



## Press release

**Under embargo until 00.01 Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022**

**New report reveals hedgehogs have declined by between  
30% - 75%**

**across different areas of the countryside since 2000, but  
are stabilising in urban areas**

***Rural populations continue to plummet, with the largest declines in eastern  
England***

***Urban populations are stable, and may even be recovering thanks to  
community action***

***Urgent action is now needed to try and bring hedgehogs back to the  
countryside***

Today, **[Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022]**, a new report published by wildlife charities People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) has revealed that Britain's hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) populations have continued to decline in rural areas by between 30% and 75% nationally since 2000. The largest declines are seen in the eastern half of England.

In stark contrast, the charities' [State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2022](#) report also shows that urban hedgehog populations appear to have stabilised and might even be starting to recover, after previously falling.

Data collected for this report between 1981 and 2020 from five ongoing surveys\* showed that hedgehogs have undergone a long historic decline, but now the vast differences between urban and rural populations are becoming increasingly apparent.

*Hedgehog in a planter. Credit Cate Barrow [High-res version available].*

**Fay Vass, CEO of The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) explains:**

“Hedgehogs as we know them today have lived here for at least half a million years, but they’re now facing myriad pressures which are causing populations to plummet, particularly in the rural landscape. The reasons for their decline are complex and aren’t yet fully understood, but two of the main pressures hedgehogs face in both rural and urban areas is lack of suitable habitat and habitat fragmentation.”

“Greater awareness, and individual and community actions, such as making gardens more hedgehog friendly, may be starting to help urban hedgehogs. However, urgent action is needed to understand why rural areas are no longer suitable for hedgehogs, and how conservationists, farmers and land managers can work together to prevent hedgehogs from becoming extinct in the countryside.”

## **Hedgehogs in the rural landscape**

The data showed that between 30% and 75% of rural hedgehogs have been lost nationally since 2000. Numbers have plummeted across the countryside, but the declines vary in different regions, with the most apparent in the East Midlands and the East of England regions. However, more research is desperately needed to confirm this and to get a more precise measure of how hedgehogs are faring across the country.

**David Wembridge, Mammal Surveys Coordinator at PTES, says:** “Loss of landscape features such as hedgerows is partly responsible for the decline, but not fully, as recent efforts have been made to restore and improve them. We know from research, funded by PTES, BHPS and others over the last decade, that hedgehogs prefer villages to open farmland, and follow field margins and hedgerows. Understanding how hedgehogs use and move through the landscape is a big step forward, but more work is needed.”

“We now need to look at the wider management of farmland and field margins, how the invertebrate species that hedgehogs eat are faring, the impact of climate change, and how connected the wider landscape is. Once we know the full facts, we can start to help rural hedgehogs to recover.”

Farmers and land managers are best placed to help, and many have already made positive changes to benefit hedgehogs and other wildlife. But, to stem the rural decline more change is still needed, which is why PTES and BHPS plan to help farmers with new Environmental Land Management (ELM) government schemes to benefit hedgehogs, promote the importance of healthy hedgerows through PTES’ *Great British Hedgerow Survey*, engage with government consultations about sustainable farming and landscape recovery, and plan to set up a national monitoring programme. The charities’ Farmers Advice booklet is also available for free: [www.hedgehogstreet.org/farmersadvice](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/farmersadvice)

## **Hedgehogs in the urban landscape**

The picture in our cities, towns and villages is more positive, with the data showing no indication of the decline continuing. Despite road mortality being highest around urban areas, gardens (with the right features) and other green spaces are thought to be a refuge for hedgehogs from pressures in the wider landscape – but only if they’re connected.

**Grace Johnson, Hedgehog Officer, Hedgehog Street (a joint campaign by BHPS and PTES) says:** “Hedgehogs can travel around one mile every night through gardens and parks in search of food and mates. It’s clear from our report that gardens can be havens for hedgehogs, but only if they are connected via gaps in or under garden boundaries to let hedgehogs in and out. A ‘Hedgehog Highway’ (a 13cm or CD case sized square gap) will enable hedgehogs to roam between neighbouring gardens and green spaces, which is vital to their survival.”

“We’re really encouraged that urban populations appear to have stabilised, but we can’t be complacent as numbers are still low. We hope everyone who has been helping hedgehogs in our towns and villages, including our amazing 100,000+ volunteer Hedgehog Champions, will continue their brilliant efforts over the coming years, and hopefully one day hedgehog sightings will be commonplace again.”

To help hedgehogs where you live, become a Hedgehog Champion, make a Hedgehog Highway in your garden fence or wall, make your garden as hedgehog

friendly as possible and record sightings via Hedgehog Street's BIG Hedgehog Map. For more top tips, visit: [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)

To read the full *State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2022* report, visit: [www.hedgehogstreet.org/state-of-britains-hedgehogs-2022](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/state-of-britains-hedgehogs-2022)

*\*PTES' Living with Mammals and Mammals on Roads surveys, BTO's Garden BirdWatch, BTO, JNCC & RSPB's Breeding Bird Survey and the Game and Conservation Trust's National Gamebag Census.*

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