Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Hedgehog Friendly County

Community toolkit



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Photo: Jon Hawkins

Hedgehogs need our help

Can you imagine a world without hedgehogs? Neither can we!

The hedgehog is one of Britain's most iconic native species, but has suffered significant declines in recent decades. Data spanning 40 years has shown the rural population of hedgehogs has continued to drop by **30%-75%.** In urban areas, there was an estimated population loss of 25% between 2000-2010, however recent data shows no indication that the decline is continuing. This is great news for urban hedgehogs, but doesn't mean they don't still need our help.

Hedgehogs in decline

To tackle the ongoing hedgehog population decline, the British Hedgehog Protection Society and the People's Trust for Endangered Species came together with 30 other organisations to launch the **National Hedgehog Conservation Strategy** in 2025, with the aim of addressing the key threats to the species. Reduced natural food sources and a lack of connectivity between habitats were identified as two major threats facing hedgehogs.

Reduced natural food sources

The insect population has declined by 59% between 2021-2025, making the hedgehog's hunt for food that much harder. Increased use of pesticides and the destruction of wild habitats has had a major impact on the availability of the hedgehog's natural food source.



Photo: John Bridges

Less bugs = less hedgehogs.

Lack of connectivity between habitats

As we continue to clear wild areas of land for housing and commercial developments, create new roads and segregate gardens with impenetrable fencing, we remove vital habitats and safe passages across the landscape for hedgehogs.



Photo: Ben Hall/2020VISION

Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign

Suffolk Wildlife Trust has launched the **Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign** to encourage individuals, community groups, businesses and stakeholders to come together to help local hedgehog populations thrive.

We hope that this guide will support your group in taking practical action, as well as advocating for our prickly friends.

Help us monitor where people are helping hedgehogs by becoming a Hedgehog Hero and add to our Hedgehog-Friendly County map on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website.

Become a Hedgehog Hero
suffolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/hedgehogs

The good news is that whether you're a school, local community group, parish council, business or individual, by following this guide, YOU can make a difference to hedgehogs in Suffolk.

How you can support a Hedgehog Friendly County

Contents

What can we change?

Councils

Hedgehog-friendly features in planning developments, joined up green spaces, diverse plants in local spaces

Businesses

Make their grounds permeable and hedgehog-friendly and support local community groups to make their space hedgehog friendly

Garden centres

Offer alternatives to chemical pesticides, together with providing advice about gardening practices to support a healthy ecosystem

Fencing companies

Include hedgehog highways as standard in products

Developers

Design wildlife-friendly corridors and hedgehog spaces from the start

What can we do?



Make our gardens and green spaces permeable with hedges and highways

Plant diverse, native-friendly plants and create wilder areas with tall grass, fallen leaves & log piles

Reduce usage of chemicals such as pesticides, rodenticides, herbicides and fungicides and anti-parasitic veterinary products

Tell others about the Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign

Localised impact

County-wide impact

How to take action

There are lots of ways you can help hedgehogs. Practical action, such as habitat creation and improvement, will make a big positive difference for hedgehogs in your local area. However, if we do not use our voice and **speak up for hedgehogs,** the long term impact on declining hedgehog populations will be minimal. As a collective, your community group's voice is louder together.

We need to influence change where it matters; in policies and within industries that affect the landscape around us. Nature is a necessity, not just a 'nice to have'.

This might be unfamiliar to you, but we've got resources and guidance to help you in this toolkit (see page 9).



Plants & flowers

Invertebrates (creepy crawlies) make up 70-90% of a hedgehog's diet, but insect populations have declined by 60% over the last 20 years, so it's becoming harder for hedgehogs to find their natural food sources.

Natural hedgehog food

Hedgehogs are omnivores and eat a variety of food, with invertebrates such as beetles, caterpillars, earwigs, earthworms, slugs and snails making up the majority.

Although there are supplementary hedgehog foods on the market, recovering their **natural food supply** ensures populations can thrive in the long-term.



Planting for hedgehogs

Pollinator pitstops are small strips (usually 1m x 1m) of wildlife-attracting plants, which will help to increase the hedgehog's natural food source. **Wildflowers** such as ox-eye daisies, yellow rattle and common knapweed suit areas such as gardens, school grounds, and recreational areas, plus they're super low maintenance! Simply allowing vegetation to grow tall increases invertebrate abundance and diversity. It is worth undertaking a habitat survey before making any changes to the current landscape to avoid removing beneficial flora.

Tips

Get permission from the landowner before you plant anything or make any changes to the land

Consider & plan who will manage and maintain the plants going forwards

Community seed swap

Photo: Autumn Barlow

Sharing is caring, so why not start a community seed swap? You could designate a location where members of the community can leave spare seeds for others to use and help increase the number of pollinator friendly plants around the local area. Telephone boxes are ideal.

