

Be Hedgehog Aware!

This week is hedgehog awareness week. Why should we care? The hedgehog is an iconic animal that has been part of our culture for centuries. It is the only spiny mammal we have in Britain and largely keeps itself to itself. They are known as the gardener's friend, because of the bugs and slugs they eat. Unfortunately, they are in trouble and their numbers have declined dramatically over the past 22 years. When a creature like the hedgehog is disappearing from our wildscape, this should be a wakeup call for us all. It is a clear sign that there is something wrong with our ecosystems which will, at some point, affect us all.



*Hedgehogs in a Chiswick Garden.
Credit – Anon.*

Latest British Hedgehog Count

The latest report (February 2022) from The People's Trust of Endangered Species (PTES) shows that hedgehog numbers in the countryside are still in decline. In urban environments, there appears to have been a slight increase, which is great news! However, PTES and London Hogwatch suggest that we treat the good news with some caution. The decline in past years has been so dramatic, that the slight upturn in numbers does not remove the hedgehog from its "Vulnerable to Extinction" status, in the Red List for Britain's Mammals (Mammal Society).

Both scientific organisations believe that the improvement in urban hedgehog numbers is due to residents creating hedgehog/wildlife friendly gardens and access to their gardens by putting in 13cm holes in their fences to allow hedgehogs to pass through. Recent research from

London Hogwatch show that all these actions are vital to the survival of our urban hedgehogs. It does not take much to make a difference!

What do hedgehogs need?

The main diet of a hedgehog is earthworms, beetles of various types, caterpillars, and slugs. It is therefore important that we keep our gardens natural with a wide range of plants, soil, and grass, where they can dig around to find the food they need to survive. They also need to nest during the day and whilst they hibernate through the winter. It is therefore important to have “messy” areas in our gardens - leaving piles of leaves and ground covering vegetation. A wood pile to attract beetles and other grubs is a big help to hedgehogs, as is a nice shallow bowl of water to drink during hot dry days. Don't forget the hole in the fence for access.



Credit - WildChiswick

Hedgehogs across Chiswick

The hedgehog monitoring work by WildChiswick with ZSL London Hogwatch last year, has shown that there is a good hedgehog population across Grove Park and Strand on the Green. WildChiswick funded the London HogWatch survey in Chiswick House & Gardens. As we suspected, the grounds are a hub of hedgehog activity. Although a small population, it is an important one, and HogWatch are keen to keep an eye on it. Although the grounds are large, they are not large enough to sustain a population of hedgehogs by itself. Hedgehogs need to travel a mile each night to find food, a mate and nesting places. We believe they move between Chiswick House & Gardens and other gardens across Grove Park and Strand on the Green. All the allotments within this area of Chiswick also showed good hedgehog activity.



Chiswick Hedgehogs caught on camera
Credit – ZSL trail Camera

Sadly, the cameras we put across Dukes Meadow area were not as successful. We found no hedgehogs despite having the cameras positioned in the allotments and the Old Chiswick Cemetery. We know hedgehogs used to roam this area of Chiswick because lots of people have shared their stories with us. It appears they disappeared about 5-8 years ago. The question is why? We believe it is due to increases in gardens being paved, the use of plastic grass and an increase in smaller gardens with no access for hedgehogs. If we can work together and improve this by creating more wildlife friendly gardens and putting holes in fences, who knows? Maybe the hedgehogs will return!

What are we doing for Chiswick Hedgehogs this year?

This year WildChiswick and London Hogwatch are keen to survey across the Turnham Green and Bedford Park area of Chiswick. We are calling for people to allow us to put temporary cameras in their gardens to monitor for hedgehogs. We have already had reports that they may be present here, so we are very keen to prove it!

How can you help?

Work with us this year:

- Contact us if you live in Bedford Park area to put a camera in your garden or your community gardens. hogs@wildchiswick.com.



*WildChiswick and London HogWatch placing cameras last year.
Credit - WildChiswick*

- Contact us if you live in Grove Park and Strand on the Green to help us develop a hedgehog highway. hogs@wildchiswick.com



*WildChiswick drilling a hedgehog hole
Credit - WildChiswick*

Make your garden wildlife friendly:

- Keep your grass!
- Leave your leaves
- Plant a wide range of plants that will flower throughout the year.
- Plant bushes and ground covering plants

- Make a wood pile
- Leave out water or make a small, shallow pond

Put a 13cm hole in your fence

- We can do this for you.
- encourage your neighbours to do so too!

You can contact WildChiswick for advice by email:

hogs@wildchiswick.com

It does not take a lot to protect a vulnerable species like the hedgehog. If we all work together, then we will have a green and wildlife friendly Chiswick for hedgehogs and other creatures too!

Please visit at www.WildChiswick.com to see the work we do.

Contact us to know more via email at hello@wildchiswick.com.

Any donations to help us continue our work, no matter how small, are always welcome.

www.wildchiswick.com/donate.