

HEDGEHOG

Scientific name: *Erinaceus europaeus*

ALL ABOUT HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs are probably our most familiar mammals, common in city parks and gardens as well as in the countryside across Britain. They are not only harmless to us, but are also very useful to the gardener, as they eat many garden pests. In recent years there have been sharp declines in the number of hedgehogs in parts of Britain.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Hedgehogs can grow up to 30cm long and weigh up to 1900g. Their body is sturdy with short legs and the head is pointed with small eyes and rounded ears. They have short, sharp, stiff spines over the back and sides and the underside is covered with dense yellow-brown fur.



Roy Vickers



Roy vickers

WHEN & WHERE TO SEE

Hedgehogs are common to fields, hedgerows, woods and gardens. They are mainly active at dusk and at night. Hedgehogs are normally only seen from May until October, as they hibernate during winter because there is too little food available during that time. They hide under logs and piles of leaves during hibernation. Hedgehogs are normally solitary, but females with young may be seen in summer.

Hedgehogs can run surprisingly quickly if frightened. They will also roll up into a ball when there is danger; this presents the sharp spines to any attacking animal and is normally a very good defence.



i DID YOU KNOW?



Hedgehogs mainly eat beetles, caterpillars, and earthworms.



Many people put out a saucer of bread and milk for them, but this can be harmful as their stomach cannot digest bread, and cow's milk is a breeding ground for germs and can cause stomach upsets.



A better choice for hedgehogs is tinned dog or cat food (not fish-based), minced meat, chopped liver, or scrambled egg. Dog biscuits, bran and peanuts can be used to supplement the diet and to provide roughage, but sweet foods such as chocolate and fruit should be avoided as they are bad for their teeth. It is very important to ensure that a supply of fresh water is always available.



The mating season for hedgehogs is from April until August, with up to 2 litters a year. The female makes a nest of grass, well hidden in the undergrowth and has two to four hoglets that are born naked, with closed eyes. She suckles them and they grow quickly. They leave the nest after about three weeks and become independent.



The hedgehog has about 16,000 prickles on its back. These normally lie flat, but are raised by special muscles in times of danger. The head and legs are also tucked in, making the animal into a spiky ball, protecting it against most predators. Sadly, it is this same response which also results in so many hedgehogs being killed on our roads.



Darin Smith

**About
Wildlife in the City**

Wildlife in the City is a project promoting local urban wildlife across Nottingham City. Wildlife in the City is a partnership between Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Nottingham City Council, aiming to offer more opportunities for people to get involved in wildlife and their local green spaces. Wildlife in the City is funded by Natural England through Access to Nature, as part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme.