Super soil

Applying a layer of organic mulch such as leaf litter, compost, well-rotted manure, wood chips, bark mulch, or cut grass, helps create cool, moist soil conditions that encourage earthworm activity; the hedgehogs's favourite food!

Five fab flowers to add to your outdoor space



common knapweed



yellow rattle



meadow buttercup



ox-eye daisy



yarrow

Tip

If you're not sure which plants are right for your outdoor space, check out the Royal Horticultural Society's wildflower list.

Other beneficial wildlife features

Creating a minibeast hotel, adding a log pile, allowing bramble to go wild in patches and adding a shallow-sided pond are other helpful features for hedgehogs, as they provide a food supply as well as nesting habitat.



Minibeast hotel at St Peter & St Paul's church Photo: Virginia Skoyles



Photo: Nick Upton

Hedgehog highways & homes

Hedgehogs travel around 1 mile every evening to forage for food, but our enclosed gardens and other physical barriers can prevent them from accessing safe spaces and valuable food sources.

Hedgehogs need just a **13cm x 13cm gap** in boundary fencing to make it accessible. Imagine if every garden, school and public space surrounded by fencing across your town or village had a hedgehog highway installed; it could link **miles** of accessible places together creating acres of potential feeding and nesting sites.

Tip The Hedgehog Street website has lots of examples of how you can make a hedgehog highway work in your outdoor space.

If you're unable to create a hole in the fence, digging a **sloped channel** underneath is a great alternative. Avoid making the sides too steep however, otherwise water will gather in the bottom and make it tricky for hedgehogs to pass through.

Hedgehogs need hedges!

They're not called hedgehogs for nothing! Hedgerows provide a safe passage between different location, habit for hibernation and breeding nests and a vital source of food, so if you have the opportunity to plant new hedges, 'gap-up', and restore to maintain a thick hedge base, this is the ideal option. .

Tip For native trees, check out the Woodland Trust and Suffolk Tree Wardens; they have tree planting schemes that provide community groups with saplings for free.



Hedgehog highway in wooden fence Photo: Mandy Gibbs

Mind the gap

Don't forget to periodically check your highways to make sure they're **free from debris** and allow hedgehogs to pass through easily.

Tip Shelter is important too! A hedgehog home is a great addition to any outdoor space. You can find instructions on how to build one on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website.

Communities in action

There are lots of communities across Suffolk and the UK starting to take action for hedgehogs, by installing hedgehog highways in gardens and community spaces. Could you start or support a neighbourhood initiative to do the same?

Case studies

Fressingfield
Church and school collaboration

East Bergholt
Hedgehog-friendly village

Growing Green
Hedgehog corridors in London



Hedgehog highway in metal fence Photo: Lauren Mack



Photo: Autumn Barlow

Put down the pesticides

One of the major causes for insect decline is the increased use of pesticides and herbicides. Many issues gardeners or land managers experience can be avoided or minimised without the use of chemicals.

As 70-90% of a hedgehog diet is made up of invertebrates, removing them from our open green spaces only makes the hedgehog's hunt for food harder.

Re-think weeds

Are weeds actually an issue? A weed is a plant growing in an unwanted place, but they're a valuable source of food for insects and therefore, beneficial for hedgehogs. Where possible, leave the 'weeds' be!

Tip

Ask your local land managers to use more wildlife-sympathetic methods of maintaining public spaces. For example; scythes instead of strimmers and robotic mowers.

The easiest way to help wildlife, is to let nature take the lead. Ask those who manage public spaces to leave areas for wildlife. For example, 'No mow May' and 'Let it Bloom June'.





You can find out more about 'No Mow May' and 'Let it Bloom June' on the Plantlife website

Organic gardening on alloments

Organic gardening is a proven method of gardening without the reliance on inorganic pesticides and herbicides. While it might taking a little adjusting, there are easy alternatives to solve some of your gardening woes, such as **deep mulching** to prevent annual weeds, **close proximity planting and** installing **pest barriers.**





Companion planting

Planting two or more plants together to create a beneficial relationship between them is a long established gardening method which can be applied to growing vegetables and flowers. This method can **deter pests** and **prevent disease**, meaning you don't need to apply chemical sprays to your plants or crops.

Perfect pairings

- marigolds + tomatoes
- nasturtium + cabbages
- onions + carrots
- roses + salvia
- sweet alyssum + lettuce



Photo: Autumn Barlow

Biological control

Provide space for nature, and the wildlife will come to you! One of the best ways you rid your garden of pests is to **attract their predators**. Plant flowering herbs like dill, fennel, and marigolds to draw in ladybirds, hoverflies, and parasitic wasps that eat aphids. Building a pond to attract amphibians, and putting up nest boxes to encourage birds to visit the garden has real impact too.



