

Hedgehog Project



With headlines like 'Hedgehog populations have declined by 50% since the year 2000' it is quite a worrying time for these charismatic little creatures. They are really suffering in urban environments due to loss of natural habitat, loss of food sources and an increase in road collisions.

Hedgehogs are a great species to have around as their presence shows that the environment is healthy and as they are so sweet, it's easy to see why they have been voted as the UK's favourite animal multiple times.

Winchester City Council wants to help the hedgehogs of Winchester so we have started a Hedgehog Project to raise awareness of the species and identify what we can do to help them; and you can get involved!

What is the Council doing?

We have been doing surveys to find out where hedgehogs are in the city and surrounding district. We are also arranging a series of presentations to raise awareness of the struggles that hedgehogs are facing. We want to get residents involved to help them as much as possible and will also be going into schools to talk about hedgehogs too.

Please keep your eyes on our website and social media accounts for more information and potential dates for hedgehog talks.

How can you help with our surveys?

If you would like to help with our surveys, you can choose between footprint surveys using a footprint tunnel or recording your hedgehog sightings.

If you would like to borrow a footprint tunnel from the Council for one week (Monday- Friday), please email Zoe Keeble, Ecologist zkeeble@winchester.gov.uk

You can find instructions for using the footprint tunnels on this page. If you wish you can also buy your own footprint tunnel from <https://www.nhbs.com/mammal-footprint-tunnel>.

If you would like to record your hedgehog sightings, please download a hedgehog survey sheet from this page. You can send these back to us by emailing naturalenvironment@winchester.gov.uk or posting them to **City Offices, Colebrook Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 9LJ**, or you can drop them off at the Council's main reception in Colebrook Street.

By doing your own surveys you can contribute to the knowledge of where hedgehogs are found, not just in Winchester or Hampshire but country wide to help increase our understanding of hedgehogs in the UK.

Both footprint surveys and recording of hedgehog sightings will take place between late February and October each year.

How else can you help?

1. **Make sure hedgehogs can access your garden** - this creates more food sources for wildlife. If you have a fence you can cut a 25x25cm square gap in the bottom of a panel or dig a little passage under the fence if you wish. If you have a hedged garden boundary this allows for wildlife access already!
2. **Leave areas of your garden wild**- you can leave a patch of your grass to grow a bit longer, allowing flower species to grow in the lawn and creating more food sources for wildlife. You can also create habitat piles

from grass cuttings, logs, branches and scrub, these are great for species that hibernate or need shelter during the day.

3. **Avoid using slug pellets and other chemicals-** using slug pellets severely reduces the amount of food that is available in your garden. The pellets can also kill hedgehogs if they ingest a slug or snail that has died from eating a slug pellet. There are many natural alternatives to slug pellets such as putting gravel or crushed shell around the plants or copper strips.
4. **Make ponds safe-** hedgehogs have been known to go for a swim. If you have a pond you can make it safer for wildlife by making one of the sides slowly sloping which means if anything falls in they can get out again easily.
5. **Check long grass before mowing-** some creatures shelter and nest in longer grass so please check before you mow!
6. **Have a compost heap-** some hedgehogs hibernate in the middle of compost heaps where it is warm. They also help with living a greener lifestyle as they can help you reduce how much waste is going to landfill.