

Hedgehog News

Auchterarder Hedgehog Highway Blog

Welcome to the second issue of our Auchterarder Hedgehog Newsletter!

I hope you enjoy reading this month's updates. We'll begin this issue with a blog-style update covering all the hedgehog news from July.

This month, we're delighted to welcome two new additions to our hedgehog project! We're now working with both Parkdale and Ruthven Tower Care Homes to monitor hedgehogs on their grounds and help create hedgehog sanctuary areas.

Parkdale Care Home already has a hedgehog hotel set up next to their sensory garden. Here, food and water are placed beside a hogilo to provide extra resources and a safe space for hedgehogs to nest or hibernate. We've installed a trail camera nearby to see if the setup is being used by a spiny visitor. The camera has been in place for two weeks now, and we're looking forward to reviewing the footage soon!

After an initial walk around Ruthven Tower's grounds, we saw great potential for hedgehog sanctuary areas. Over the next month, we'll be installing both footprint tunnels and trail cameras to monitor for hedgehog activity and identify key areas they may be using.

During the autumn months, while hedgehogs are hibernating, we hope to continue visiting both Parkdale and Ruthven Tower to chat with residents about hedgehogs. We're also planning short film screenings featuring trail camera footage and other videos, as raising awareness about hedgehog conservation is just as important during the quieter months.

A Call For All Hedgehog Footage

Unfortunately, we haven't received any trail camera footage from volunteers in Auchterarder this month. This is most likely due to people being away on holiday or simply not spotting any hedgehogs to share—and both are completely understandable! However, we do appreciate any updates, even if it's just to say you haven't seen any hedgehogs. Every bit of information helps.

As summer draws to a close, we want to gather as much data as possible from this year's survey. This includes knowing where hedgehogs are being seen, whether they have easy access to gardens, and—very importantly—checking that no hedgehogs are injured. Trail camera footage is key for this!

We want to hear from you!

If there's anything stopping you from staying involved—or if you have ideas to help remind people to send updates—please do get in touch. We value your feedback and want to work together to create a hedgehog-friendly community.

As mentioned last month, we're selecting a **"trail camera winner"** each month for the best photo or video. Unfortunately, with no submissions this month, we aren't able to choose a winner for this issue.

But good news!

The September winner will receive a hedgehog goodie bag, full of fun hedgehog-themed gifts and an information pack! There will also be small prizes for all submissions—so please send in your footage.

Submit your entries to: hedgehoghighways@gmail.com



Photo above © Elena Barbary

Hedgehog Homework

This month I wanted to share with everyone this excellent research article:

"An investigation into the techniques for detecting hedgehogs in rural landscapes"

Authors: Amy Haigh, Fildelma Butler and Rurth M. O'Riordan

This study explores different methods for detecting and monitoring hedgehog populations in rural areas. Hedgehogs are difficult to observe because they are nocturnal and often move through dense or overgrown vegetation where they are easily missed. As a result, it's important to assess which monitoring techniques are most effective for studying these elusive animals.

The researchers tested several methods. First, they engaged eight volunteers to report hedgehog roadkill sightings and distributed questionnaires to residents in the area. This helped identify where hedgehogs had been seen and informed the selection of survey sites. They then trialled a range of field techniques: footprint tunnels to capture hedgehog tracks, spotlighting at night using powerful 2-million candlelight torches, live trapping with baited rabbit traps, tagging hedgehogs with radio transmitters, and using thermal imaging to detect hedgehogs by body heat.

The results varied by method. Roadkill sightings were common, with 145 hedgehogs reported, but no live hedgehogs were ever found at these locations. This suggests that roadkill data does not accurately represent live hedgehog populations and is likely influenced by road traffic levels. Of the 320 questionnaires sent out, 128 responses were received, many of which reported hedgehog activity throughout the summer. While this confirmed their presence in several habitats, the absence of sightings could not be relied on to confirm hedgehogs were not present.

Footprint tunnels proved largely ineffective, only confirming hedgehogs at one site, and were not used consistently. Live trapping was also unsuccessful, with none of the 176 traps capturing any hedgehogs. Spotlighting, however, was much more effective—seven hedgehogs were found at a single site using this method. Over a 48-night survey period, spotlighting was predicted to detect hedgehogs on 27 nights, compared to only five nights for footprint tunnels. Radio tracking was useful once hedgehogs were found, as it allowed researchers to follow their movements. Thermal imaging, on the other hand, failed to detect any hedgehogs and may not be suitable for environments with heavy vegetation cover.

Key takeaway and notes for our project:

This study highlights the importance of using more than one detection method when monitoring hedgehogs. Based on its findings, we encourage our volunteers to use both trail cameras and footprint tunnels to improve the chances of detecting hedgehogs in urban environments.

It's also important to note that the study focused on monitoring rural hedgehogs in Ireland, so its results may not fully apply to our urban hedgehog project. However, the research is still highly informative and offers valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of different monitoring techniques.

if you would like to read this paper you can access it online here:

<https://cora.ucc.ie/server/api/core/bitstreams/b52fcaeb-8009-4406-b9e5-3b796149204b/content>

Finally, if you have any comments, questions or want to get involved in the Auchterarder Hedgehog Highway Project please email hedgehoghighways@gmail.com and get in touch!

August's Biodiversity Challenge

This Month's Biodiversity Challenge: Create a Hedgehog Highway!

This month, help hedgehogs safely move between gardens by creating a hedgehog highway. These are small gaps (13 x 13 cm) at the bottom of fences or walls that allow hedgehogs to travel through your neighbourhood without getting stuck or having to cross dangerous roads.

Your challenge:

Make at least one hedgehog hole in your garden fence (with permission if needed). Have a look at the wildlife trust guide:
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-hedgehog-hole>

Log your highway on the Hedgehog Street map (www.hedgehogstreet.org).

Bonus: Encourage a neighbour to do the same and create a mini corridor!

Why it matters:

Hedgehogs can travel up to 2km a night in search of food and mates, but modern fences often block their routes. A simple hole could connect vital habitats and make a huge difference.



Photo above © Elena Barbary

More Information and Helpful Links

-Tayside biodiversity website:
<https://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk>

- Hedgehog Highway Instagram
[@hedgehoghighwaysproject](https://www.instagram.com/hedgehoghighwaysproject)

- British Hedgehog Preservation Society
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

- hedgehog street
<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>

- big hedgehog map
<https://bighedgehogmap.org/>

- Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust
<https://www.pkct.org/>

- How to create a hedgehog highway
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-hedgehog-hole>

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