



*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**



Hedgehog Highway  
Project sponsors

**bpcollins**  
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Contact [trees@21stcenturythame.co.uk](mailto: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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21st Century Thame Environmental projects are supported by



**THAME**  
Town Council



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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 800,000, compared with 30 million in the 1950s



## Threats to hedgehogs

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

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

Road traffic

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

## 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](mailto: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.