

Hedgehogs

With their spiky coats and long snouts, hedgehogs are a special sight in gardens across the UK. There are 17 different species of hedgehog that can be found across the world.



The West European Hedgehog

The West European hedgehog can be found across mainland UK. These small mammals can also be found on several British islands, including the Isle of Man. This is thought to have been a result of hedgehogs being introduced to these areas by humans.



When fully grown, the West European hedgehog is between roughly 20cm and 25cm long. These hedgehogs are **nocturnal** and have a coat made from around 6000 spines. This armour protects the hedgehog when they curl up into a ball. However, this defence isn't strong enough to escape badgers, who are a hedgehog's greatest predator.

Hedgehogs are insectivores, which means that they feast on insects, including worms and beetles. This diet helps hedgehogs to store up enough fat to keep them going as they go into **hibernation** for the winter months.



Are Hedgehogs Endangered?

Unfortunately, many people believe that hedgehog numbers are dropping across the UK. As well as other factors, this is thought to be because of a loss of suitable habitat. In 2020, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society announced that they believe Western European hedgehogs are now vulnerable to **extinction**.

A Hedgehog's Habitat

As their name suggests, hedgehogs can often be found in hedgerows. They are common visitors to gardens across the UK but can also be found living in parks and at the edges of woodland areas. Despite their size, hedgehogs are fast runners, good climbers and can even swim for short distances.

After hibernating, hedgehogs will emerge at the beginning of spring. At this time, hedgehogs will begin making nests in safe, sheltered areas.

Female hedgehogs will usually have between four and six babies and will look after them for eight weeks before they leave the nest. Until recently, there wasn't a name for baby hedgehogs. Today, they're known as 'hoglets' or 'hedgehoglets'. Some people even call baby hedgehogs 'urchins', which is the ancient name for hedgehogs.

What Can We Do to Help Hedgehogs?

Luckily, there is a lot that can be done to help hedgehogs. People can start by making their gardens hedgehog-friendly. This means leaving overgrown areas with places for insects, such as log or leaf piles. With lots of insects and plenty of space to hide, hedgehogs will see this as an exciting space to explore.



If you think that hedgehogs could be visiting your garden, you might wish to put out some food and water at dusk. Tinned, meat-based cat food or special hedgehog food is an ideal meal. Leave water in a shallow bowl and never give hedgehogs milk to drink. This is because milk contains a type of sugar called lactose that hedgehogs cannot digest. Drinking milk could make a hedgehog seriously ill.



Glossary

hibernation:

The act of plants or animals spending the winter in a dormant or deep sleep state.

extinction:

If an animal goes extinct, it means that there are no living members left and it is no longer in existence.

nocturnal:

Active at night.

Questions

1. How many different species of hedgehog are there? Tick one.

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19

2. According to the text, what is a hedgehog's greatest predator? Tick one.

- humans
- loss of habitat
- badgers
- wolves

3. Look at the section titled **A Hedgehog's Habitat**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'regular'.

4. Fill in the missing words.

After _____, hedgehogs will emerge at the beginning of _____.

5. Why shouldn't you give milk to a hedgehog?

6. Using 15 words or fewer, explain what people can do to help hedgehogs.

7. What do you think will happen to hedgehogs in the future? Explain your answer.

8. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand the information.

Answers

1. How many different species of hedgehog are there? Tick one.

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- 17
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2. According to the text, what is a hedgehog's greatest predator? Tick one.

- humans
- loss of habitat
- badgers**
- wolves

3. Look at the section titled **A Hedgehog's Habitat**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'regular'.

common

4. Fill in the missing words.

After **hibernating**, hedgehogs will emerge at the beginning of **spring**.

5. Why shouldn't you give milk to a hedgehog?

You shouldn't give milk to a hedgehog because it contains lactose which hedgehogs cannot digest. Also accept: It will make them ill.

6. Using 15 words or fewer, explain what people can do to help hedgehogs.

Pupils' own responses, such as: People can make their garden hedgehog-friendly or leave out suitable food and water.

7. What do you think will happen to hedgehogs in the future? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that there will be more hedgehogs in the future because people are becoming more interested in looking after the planet and animals and they will do more to help hedgehogs.

8. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand the information.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The subheadings help you to find specific information quickly. The pictures help you to understand the text by showing you images of what the text is talking about.



Hedgehogs

It is thought that hedgehogs have changed very little since they evolved over 15 million years ago. They are a distinctive sight in gardens across the UK. There are 17 different species of hedgehog that can be found all across the world.

