

Thank you



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**

This is to certify that you have **adopted a hedgehog**

European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

The hedgehog is one of the UK's most familiar wild animals. Hedgehogs are nocturnal and hibernate, usually in piles of leaves or logs, from November until mid-March. They prefer a medium-sized leaf such as oak, ash or lime for their nests and have a particular preference for nesting under brambles.

Hedgehogs are declining rapidly. Numbers have fallen by up to 30% in urban areas and 50% in rural areas since 2000. There are believed to be fewer than 1 million left in the UK. Thank you for supporting your local Wildlife Trust to help make a difference to hedgehogs in your area.

Matt Jackson, Director of Conservation





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A Guide to Hedgehogs

Armed with up to 7,000 spines, able to run at two metres per second, climb walls and swim ponds, there's more to the hedgehog than meets the eye. But despite these abilities, hedgehogs are under threat. Their numbers have declined rapidly in both urban and rural areas since the millennium.



Tom Marshall

Hedgehog lifestyle

Hedgehogs are nocturnal and can travel up to 2km each night. Males in search of food are likely to travel furthest. They are opportunist feeders, ambling around in the undergrowth and eating what they find. Their diet consists mainly of invertebrates – beetles, caterpillars, earthworms, millipedes, earwigs, slugs and snails are all eaten – but they are also known to eat eggs, amphibians and carrion.

They hibernate from November to March, depending on the weather. During hibernation a hedgehog's heartbeat drops dramatically from 190 beats per minute to just 20, and its body

temperature from 35°C to 10°C. Adults can weigh as much as 2kg. They need to weigh at least 450g (preferably more) to have a chance of surviving hibernation. If the weather is mild they can feed well into December, building up their fat reserves.

Hedgehogs have been known to live up to 14 years in captivity, but in the wild most live between two and four years, with only an estimated 1 in 1,000 living to seven years.

Sometimes hedgehogs coat their spines with frothy saliva. The reason for this is still unknown.

Hedgehog breeding

Hedgehog mating is a delicate,

and often noisy procedure involving the female adopting a position with her spines held flat against her body. Pregnancy lasts around four weeks and the young are born between May and September in litters of four and five. Mothers can have two litters each year. Hoglets are born blind with their spines hidden within a fluid-filled sac and are independent after about six weeks.

Hedgehog numbers

Hedgehogs are disappearing faster than tigers. Numbers have fallen by a third since 2002. In 1950 the UK population of hedgehogs was roughly 30 million, but now fewer than one million are thought to be left. The decline is thought to be due to the loss of hedgerows, over-management of parks and gardens, loss of green space to paving and decking, and the use of chemical pesticides leading to fewer invertebrates for hedgehogs to eat.



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**See overleaf for how you
can help hedgehogs**

Top tips on how to help hedgehogs

Hedgehog highways

Get together with your neighbours to put 12cm square holes (the size of a CD case) at the bottom of garden fences to create a thoroughfare for hedgehogs. Adding a 'Hedgehog Highway' sign will let others know that the hole is intentional!

Feeding hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are lactose intolerant so DON'T give them bread and milk. Mealworms should also be avoided. Instead, give them meaty cat or dog food, or specialist hedgehog food (sold at our Nene Wetlands Visitor Centre and at some garden centres) and water.

Hedgehog houses

Leave a scruffy corner in your garden – hogs love brambles as the prickles give them some protection. Provide nesting sites such as log and leaf piles (these will also attract food for hedgehogs) or buy a purpose-built hedgehog house.



Gardening and hedgehogs

Check long grass before cutting or strimming as hedgehogs occasionally make nests in grass. Check bonfires before lighting as hedgehogs like to sleep underneath – delay building them until the last minute or move the whole pile, if possible. Avoid using slug pellets – instead, let hedgehogs be your pest control.

If you have a garden pond, make sure there is a shallow edge or ramp so that hedgehogs can get out. They are good swimmers but can get trapped and drown in steep-sided ponds.

Monitoring hedgehogs

If you have seen a hedgehog in your neighbourhood or elsewhere, let us know! Just complete the hedgehog sighting form on our website: wildlifebcn.org/take-action/hedgehogs. You can also follow our own Harry Hog on Twitter and Facebook.



And finally, if you are not already a member, please consider joining the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants.

We work to ensure that our three counties are a better place for wildlife and people, by caring for nature reserves and encouraging people to get to know the nature on their doorstep, like hedgehogs!