

Discovering Hedgehogs

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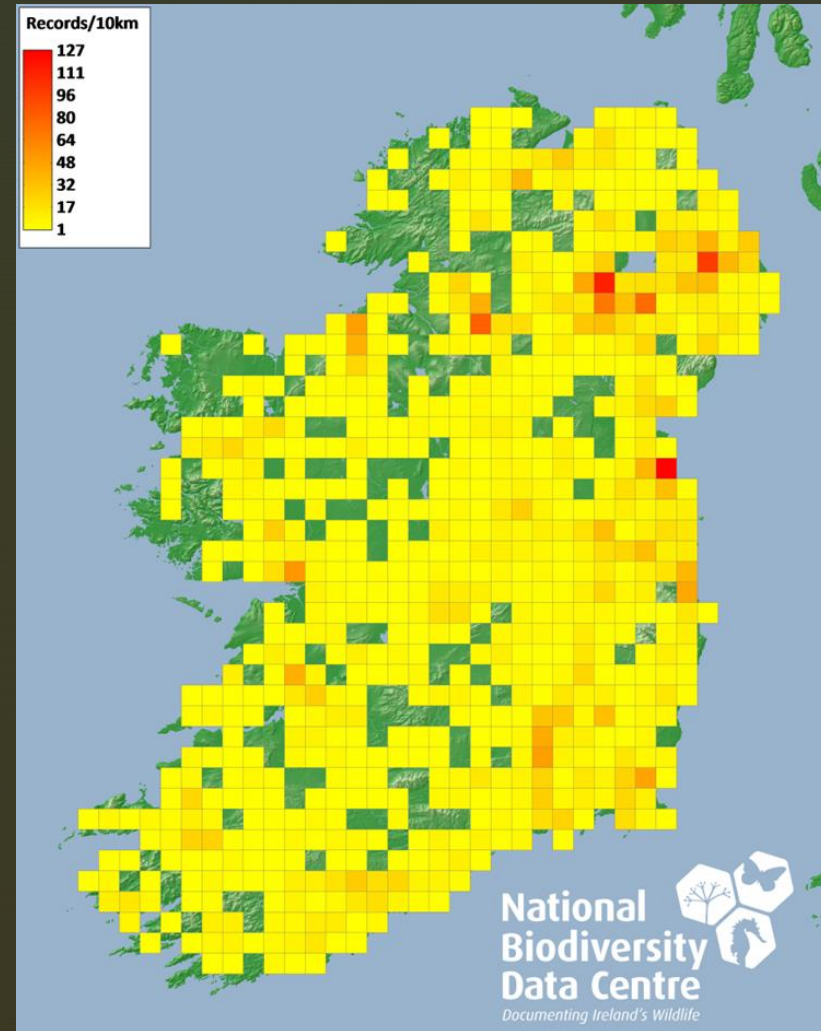


Hedgehogs in Ireland

- An Gráinneog (little ugly one)
- Introduced to Ireland ~ 12th Century
- From Britain or Continent (Normans?)
- Not invasive or a pest or of commercial or conservation interest
- Protected under Wildlife Acts, Bern Convention
- Very little research in Ireland so far.

Where are the hedgehogs in Ireland?

- Considered widespread and common in suburban and rural environments.
- Absent from mountains, wetlands and karst habitats
- Found in hedges, low intensity farmland, gardens, parks, housing estates
- Wherever food and shelter is plentiful



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, West European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), image, accessed 24 September 2019



Food and Feeding

- Insectivores
- Short, sharp teeth
- Eat invertebrates - especially beetles, earwigs, millipedes, also slugs and snails (but not as much as you think!)
- Can travel over 1km per night looking for food



Reproduction

- Breeding takes place after hibernation
- Courtship rituals
- Gestation 31 – 34 days
- 4 – 6 hoglets
- Female rears them alone
- Independent by 6 weeks
- May have a second litter



Photo Sarah Regan

Hibernation

- Undertake true hibernation
- Oct/Nov to March/April
- Need to be >500g
- Build up fat stores
- Will sometimes wake up and come out for food or even move nests

The weird and the wonderful world of hedgehogs

- They have around 5,000 spines on the body
- They can stay rolled in a ball for hours
- They cover their spines with saliva when encountering a new smell – self anointing
- They have some resistance to snake venom



Population Trends

- UK - Population declined by 66% over the last 20 years
- Decline is greater in rural areas due to loss of hedgerows and marginal habitats (intensive agriculture), possibly badgers and pesticides, road traffic.
- Decline slightly lower in urban areas
- Much data from volunteer surveys and road kill records



Photo: ALAMY. telegraph.co.uk

Helping Hedgehogs

- Provide food and water (wet or dry cat food)
- Avoid milk, bread, fruit or peanuts.
- If you have dogs, cats or foxes in your garden, you can make an enclosed feeding area for hedgehogs from an old plastic storage box.
- Install a hedgehog house!



Helping Hedgehogs

- You don't need to make or buy a special house
- Leaf and log piles provide spaces to nest and hibernate.
- They also attract insects which are the natural food for hedgehogs.



▸ Hedgehog highways



Photos courtesy of Hedgehogstreet.org



Helping Hedgehogs

- A wildlife pond can provide drinking water and attract insects.
- It should have shallow sloping sides to allow hogs to escape if they fall in – otherwise install a ramp!
- Cover drains and put a ramp in cattle grids too!

Rescue and Rehabilitation

- Wild animals – licence required to keep them
- If you find a sick or injured hedgehog you should contact your local ISPCA branch or wildlife rescue for help and advice.
- There is a network of specialist carers e.g. Dublin Hedgehog Rescue, Kildare Animal Foundation, The Hogsprinkle.
- Further information and a list of rescue agencies is available on <http://www.irishwildlifematters.ie/index.html>



Thank you to our partners!



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Please report your hedgehog sightings!

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Thank You