The West European Hedgehog

The West European hedgehog can be found across mainland UK. These small mammals can also be found on several British islands, including the Isle of Man. This is thought to have been a result of hedgehogs being introduced to these areas by humans.

When fully grown, the West European hedgehog is between 20cm and 25cm in length and can weigh up to 1.2kg. These hedgehogs are nocturnal and have a coat made from around 6000 spines. These spines are hollow and made from keratin, which is the same material as your fingernails!

This armour allows hedgehogs to curl up into a ball in order to protect themselves. However, this defence isn't strong enough to escape badgers, who top the list of hedgehog predators.



A Hedgehog's Habitat

Hedgehogs are insectivores, which means that they feast nightly on slugs, snails, worms and other invertebrates. These meals ensure that hedgehogs can store up enough fat reserves to see them through their hibernation during the winter months.

- As their name suggests, hedgehogs can often be found in hedgerows. They are common visitors to gardens across the UK but can also be found living in parks and at the edges of woodland areas. Despite their size, hedgehogs are fast runners, good climbers and can even swim for short distances.
- After hibernating, hedgehogs will emerge at the beginning of spring. At this time, hedgehogs will begin making nests in safe, sheltered areas.

Female hedgehogs typically have between four and six babies and will look after them for a total of eight weeks before they leave the nest.

Interestingly, until recently there wasn't a name for baby hedgehogs. Today, they're known as 'hoglets' or 'hedgehoglets'. Some people even call baby hedgehogs 'urchins'. This is because, historically, hedgehogs were known as 'urchins'.

Are Hedgehogs Endangered?

Unfortunately, recent figures suggest that hedgehog numbers are declining across the UK. This is thought to be because of a number of factors - including a loss of suitable habitat and an increase in cars and other traffic. In 2020, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society announced that they believe Western European hedgehogs are now vulnerable to extinction.



What Can We Do to Help Hedgehogs?

Luckily, there is a lot that can be done to help hedgehogs. To encourage hedgehogs into their gardens, people can start by making them hedgehog-friendly. This means leaving overgrown areas with lots of tempting places for insects, such as log or leaf piles. With lots of insects and plenty of places to hide, hedgehogs will see this as an exciting space to explore.

Another thing that can be done to help hedgehogs, is to make a small gap in your garden fence or wall that a hedgehog can fit through. This is because hedgehogs can walk up to 2 miles each night across multiple gardens. Of course, if you want to make a hedgehog-friendly gap, always ask for permission first.



If you think that hedgehogs could be visiting your garden, you might wish to put out some food and water at dusk. Tinned, meat-based cat and dog food is perfect for hedgehogs, as well as dedicated hedgehog food.

- Leave water in a shallow bowl and never
- ◆ give hedgehogs milk to drink. This is
- because milk contains a type of sugar called
- ◆ lactose which hedgehogs cannot digest.
- Drinking milk could make a hedgehog
- ◆ seriously ill.

Questions

1. What weight can a fully grown, West European hedgehog reach? Tick one.

- 12g
- 1.2kg
- 2kg
- 12kg

2. Which of the following statements is **not** true? Tick one.

- Hedgehogs can be found on the Isle of Man.
- Hedgehogs hibernate during the winter months.
- Hedgehogs eat small mammals and plants.
- Hedgehogs are thought to be at risk of extinction.

3. Look at the section titled **A Hedgehog's Habitat**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'appear'.

4. Why do some people call baby hedgehogs 'urchins'?

5. In which section can you find information about feeding hedgehogs?

6. Summarise what you have learnt about hedgehogs using 20 words or fewer.

7. **As their name suggests, hedgehogs can often be found in hedgerows.**

Explain what is meant by 'As their name suggests'.

8. What evidence can you find that the author likes hedgehogs?

9. Do you think that people will be inspired to help hedgehogs after reading this text?

Explain your answer.

Answers

1. What weight can a fully grown, West European hedgehog reach? Tick one.

- 12g
- 1.2kg**
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3. Look at the section titled **A Hedgehog's Habitat**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'appear'.

emerge

4. Why do some people call baby hedgehogs 'urchins'?

Some people call baby hedgehogs 'urchins' because this is what hedgehogs were known as historically.

5. In which section can you find information about feeding hedgehogs?

What Can We Do to Help Hedgehogs?

