

Hedgehog

Habitat Hero



Common Name: Hedgehog
Irish Name: Gráinneóg
Scientific Name: Erinaceus europaeus

Seen in Ireland:

Hedgehogs are most active at night from April to October
 Present in Ireland: Year-round
 (but usually not seen during their hibernation period over winter)



Hedgehogs range from between 15- 25cm in length.



The hedgehog doesn't build a permanent home. Instead, they sleep in a dry nest, these are usually piles of leaves, in hedges, wooded areas or even gardens.



Slugs, snail, spiders, caterpillars, beetles, and other insects make most of the hedgehog's menu.



Hedgehogs can live up to 10 years. However, a lot of them are not that lucky because of our activity and our transport.

Hedgehog Life Cycle

Foraging is a time-consuming nightly activity, for both sexes of hedgehog during the **autumn** period. It will go into hibernation around October for the **winter**.

Hedgehogs come out of hibernation in **Spring** around March each year, once the weather begins to get mild.

Most hedgehogs breed between April and July. Males will travel far and wide to find a partner. Females tend to stay in their own area and await the arrival of a wandering male.

The female makes a cosy nest; they are not too fussy. They have been known to use abandoned rabbit holes, dense hedges and old hay bales!

In **Summer** Females take care of the family alone. Most will give birth to 3-6 babies around June. After birth, the young remain in the nest with their mother, who feeds them milk, for about 4 weeks.

After a month, the young will leave the nest, accompanied by their mother and learn to forage for two weeks. By the age of 6 weeks old they are ready to live alone!



Hedgehogs are one of only two Irish mammal's that truly **hibernate** for the winter. That means they have a long sleep all through the winter months. The other mammal is our native Bats



Hedgehog



Some more Facts:

- Hedgehogs are prickly little Mammals, even as baby's they have spikes. The young spikes fall out and are replaced as the hedgehog gets older, in a process called 'quilling', like how we lose our baby teeth.
- Hedgehogs are well protected against natural predators such as the fox. If a fox thought that hedgehog looks tasty, they could just curl up in a ball and use the spikes to protect themselves.
- Hedgehogs are nocturnal –they mostly come out at night- this is a good thing because our roads are less busy at night with trips to school or work.
- From March to October, hedgehogs can travel between 1-2km every night looking for food and mates.
- This means each hedgehog may has more than one nest where they rest during the day.
- No one garden or school grounds can provide everything a hedgehog needs.
- You can help the little wanderers by making 'hedgehog highways'. Create a hole about 13cm x 13cm in your garden wall or fence to allow them to travel.
- Hedgehogs may nest in undisturbed areas of the garden such as under a hedge or garden shed. You can provide spaces for hedgehogs to nest or hibernate by making piles of logs or leaves in a quiet corner.
- These natural hedgehog homes will also attract lots of insects which provide food for hedgehogs but also for other animals such as birds, frogs and pygmy shrews!

