

# Hedgehogs in peril

**Hedgehogs have moved a step closer to extinction following a significant population decline.**

Once a common sight across Europe, the West European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) has declined in numbers by more than 30% in the past decade.

The conservation status of the species has been officially updated from Least Concern to Near Threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) [Red List](#).

Key factors driving the decline of Britain's only spiny mammal include habitat fragmentation from urbanisation and agricultural expansion, vehicle collisions, pesticide use and garden mismanagement.

Conservationists warned that urgent action is needed to prevent further deterioration.

Abi Gazzard, Programme Officer at IUCN SSC Small Mammal Specialist Group, said: "The change to the Western European hedgehog's status comes after careful review of local, regional and national-level surveys from across its range. Unfortunately, evidence points towards a worrying and widespread downward trend.

"There is still a chance to halt the decline of the Western European hedgehog, and we must aim to prevent any further worsening of status."

Found throughout mainland Britain and Ireland, hedgehogs have also been introduced to Orkney, Shetland, the Isle of Man, and

some of the Channel Islands.

An indicator species of a healthy environment, as they feed on a variety of soil invertebrates, conservationists warn that a decline in hedgehogs indicates a decline in the health of the ecosystem as a whole.

Hope Nothhelfer, of the Mammal Society, said: "This decline will likely come as no surprise to the average person. When hedgehogs come up in conversation, it's not long before someone says that they just don't see them anymore.

"The hope is that as hedgehogs become more and more like a distant memory from our childhoods, we will respond with action that will bring these memories back to life."

The Mammal Society says people in urban and rural areas can help the species by employing wildlife-friendly garden management practices. These include leaving small gaps in fences to allow hedgehog movement, reducing pesticide use, and providing food and shelter by creating log piles or hedgehog houses.

Dylan Allman, Youth Ambassador at the Mammal Society and Hedgehog Champion at Hedgehog Aware, said: "Everyone can take simple steps to make an impact in reversing the steep decline in hedgehog numbers, such as providing a shallow dish of water, creating a hedgehog highway, and checking for nests before strimming.

"Collective small actions encourage young people to engage with wildlife, leading to a better overall understanding of supporting biodiversity."



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