



## SPECIES

Photos: David Chandler, David Beattie

# Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Information: Lydia Reese

### All about the hedgehog

- Hedgehogs favour hedgerows, woodlands, and meadows but are commonly found in suburban gardens, assuming a few sleeping nests are present.
- Their colour varies from white, to pale or deep brown and black.
- Hedgehogs have approximately 6,000 short 'quills' on their back. The rest of their body is covered by short, rough textured fur.
- They feed on insects (such as beetles, slugs, and earthworms) as well as fruits and berries.

### Why do hedgehogs need our help?

Hedgehogs are struggling to find suitable habitats and food. The changing climate is also effecting their hibernation and feeding patterns.

### How can we help?

- Place a pile of hay, straw, or leaves under a dry shed, log pile, or thick hedge in the garden for a safe place to hibernate. Leave wild areas for foraging.
- Avoid using slug pellets and pesticides.
- Don't interfere with nests and be especially careful when working in the garden and strimming.
- Make small holes in walls or fences allowing hedgehogs to move freely between gardens.
- Where there are ponds, ensure there is a ramp (wrapped in chicken wire), or create shallow areas at the pond's edge. Hedgehogs are great swimmers, but they struggle to climb out of steep-sided ponds.

- Leave out pet food, not milk! Lactose upsets hedgehogs' digestion, so contrary to popular belief, leaving out a dish of milk is not the best thing to do! Instead, leave out any meaty pet food (such as cat food) with some water.

**DID YOU KNOW? In one night a single hedgehog can munch up to 200g of insects (hence the title the gardeners' friend) and roam up to 2 miles!**

#### How do I monitor and record?

- Hedgehogs are not easy to record. The easiest way is to provide hedgehog food where they are known to occur and observe either through a window or using a mammal camera.
- Alternatively provide a hedgehog house for winter where hibernating hedgehogs can be observed but be careful of frequent disturbance.
- You can also make use of footprint tubes to record their presence.
- Enter records into iRecord.

#### Learn more

- [hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/](https://hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/)
- [wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home/](https://wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home/)
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at [naturalist@arocha.org](mailto:naturalist@arocha.org)