



*Creating hedgehog highways
in Thame, Chinnor and
surroundings*

Hedgehog care in our community

Hedgehog Highway Project



Our project

Make Thame a haven for hedgehogs

A Hedgehog Champion on every street

Hedgehog Highways between every garden

A community awareness about Hedgehogs in Thame

Build hedgehog feeding stations

Provide hedgehog training sessions

Build and supply hedgehog houses

Help neighbours create highways



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Contact trees@21stcenturythame.co.uk

<http://21stcenturythame.co.uk/hedgehog-highways>

About our Hedgehog friends

15-30cm nose to tail tail 1-2cm weight up to 2kg

Well known to be mostly nocturnal and solitary and hibernate over winter (November to April) in a nest of leaves or logs ('hibernaculum')

They have an acute sense of smell, touch and hearing to make up for poor eyesight

Hedgehogs have been around for over 15 million years

Hedgehogs are the UK's only spiny mammal

Average lifespan 2-3 years but can live up to 6 years if safe !

Only Hedgehogs, Dormice and Bats hibernate in the UK

Hedgehogs are protected in the UK under the

Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981



Breeding

In April a male (boar) will circle a female (sow) for hours to persuade her to mate

After mating, the male leaves, taking no part in rearing the young

The female makes a special 'maternity' nest of leaves and grass and has a gestation period of about 32 days after which 3 to 5 babies are born

The young are blind and pink but soon sprout soft white spines and their eyes open at about 14 days

The mother suckles them until they can hunt for themselves

The mother takes them out for their first foraging trip after 4 weeks and just 10 days later they all go their separate ways

A second litter may be produced in late summer, but seldom survives the winter

A day in the life of a Hedgehog

In spring and summer a hog sleeps in a temporary nest in hedgerows or under shrubs and wakes up at dusk to hunt for food

A hog may roam 2 - 4 km a night in search of food

They eat all kinds of invertebrates, as well as amphibians and anything else they can catch; they particularly like big, crunchy beetles and earthworms. They are partial to birds' eggs and raid mouse nests for newborn young

In autumn, soft fruit and as much food as possible is eaten to store as fat which is used up during hibernation

In winter they spend the coldest months (usually from November until March) hibernating in a specially prepared nest

The nest is usually at ground level in a hedgerow, a compost heap, under a thick layer of leaves or under logs

During hibernation the body temperature drops to that of its surroundings and they almost stop breathing

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Why hedgehogs are good

Hedgehogs are a gardener's friend,

as they eat beetles, caterpillars, worms and other invertebrates

They act as a barometer for the health of our local environment

Like all creatures hedgehogs are part of the ecosystem and whatever role they do play we can be sure it is in some way vital to maintaining the balance that all life, including us humans, depends on

A single hedgehog can eat over 100 invertebrates in a night, their presence therefore indicates a diverse, healthy and thriving ecosystem

Hedgehogs are in decline

The hedgehog is in decline

but it is not officially a threatened species YET !

Hedgehogs have declined by approximately a third between 2002 and 2012

Sightings fell by 4 percent just in 2014

Rough estimates put the hedgehog population in England, Wales and Scotland at about one million, compared with 30 million in the 1950s



Threats to hedgehogs

Road traffic

Habitat loss intensive farming has removed hedges, woods and small fields in which hedgehogs thrive

Tidy gardens and lots of decking and paving have reduced the habitats of mixed vegetation and fallen leaves that hedgehogs love

Chemicals; insecticides and slug pellets reduce the natural food available. Tiny quantities of chemicals present in slugs, beetles etc. can soon accumulate enough poison in a hedgehogs body to affect their health

Drowning; a hedgehog often drowns if it cannot climb up the smooth sides of a swimming pool or steep-sided pond

Cattle grids; hedgehogs often fall through these and cannot climb out so they starve to death

Hibernation; how much safer could a hibernating hedgehog be if we're watching over it during the winter

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Help all of nature on your walks !

Download the iNaturalist app and record ALL nature that you see. Especially hedgehogs ! Your data could be used to protect species from development !

Find and add to the Thame Hedgehog Highways recording project !

iNaturalist

How to help hedgehogs

Gardens can be an ideal habitat for hedgehogs - encourage them in

Some do's and don'ts

Find alternatives to chemicals for killing pests (no slug pellets)

Don't tidy up too much

Be careful when breaking up compost heaps

Check there is not a hedgehog sleeping when mowing, strimming or lighting bonfires

Do help them fatten up for the winter with saucers of tinned cat or dog food. The hedgehog will regularly return for its supper

Do provide a good place to hibernate with a bundle of straw, hay or leaves under a dry shed, thick hedge or log pile

Put out a box covered with polythene and soil

Make sure there are access points to your garden

Digging a tunnel underneath a wall or fence or making a small hole for the hedgehogs to pass through and continue their search for food and a mate

In a walled garden consider removing a brick for the same purpose

Cover your drains – hedgehogs can fall into these and become stuck

Put away netting - net can become entangled in hedgehog spines: put away sports nets and install garden netting at a height that hedgehogs can safely pass under



Hedgehog Highways

One of the main reasons for hedgehog decline is the secure fencing off of the land they need to roam

Even a hedgehog friendly garden (with food, water and shelter) one garden is rarely going to be enough for a hedgehog

They need to travel around a mile each night to get the food they need

A solution is a hedgehog highway which is a series of holes in fences and walls that allow hedgehogs to pass freely between gardens, parks and allotments without having to use human roads (too dangerous)

A hedgehog highway hole should be about

5 inches or 13cm square, about the size of a CD case

Holes should be at ground level on each side of your garden

Become your Hedgehog Street Champion



Send us an email at trees@21stcenturythame.co.uk with your name and your street and town.

Talk to your neighbours to encourage access holes between gardens and to the outside.

Join the Hedgehog Street mailing list - all you need to know when you need to know it.