

# Kingston Nature Recovery Group - Wildlife Gardening Forum

## Helping Hedgehogs

Emily Thrift, a PhD student at Sussex University and member of the Hedgehog Preservation Society, gave an inspiring talk to around fifty people in the Parish Hall on Sunday 27 October. She explained that the population of hedgehogs in the UK is estimated at between 700,000 and 1 million which is much reduced from earlier times. The population is recovering slowly in urban areas where gardens provide good places to nest and food but that rural hedgehogs are at risk of further decline due to loss of habitat.

The main threats to hedgehogs are:

- **Road collisions:** around 100,000 are killed annually on our roads.
- **Intensification of farming:** hedgehogs need hedges and 300,000 kilometres of hedges have been lost. There is no food for hedgehogs in fields of monoculture.
- **Landscape fragmentation:** there has been a loss of connectivity. Hedgehogs need space. It is estimated that a female hog travels two kilometres a night and a male hog three and that a viable population of 32 hogs needs an area of 0.9 square metres to thrive.
- **Lack of food sources:** with the increased use of pesticides a 75% decline in hedgehog food sources (slugs, snails, worms, ladybirds, woodlice etc) is estimated.
- **Human related injuries:** bonfires (hedgehogs nest in them), strimmers, robot lawnmowers and the ingestion and entanglement in plastic litter (plastic particles in the soil, netting, can hoops). It is estimated 4-7,000 die annually from plastic entanglement.

### What we can do in our gardens

**Create a hedgehog highway** to enable hedgehogs to roam freely; make a hole (13cm x 13 cm) in your fence or wall or dig a channel under your fence to give hedgehogs access to a wide range of gardens.

**Reduce plastic waste** by making our own compost; using cardboard seed pots; grow from seed or buy bare root plants; use natural twine; use glass cloches to protect plants; and keep netting off the ground.

**Make leaf and log piles** which provide good nesting spots and sources of food.

**Ponds** give access to water to drink or leave out a shallow dish of water

**Make a hedgehog house;** hedgehogs prefer homemade ones, it doesn't need to be fancy and locate in a sheltered spot.

For more information see British Hedgehog Preservation Society  
[www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk) People's Trust for Endangered Species [www.ptes.org](http://www.ptes.org)

**And there are many things we can do as a village to encourage hedgehogs. We can:**

- Monitor our hedgehogs to understand how big the population in and around Kingston is
- Map the village and work out where hedgehog holes are required to increase connectivity
- Increase the number of gaps and access points there are in the village to support the hedgehog population
- Make our gardens more hedgehog friendly with leaf litter piles, logs pile and hedgehog houses
- Put up warning road signs asking motorist to slow down and be aware of hedgehogs
- Adopt an injured hedgehog

The KNRG are looking into how we can go about supporting these activities. Emily has offered to help us make this happen. If you are interested in getting involved with helping hedgehogs in Kingston please contact Helen via email at [knrg@kingston-pc.gov.uk](mailto:knrg@kingston-pc.gov.uk)