoe and set it to Channel 2; this will be in contact with the two flashguns. Attach each flashgun to a receiver (which should also be set to Channel 2). Then plug the third receiver into the camera with the appropriate cable (it can sit on the transmitter hotshoe) and set it to Channel 1; this will be in contact with the PIR sensor (which should also be set to Channel 1). What happens is that the badger triggers the sensor, which triggers the camera which, in turn, triggers the flashguns in synch with the shutter.

Transmitters (triggers) and receivers for shooting with a remote camera

You need exactly the same set-up as for camera trapping – but with one key difference. Instead of leaving the PIR sensor to trigger the camera, you trigger it yourself by pressing the button on a separate trigger or transmitter to take the picture.



Settings: 1/250 sec, f16, ISO 200, with an EF16-35mm f/4 lens (manual mode)

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