Suffolk Wildlife Trust

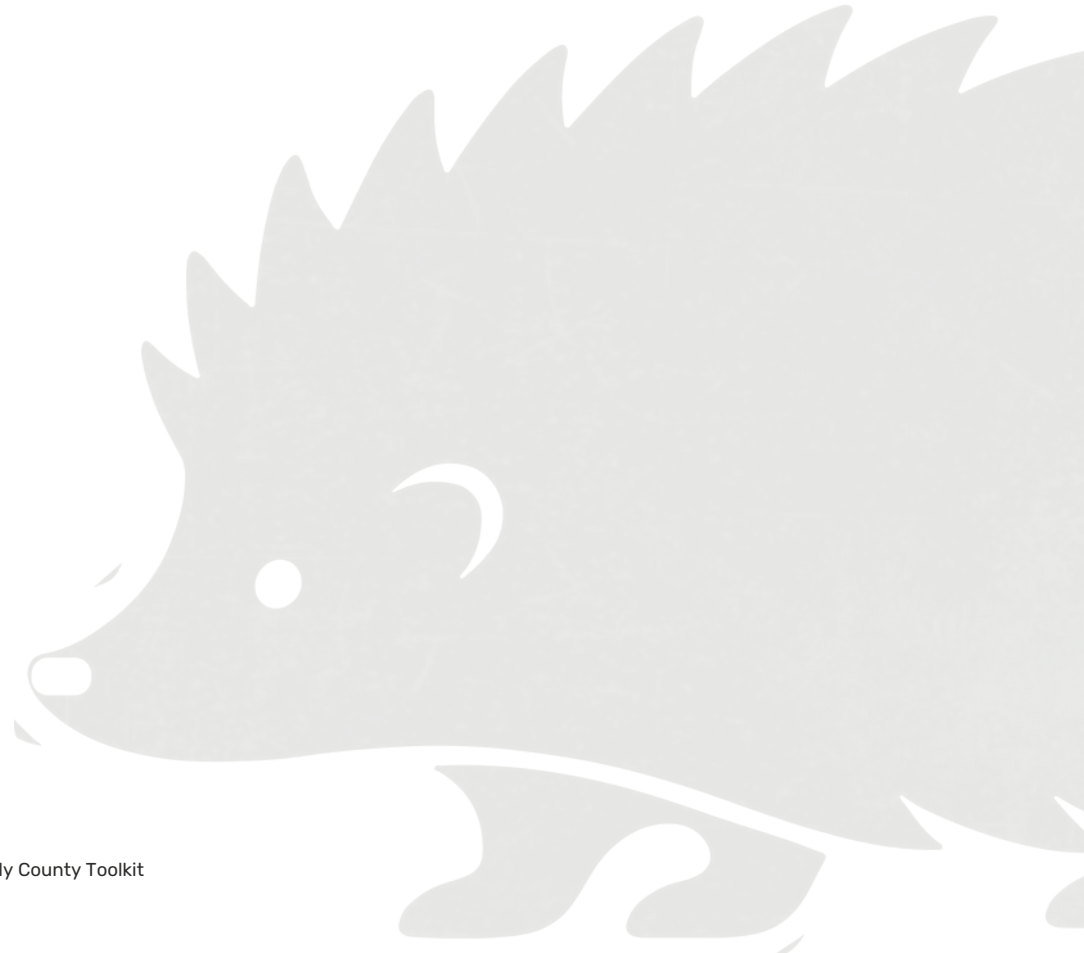
Hedgehog Friendly County

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. In the last 25 years, the hedgehog population has **declined by 30% to 75%** in rural areas and up to 30% to 50% in urban areas.

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 first **National Hedgehog Conservation Strategy** in October 2024, 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 the biggest threats facing hedgehogs.

Reduced natural food sources

The insect population has declined by over 60% in the last 20 years, 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.



Less bugs = less hedgehogs.

Photo: John Bridges

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, communities, businesses and stakeholders to come together to help local hedgehog populations thrive.

We hope that this guide will support you 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 by following this guide, YOU can make a difference to hedgehogs in Suffolk.

How you can support a Hedgehog-Friendly County

Contents

What can I change?

What can I do?



Make my garden permeable with hedges and highways

Plant diverse, native-friendly plants

Reduce my use of pesticides and chemicals

Leave wild areas in the garden for hedgehog habitat

Tell others about the Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign

Councils

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

Businesses

Make their grounds permeable and hedgehog-friendly

Garden centres

Support wildlife-friendly gardening

Fencing companies

Include hedgehog highways as standard in products

Developers

Design wildlife-friendly corridors and hedgehog spaces from the start

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.

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).



Photo: Autumn Barlow

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.

When available, they'll also eat fallen fruit and even carion!



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

Planting a mix of annual, biennial and perennial plants, shrubs and flowers that encourage insects and pollinators, along with leaving areas wild and untouched, will help to increase the hedgehog's natural food source locally. You don't have to have a large garden to make a difference; adding flowers in plant pots to your outdoor space helps too.

