



The hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* is Britain's only spiny mammal and can be found in a wide range of habitats from woodland to pasture. Urban and suburban gardens have become particularly important to hedgehogs seeking food and nest sites. Hedgehogs are mostly nocturnal, and can travel up to 2km when foraging for food. They have an omnivorous diet of fruit, earthworms, slugs and other invertebrates but can also eat amphibians and reptiles, small rodents, eggs and birds

Hedgehogs are nocturnal in the summer and have litters of between 4-6 young. They spend the winter months (usually between November and early April) in hibernation. Favorite sites for their nests, or hibernacula are under timber buildings, in piles of brushwood or leaves, or in compost heaps. Hedgehogs need to be in good condition physically and weigh over 600 grams before they enter hibernation. However, if it is warm enough and there is enough food, hedgehogs do not hibernate at all. The average life expectancy is around three years, but individuals have been known to live up to ten years.

The European hedgehog was declared a priority conservation species in 2007, after the latest findings from the Mammal Trust UK (2006), reported a rapid decline in hedgehogs. The rate of decline was up to 50% in some areas.

Threats

- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Road casualty mortality
- Lack of prey due to pesticides and habitat degradation
- Poisoning from slug pellets and other pesticides
- Mortality due to lungworm
- Increasing trend for tidy gardens including; Removal of leaf litter, a tendency towards fences rather than hedges in gardens, reducing hibernation sites and presenting barriers to movement
- Lighting of bonfires without checking for hibernating hedgehogs
- Feeding of milk and bread causing diarrhoea and dehydration which can lead to death
- Weak/underweight hedgehogs susceptible to maggot infestation leading to mortality in extreme cases

Current Action

- National hedgehog survey (PTES/BTO)
- Hedgehog street campaign (PTES)
- Awareness campaign 'The last hedgehog in Hereford' (HWT)
- Hogwatch (PTES)
- 'The state of Britain's hedgehogs' (PTES report 2011)
- Hedgehog Festival and rescue center in Ross-on-Wye

	Objective	Action
A	Locate and map existing populations	1
B	Halt the decline in hedgehog population in Herefordshire	2
C	Increase knowledge and awareness	2
D	Ensure habitat is not lost to development	3
E	Reduce mortality from traffic accidents	4

	Actions	Target
1	Map distribution	2020
2	Produce advice, increase awareness to members of the public and land owners	2020
3	Survey for and take account of hedgehogs in planning applications	Annual
4	Continue to encourage the reporting of road casualties to HBRC and identify hotspots	Annual
5	Develop and implement an Action Plan to reduce mortality in road traffic accident hotspots	2020

Lead Partner	HMG
Key Partners	HWT, PTES, Hedgehog Rescue Centres