

Hedgehog News

Auchterarder Hedgehog Highway Blog

Welcome to the third issue of our Auchterarder Hedgehog Newsletter!

I hope you enjoy reading this month's updates. We'll begin this issue with a summary of what has been happening since our last newsletter.

Autumn and winter are important seasons for spreading awareness about hedgehogs, including how people can provide suitable spaces for hibernation and reliable food sources to help hedgehogs prepare for the colder months.

The project was lucky enough to be featured in an article in the 2025 Tayside Recorders Bulletin, as well as to give a project update at the Tayside Recorders Day at the beginning of October. You can find the bulletin here: <https://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/TaysideRecorders25.pdf>

The hedgehog highways article can be found on pages 9–11 and is definitely worth a read!

As the Auchterarder Hedgehog Highways Project has now reached its one-year mark, we have prepared an interim report. This includes an overview of the project so far, as well as our plans for the year ahead. You can read the report here: <https://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Auchterarder-Hedgehog-Highway-Project-Interim-Report.pdf>

Hedgehog Footage from Ochil Tower School

At the beginning of August, we visited the lovely grounds of Ochil Tower School. The aim of this visit was to set up four trail cameras in different locations to identify whether hedgehogs are present on the school grounds.

This month, we collected our four cameras that had been placed around Ochil Tower School. One was located in an open field, one next to a pond, one facing a vegetable patch, and the last in a woodland corner. After reviewing over 4,000 pictures and videos, we are excited to confirm that all four cameras recorded hedgehogs!



This is great news, as it not only confirms that hedgehogs are present on the school grounds, but also that they are using a variety of different habitat types and resources in the area.

The woodland corner, where one of the cameras was located, also has a hogilo (hedgehog house) close by. We hope that the hedgehogs we saw will make use of this for hibernating, helping them to conserve energy over the cold winter months. The gardens also have old trees with large roots and compost heaps, which both make excellent natural hibernation spots for hedgehogs.

Once spring starts to emerge, we can begin thinking about how to welcome the hedgehogs back and continue to monitor their activity on the grounds. We look forward to seeing more of the Ochil hedgehogs!



Hedgehog Homework

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

"Food over features: supplementary feeding has the strongest influence on hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) occupancy in urban gardens"

Authors: Kelly Hitchcock · Simon Tollington · Hannah Khwaja · Leah J. Williams · Kat Hamill · Richard W. Yarnell

Received: 23 May 2025 / Accepted: 16 October 2025 / Published online: 30 October 2025

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Summary:

This study investigates how different garden features affect the presence of hedgehogs. The authors examined features such as garden size, supplementary hedgehog food, access points, log piles, and ponds. They aimed to identify the key predictors of hedgehog presence. Across over 400 gardens, volunteers used trail cameras for three consecutive weeks between 2021 and 2023. Using single-species occupancy models, which account for a species being present but not always detected, they analysed the footage.

They found that hedgehogs were present in 57% of gardens, and the likelihood of detection increased with survey duration. Additionally, the strongest predictor of hedgehog presence was whether supplementary hedgehog food was provided. Gardens with food had approximately 77.5% occupancy, whereas gardens without food had 49.9% occupancy.

Interestingly, features often associated with hedgehog-friendly gardens, such as wild corners, log piles, and ponds, were not statistically significant predictors of hedgehog presence. However, supplementary feeding may override the effects of habitat features, making them difficult to detect statistically. Additionally, hedgehogs may use multiple gardens each night, meaning that single-garden features might matter less than landscape-level connectivity. Overall, gardens may function more as part of a network than as isolated habitats.

Some limitations of this study include that participants were likely wildlife-friendly and may already support hedgehogs. Therefore, the study could not determine whether food attracted hedgehogs or whether people fed hedgehogs that were already visiting. Additionally some important features (e.g., hedgehog houses and highways) were excluded due to collinearity with food.

The authors emphasise that "hedgehog-friendly" gardening practices still provide benefits to wider biodiversity, and further research is needed to disentangle the combined effects of these features to fully understand their impacts on hedgehogs.