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!

Grow your own

You can grow so many valuable plants from seed from the comfort of your home, which can be later planted outdoors. Our favourites are sunflowers, cosmos, sweetpeas, nigella and nastutium. Why not share your extra plants with your neighbours?

Five fab flowers to add to the garden

Tip if you're not sure which plants are right for your garden, check out the Royal Horticultural Society's recommended garden plants list.



cosmos



yarrow



lavender



nepeta (catmint)



verbena

Gardening key

Annual plants
Last one season; great for a pop of colour, but need to be replaced the following year.

Biennial plants
Germinate, flower and die within two years; great for a pop of colour, but need to be replaced every other year if not left to re-seed.

Perennial plants
Flower every year and usually get bigger; a great long-term addition to your garden.



Photo: Trevor Acreman

Hedgehog highways & homes

Hedgehogs travel around 2 miles 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.

Creating just a **13cm x 13cm gap** in your garden boundary for hedgehogs to move through aids connectivity to the wider landscape, providing the safest passage.

Whether you have wooden fencing, chain link fences, brickwork or concrete gravel boards, there are ways to make hedgehogs accessing your garden easier.



Hedgehog highway in wooden fence

Photo: Mandy Gibbs

Tip

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

Renter-friendly highways

If your landlord doesn't approve of creating 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.

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.

Hedgehogs need hedges!

They're not called hedgehogs for nothing! Hedgerows provide hedgehogs a safe passage between different locations, protected hibernation sites and a vital source of food; they're incredibly valuable.



Download: hedgehog highway template



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 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 your garden only makes the hedgehog's hunt for food harder.

Organic gardening

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.**

The Royal Horticultural Society website has some great tips on how you can keep your garden looking lovely without affecting wildlife.



Photo: Katrina Martin



Photo: Tom Marshall



Photo: The Wildlife Trusts

Re-think weeds

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

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.



Hedeghog mural: Ali North

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.

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 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.



Click to download

Tip

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

Social media

Social media is a powerful way of reaching lots of people at once. You can use our **social media assets** 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.



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

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.

Community groups

Local community social media groups, such as those on Facebook, are a great way to raise awareness of issues in your local area. These are often called 'Your area's name' followed by 'community group'.

Many voices together have a bigger impact than those alone. There may be others in your area who are passionate about helping hedgehogs and want to join forces with you. We have created a a **hedgehog toolkit for community groups** wanting to take action.



Click to download



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 individuals, community groups, businesses and those with the power to make a difference are supporting hedgehog populations.

I'm doing things at home to help hedgehogs, isn't this enough?

That's great! But you can also help hedgehogs across a whole town, not just a single garden.

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.

For more tips on speaking to decision-makers and people of influence, see our campaigning toolkit:

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.

The next page of this toolkit has templates to help you contact all of the people below.

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.

Tip 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 and encouraging natural predators like ladybirds and birds. Ask your local garden centre to promote the Hedgehog-Friendly County actions.



Templates

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

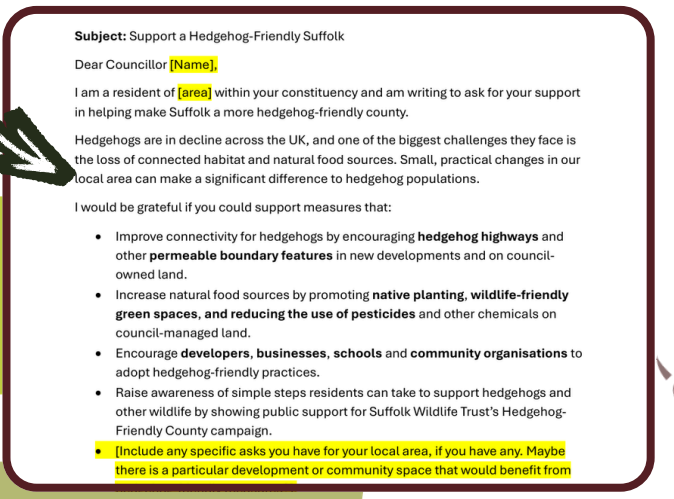
We've created **templates** and **guides** to make it easy for you to contact key decision-makers and businesses who can introduce hedgehog-friendly measures across Suffolk on a greater scale.

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.
- Increase natural food sources by promoting **native planting, wildlife-friendly green spaces, and reducing the use of pesticides** and other chemicals on council-managed land.
- Encourage **developers, businesses, schools** and **community organisations** to adopt hedgehog-friendly practices.
- Raise awareness of simple steps residents can take to support hedgehogs and other wildlife by showing public support for Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Hedgehog-Friendly County campaign.
- [Include any specific asks you have for your local area, if you have any. Maybe there is a particular development or community space that would benefit from

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!





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

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 to make Suffolk a

Hedgehog Friendly County