Photo: Virginia Skoyles

Raising awareness

The more people taking action for hedgehogs in an area, the more chance we have of helping them thrive.

Making your personal space hedgehog-friendly is a great first step, but imagine how much of a positive impact we could have on hedgehog populations if there were multiple highways in a neighbourhood? What if there were lots more pockets of plants attracting even more insects for hedgehogs to munch on?

Help us share the Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign with others to make an even greater change. **Your voice as a collective is powerful.**

Word of mouth

The easiest place to begin raising awareness is within your immediate network; tell your friends, family, neighbours or colleagues what you're doing to help hedgehogs and how they can get involved.

Posters

Spread the word in your local area by putting up a our **Hedgehog-Friendly County poster** on your community noticeboard or local supermarket noticeboard. You could also use them as a conversation starter with people who live down your street or with businesses who could make a difference.



click here to download poster

Tip To tag someone on social media start by typing '@' followed by their name or their organisation's name. To find us, search @SuffolkWildlifeTrust.

Social media

Social media is a powerful way of reaching lots of people at once. You can use our **social media asset(s)** to encourage others to take action, share photos of your hedgehog-friendly garden or tell others how you're speaking up for hedgehogs in Suffolk. If your group has a social media page, village magazine, or you're part of a local community group on facebook, **why not share on there**?



Download social media assets here or visit: **suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs**

Community events

Many voices together have a bigger impact than those alone. There may be others in your area who are passionate about helping hedgehogs but don't know who to speak to. Holding a 'nature natter' in a community hub is a great way to get started, as it invites people with similar interests or shared concerns, to get together and chat.

Hedgehog Highways are a great conversation starter and easy way to get people involved. Could you offer your services with helping people make holes in their fences, or do you know someone who could? Why not hold a Hedgehog Highway action day in your local area?

Decision-makers

If you're speaking up for hedgehogs, **see page 9** social media can be a useful tool. You can publicly contact decision-makers, businesses and organisations through social media by tagging them. This allows you to raise awareness of issues and demonstrate local concerns, such as declining hedgehog populations.



Speaking up for hedgehogs

To have a Hedgehog-Friendly County, where natural food supply is abundant and hedgehogs can move freely and safely through towns, villages and countryside, we need systemic change.

We need a county of **Hedgehog Heroes,** where community groups, individuals, businesses and those with the power to make a difference are supporting hedgehog populations. Advocating for nature is more influential when people get together and use their voice collectively.

I'm doing things in my local area to help hedgehogs; isn't this enough?

That's great! But you can also help hedgehogs by creating links with neighbouring communities

Making an impact

If new housing developments have hedgehog highways in all garden fences when they are established, we do not need to call for hundreds of individuals to do this themselves. If we ask local councils to reduce pesticide use on council-owned areas, we can reduce the impact of chemicals at a much greater scale than just our own gardens.

Using our voice to **advocate for change** is vital for helping hedgehogs thrive on a county-wide scale, and it's something we all have the power to do.

Check out our tips for speaking to decision-makers and people of influence:

Call for change

There are lots of ways to call for positive change to help hedgehogs. We've identified **key decision-makers and people of influence** that you can ask to support the Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign.

Local Councillors/Councils

Councils and councillors can influence entire neighbourhoods, developments and public spaces, making them one of the **most important groups** to engage. They can make decisions for council-owned land such as improving connectivity, restoring hedgerows, and reducing pesticide use. They can also shape local planning requirements for new developments.

Developers

New housing developments can work in harmony with nature. Rather than being an obstacle for hedgehogs, they can offer diverse plants and facilitate connectivity. You can call for new developments to include hedgehog-friendly features by using our guide on **page 10.**

Stay up to date with planning alerts by checking your local council's portal, following your local council on social media and sign up for council newsletters.

Fencing companies

Impermeable barriers are detrimental to hedgehogs successfully finding food, habitat and mates. By ensuring that fences include hedgehog highways or other permeable areas, hedgehogs can move freely.

Garden centres

Garden centres are a great place to help raise awareness of the threats to hedgehogs and how we can all make our gardens more wildlife-friendly. They can also promote natural pest management such as companion planting **(see page 7)** and encouraging natural predators like ladybirds and birds. Ask your local garden centre to promote the Hedgehog-Friendly County actions using our conversation and email guide on **page 10.**

See page 10 for templates and guides on how to contact the key players



Templates

We can make the biggest positive impact for hedgehog populations by using our voice and calling for change.