Key takeaway and notes for our project:

This research shows that providing supplementary food for hedgehogs can be an important predictor of their presence. However, this does not mean that hedgehog-friendly gardening practices are not valuable, as they likely benefit many other species and may have effects at a larger landscape scale that remain undetected. If you are unsure whether hedgehogs are present in your garden, you could try adding some hedgehog food in spring to see if this encourages visits. However, it is important to note that feeding has risks, such as disease transmission, altered behaviour, nutritional issues, and increased competition and aggression. Therefore, we should not rely solely on feeding as a conservation tool, and habitat-based gardening practices should not be ignored.

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

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11252-025-01840-1>

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!

Hedgehog Library Drop In

This month we set up a ten day hedgehog exhibit in the Auchterarder Library, from the 7th to the 17th. We wanted to say a huge thank you to the library for hosting us for this.

We were pleased to welcome the local people to our drop in events, as part of the exhibit. On the first drop in session we handed out trail cameras with batteries, SD cards and provided advice on how to use the equipment to track hedgehogs in Auchterarder.

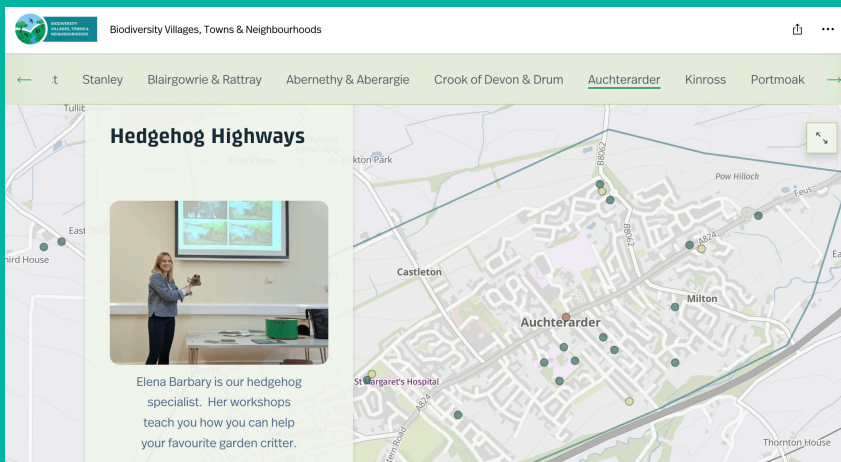
The following drop in was focused on mapping sightings of hedgehogs in the town. Due to the snowy conditions it was a quiet day in the library but it was great to speak to the few local people that did manage to pop in. The major consensus from talking to people was that many do not know if they have hedgehogs in their garden. This emphasises the importance of the use of the tracking equipment, such as footprint tunnels and trail cameras. If you didn't get a chance to make it to our drop in event and would like to borrow equipment to find out if you have hedgehogs, please get in touch with Elena - hedgehoghighways@gmail.com



Logging Hedgehog Sightings on Our StoryMap

Auchterarder is part of the ongoing Biodiversity Villages & Towns Initiative, and the hedgehog highways is a project within this. Recently the initiative has introduced the [StoryMap](#) an interactive webpage showcasing all the successes of the project across Perth & Kinross. This is a long-term, ongoing project that will be updated over time, so participants are being encouraged to add contributions to the map - such as hedgehog sightings!

On the website users can add points directly to the map under "Tell us about your project", where you can also upload photos and suggest new project ideas. If you've taken part in the Initiative—through planting, box installations, workshops, bioblitzes, or receiving seed packets—please add your contributions to the map. This helps us track progress and plan what's next.



January's Biodiversity Challenge

This Months Biodiversity Challenge: Create a Hedgehog Hotel!

This month, in preparation for hedgehogs emerging in spring it's time to create a hedgehog hotel. These are a kind of hedgehog feeding station where you can provide hedgehogs food and water in a safe, protected location.

Your challenge:

1. Find a large plastic box
2. Cut a 13 x 13 cm square in the short side of a box. Cover the edge with tape
3. Place the hedgehog food and water under the box
4. Lastly put a brick on top of the box, and one by the entrance

IMPORTANT:

Although supplementary feeding can be useful to hedgehogs it can pose additional risk for the spread of diseases and parasites, if there are many hedgehogs feeding in the same area. Additionally, if you are not using BHPS recommended hedgehog food, they may be at risk of improper nutrition. Make sure to clean your feeding station regularly, and double check the food that you are providing.

Find out more here:

<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/feeding/>



Photo above © BHPS

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>

Published by the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and Tayside Biodiversity Partnership - © 2026

Editor: Elena Barbary

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership

