

ENCOURAGING HEDGEHOGS



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WHY?

In July 2020, hedgehogs were placed on the Red List for Britain's Terrestrial Mammals, meaning they are vulnerable to extinction. Sadly, hedgehog numbers have halved since 2000, and reduced from 30 million in the 1950s to 1 million today.

Numbers have declined in rural areas as hedgerows and field margins have disappeared. Loss of habitat due to increasing urbanisation and associated infrastructure such as roads (on which one third of a million are killed each year), means their future looks bleak. However, churches can reverse this decline.

HOW?

NESTS AND HIBERNATION

Hedgehogs favour hedgerows, meadows and woodlands, but are also found in larger suburban gardens. To be happy in our churchyards, they need access to nests, safe hibernation sites and a safe food supply.

Piles of hay, straw or leaves under a dry shed or in a thick hedge provide good homes, or you could organise an activity to make some hedgehog houses as a church:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home>

It's really important to check for nests when working in a garden or grounds, especially strimming near hedges. Autumn bonfires are particularly dangerous to hedgehogs, so before lighting, either move the whole bonfire to another open space or thoroughly check that no hedgehogs are living in the centre.



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FOOD AND MAKING HEDGEHOG CORRIDORS

Hedgehogs roam widely, (up to 1–2 miles each night) eating beetles, worms and plenty of slugs and snails, which is an excellent reason to encourage them in our gardens and churchyards!

To help their roaming we can make 13cm square holes in our fences to create hedgehog corridors with our neighbours. The organisation 'Hedgehog Street' keeps records of neighbours who are participating in hedgehog corridors.

Slug pellets are toxic to hedgehogs. They may eat the pellets but are more likely to eat poisoned slugs and suffer painful death. Biological controls for slugs are a much better method.

If you plan to feed hedgehogs, leave out meaty pet food, not milk which upsets their digestion and build your feeding station in a way to exclude foxes, cats and dogs. You can do this by ensuring the food is protected by a crate or similar and access is via a low tunnel which larger mammals can't enter: <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/>

<https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/how-to-build-a-hedgehog-feeding-station>

PONDS

Whilst hedgehogs are good swimmers, ponds need at least one edge with a shallow slope to allow them to escape. A ramp covered in chicken wire does the same job.

Please report any sightings to Hedgehog Street: <https://bighedgehogmap.org/holes-for-hedgehogs-home/map-hedgehog-sighting>

Here is some advice if you find an ill or injured hog: <https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/found-a-hedgehog/>



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LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

Wild about Gardens has lots more facts and fun ideas to help hedgehogs:

<https://wildaboutgardens.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/Wild%20About%20Gardens%20Get%20creative%20for%20hedgehogs.pdf>

Natural History Museum information:

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/hedgehog-erinaceus-europaeus.html>

Hedgehog Street YouTube Channel has lots of fun videos showing their antics:

<https://youtu.be/D7KPHF30Wto>