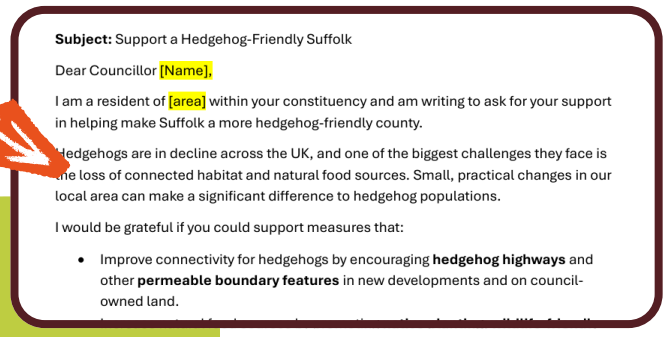
We've created **templates** and **guides** to make it easy for you to contact key decision-makers and businesses who can introduce hedgehog-friendly measures across Suffolk on a greater scale.

How to contact:

Local Councillors

Download





Subject: Support a Hedgehog-Friendly Suffolk

Dear Councillor [Name],

I am a resident of [area] within your constituency and am writing to ask for your support in helping make Suffolk a more hedgehog-friendly county.

Hedgehogs are in decline across the UK, and one of the biggest challenges they face is the loss of connected habitat and natural food sources. Small, practical changes in our local area can make a significant difference to hedgehog populations.

I would be grateful if you could support measures that:

- Improve connectivity for hedgehogs by encouraging **hedgehog highways** and other **permeable boundary features** in new developments and on council-owned land.

Developers/Planning Officers

Download



Fencing companies

Download



Garden centres

Download



Become a Hedgehog Hero

Hedgehogs need our help. The more people that get involved, the bigger the impact we can have.

We want to know how you've been taking action for hedgehogs so that we can create a county-wide map of hedgehog advocates, celebrate your efforts and share your success with others.

By submitting stories and photos of your hedgehog actions, you can become a Hedgehog Hero and receive your certificate.

How to become a Hedgehog Hero

1. Sign up on our website.
2. Take practical action for hedgehogs in your outdoor space.
3. Raise awareness and speak up for hedgehogs.
4. Send us photos or tell us how you've taken action via our online form.
5. You'll receive your Hedgehog Hero certificate!





How we can work together



Positive change happens when we work collaboratively. There are lots of ways we can support each other to increase the impact of our efforts and help hedgehogs across Suffolk. Our toolkit can help you get started.

New to nature groups

If you want to help nature in your area, our Wilder Communities Officer can help support your group to have influence over changes happening in your local green spaces and neighbourhoods

wilder.communities@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Training & workshops

If you'd like to deliver nature-based events and activities for people in your local community, but are not sure how to go about it, we can help with training your community leaders, creating risk assessments, activity ideas and promotion.

wilder.communities@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Habitat advice

Our Conservation Adviser can meet representatives from your group and walk around your community site to identify existing habitats and identify opportunities for restoration and creation.

suffolkwildlifetrust.org/communitygreenspaces

Business advice

Our Conservation Adviser for Business can visit your site to create an advisory report describing the existing wildlife habitats present across the site and identify practical opportunities to protect, create and invest in biodiversity to deliver lasting ecological value.

wildmybusiness@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Farming

Our Farm Advisers work with farmers and landowners across Suffolk to create more space for nature while maintaining productive, resilient businesses.

farm.advice@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Community Networks

Our Nature Action Network has access to shared resources, training, workshops, networking events. We host an interactive map of community groups, individuals, parish councils, churches and landowners taking action for nature so you can colaborate with others in your area.

community.networks@suffolkwildlifetrust.org



Photo: Nick Upton

Useful resources

Check out this list of useful resources to support your Hedgehog Friendly County journey

NB: Links may open in a new browser.

Leading hedgehog organisations

British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Hedgehog Street - The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES)

Why hedgehogs are at risk

Britain's National Hedgehog Convervation Strategy

Wildlife Live: Hedgehog Discovery webinar

Greenspace management tips

Wildlife gardening

Wildlife gardening

Wildlife gardening myths

Plants for pollinators

Wild about gardens

Meadow management

Meadows and grassland

Hedgehog-friendly gardening

Chemical-free gardening

Avoiding chemical use

Gardening without pesticides

Biological control

Non-chemical weed control

Chemical-free gardening

Organic gardening

Other ways to help hedgehogs

Build a hedgehog house

Rural hedgehog guide

Make a hedgehog feeding station

Create wildlife hidey holes

Campaigning and advocating

Campaigning toolkit

Find your local MP

Find your local press outlets

Find your local councillor - Gov UK

Local development plans

Information for developers - Hedgehog Street

Find your local councillors

What to do if you find a hedgehog

General advice

When should you help a hedgehog

Find a local wildlife rescue

Hedgehog first aid



Thank you

For helping make Suffolk a

Hedgehog Friendly County

