

# West-European Hedgehog

## *Erinaceus europaeus*



- 1) Adults can have up to 7000 spines on their back and sides. These moult from time to time and regrow. If threatened, defence strategy is usually to roll into a ball, its spines as protection.
- 2) Not usually fast movers, but have been reported to run at 4.5 mph when they need to.
- 3) Nocturnal and can travel up to 1.5 miles each night, especially males in search of food and mates.
- 4) They can have several daytime nests they use, which are spread out within their territory. Usually make nests out of leaves, favouring a medium sized leaf like oak, ash, or lime. They particularly like to build their nests under brambles.
- 5) Opportunist feeder, ambling about in undergrowth eating what they find. Diet consists of mainly invertebrates - beetles, caterpillars, earthworms, millipedes, earwigs, slugs and snails are all eaten, but they are also known to eat bird's eggs, amphibians and carrion.
- 6) Hibernate usually from November to March, depending on weather conditions. During hibernation their heartbeat drops dramatically from 190 bpm to 20 bpm. Their body temperature drops from 35 to 10°C.
- 7) Hibernation nests are called 'Hibernacula'. If a hedgehog is disturbed or the weather changes during hibernation, they can move on to build new nests.
- 8) Adults can weigh as much as 2kg, but need to be at least 450g (preferably more) to have a chance of surviving hibernation. If it's mild they can feed well into December building up their fat reserves before hibernating.
- 9) Young are born between May and September, in litters of 4 or 5 and are called 'hoglets'. They are born blind and their spines are initially hidden beneath a fluid sack. Hoglets are independent after about 6 weeks. Mothers can have 2 litters a year and will move babies if disturbed.
- 10) Have been known to live up to 14 years in captivity. However, in the wild, most live between just 2 to 5 years, with only an estimated 4 in 1000 living to 7 years.
- 11) Nicknamed 'Hedgepigs' as they often make grunting sounds and can get aggressive with other hogs over food and mates. Also they can be rather noisy during courtship !
- 12) Have good hearing and sense of smell, but are quite shortsighted. Blind hogs have been known to survive well.
- 13) Sometimes they self-anoint themselves with a frothy saliva. The purpose is still a mystery.
- 14) Hedgehogs were made a UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority species in 2007.
- 15) There are believed to be fewer than 1 million hedgehogs left in the UK, down by some 30% since 2002. They appear to be declining by around 5% a year in both rural and urban habitats.

**See overleaf for how YOU can help this iconic species!**



## **Top tips to help our prickly friends ! -**

- 1) Check long grass before cutting or strimming - hedgehogs can make nests in grass and many are injured or killed each year.
- 2) Don't use slug pellets in the garden - these are deadly to hedgehogs who either eat the pellets or the poisoned slugs and snails.
- 3) Check bonfires before lighting - hedgehogs sometimes like to sleep underneath. Delay building the bonfire until the last moment, if at all possible.
- 4) Dispose of litter carefully - hedgehogs can get entangled in the plastic (4 pack) rings for cans or wedged in yogurt pots and tin cans. McDonalds previously redesigned one of their McFlurry containers to prevent hedgehogs getting trapped.
- 5) Cut a 12cm square hole (size of a CD case) at the bottom of your garden fence to create a connected habitat (hedgehog highway) with the adjacent land. Please check with your neighbours first though!
- 6) If you feed hedgehogs in your garden **DO NOT** give them milk or bread as this makes them ill, they are lactose intolerant. **DO** feed them meaty cat or dog food, mealworms and water.
- 7) Hedgehogs are good swimmers, but ponds and sunken areas need to be safe by ensuring there's a way out. A shallow edge or ramp of at least 20cm wide and with an angle of less than 30 degrees should help.
- 8) Keep garden netting taut or tie it up when not in use so that hedgehogs don't get tangled in it.
- 9) Leave a scruffy corner in the garden so hedgehogs can nest. You could even build them a hibernacula out of leaves and grass cuttings.
- 10) Make a log pile, which is a perfect habitat for encouraging beetles, a hogs favorite food and also, if you're lucky, a place for hedgehogs to make a nest too.
- 11) Visit Hedgehog Street - [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org) and learn how to become a 'Hedgehog Champion'.
- 12) For specialist advice on hedgehogs contact British Hedgehog preservation society [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk) or your local Hedgehog hospital SWCC at Shepreth on 07505 651968 or out of hours emergency 07771 457693 - [sheprethhedgehoghospital.co.uk](http://sheprethhedgehoghospital.co.uk).
- 13) If you have seen a hedgehog in your garden or elsewhere, please email the details to Paul Wyer at the Wildlife Trust BCN to help with his 'Three County Hog Survey' – [paul.wyer@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:paul.wyer@wildlifebcn.org)  
You can also talk to Paul about becoming a member of the Wildlife Trust.

**You can also find out more about other local wildlife and how you can help us at the Wildlife Trust by visiting [www.wildlifebcn.org.uk](http://www.wildlifebcn.org.uk)**



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