6. Summarise what you have learnt about hedgehogs using 20 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Hedgehogs live in gardens across the UK and have around 6,000 spines. They are currently at risk of extinction.

7. **As their name suggests, hedgehogs can often be found in hedgerows.**

Explain what is meant by 'As their name suggests'.

Pupils' own responses, such as: 'As their name suggests' means that the word 'hedgehog' gives you a clue about where they live. The sentence says that they live in hedgerows and the first part of their name is 'hedge'.

8. What evidence can you find that the author likes hedgehogs?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The author has written lots about what can be done to help hedgehogs and tells people how to make their gardens 'hedgehog-friendly'. They have also written 'Luckily, there is lots that can be done to help hedgehogs' which shows that they like the animals.

9. Do you think that people will be inspired to help hedgehogs after reading this text?

Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that people will be inspired to help hedgehogs after reading this text because the things that can be done to help hedgehogs are easy things to do. I also think that, after finding out more about hedgehogs, people might like them more and want to help them.



Hedgehogs

Thought to have evolved over 15 million years ago, the hedgehogs that we see today are relatively unchanged from their ancient ancestors. There are 17 species of these distinctive mammals that can be found all across the world.

The West European Hedgehog

Across mainland UK, the West European hedgehog can be found scouting around hedgerows, parks and woodland edges. Although not known for swimming large distances, these small mammals can also be found on several British islands, including the Isle of Man and several of the Channel Islands. This is thought to have been a result of hedgehogs being introduced to these areas by humans.



The West European hedgehog is roughly between 20cm and 25cm in length when fully grown. They can weigh up to 1.2kg and are nocturnal. With around 6,000 spines, hedgehogs are instantly recognisable. Interestingly, these spines are hollow and are made from keratin, which is the same material as your fingernails!

This coat of armour allows hedgehogs to curl up into a ball in order to evade most predators. However, this defence isn't strong enough to escape the strong claws and jaws of badgers who top the list of hedgehog predators. Hedgehogs are insectivores: feasting nightly on slugs, snails, worms, beetles and other invertebrates.



These meals provide essential fat reserves for hedgehogs who spend the winter months hibernating in a nest made from fallen leaves and other easily obtainable materials.

A Hedgehog's Habitat

As their name suggests, hedgehogs can often be found inhabiting hedgerows. They are common visitors to gardens across the UK, but may go unnoticed due to the fact that they are nocturnal. Hedgehogs can also be found living in parks and at the edges of woodland areas. Despite their small stature, hedgehogs are fast runners, good climbers and can even swim for short distances.



After hibernating, hedgehogs will emerge at the beginning of spring and they will begin making nests in safe, sheltered areas.

Female hedgehogs typically have litters of between four and six babies and will look after them for a total of eight weeks before leaving them to fend for themselves. Interestingly, prior to the 1990s, there wasn't a name for baby hedgehogs. Today, they're known as 'hoglets' or 'hedgehoglets'. Some people even call baby hedgehogs 'urchins'; a term which comes directly from the ancient name for hedgehogs.

Are Hedgehogs Endangered?

Unfortunately, recent figures suggest that hedgehog numbers are in decline across the UK. This is thought to be attributed to a number of factors - including a reduction in habitat and an increase in traffic-related incidents involving hedgehogs. In 2020, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society announced that they believe Western European hedgehogs are now vulnerable to extinction. Alongside this, hedgehogs have also been added to the red list for Britain's mammals: a list that highlights species that are at risk of extinction.

What Can We Do to Help Hedgehogs?

Luckily, there is a lot that can be done to help hedgehogs - especially in areas where there are few natural predators. If people want to encourage hedgehogs into their gardens, they can start by making it hedgehog-friendly. This means leaving overgrown areas with lots of tempting places for insects, such as log piles, leaf piles and sticks. With insects and shelter in abundance, hedgehogs will see this as a tempting space to explore.

Another thing that can be done to help hedgehogs is to make a small gap in your garden fence or wall that a hedgehog can fit through. This is because hedgehogs are nomadic and can walk across multiple gardens, walking up to 2 miles each night. Of course, should you wish to make a hedgehog-friendly gap, always ask for permission first.



If you know that there are hedgehogs in your garden (or you suspect that there may be), you might wish to put out some food and a shallow bowl of water for hedgehogs at dusk. Tinned, meat-based cat and dog food is ideal for hedgehogs, as well as dedicated hedgehog food. Although



people used to believe that hedgehogs drank directly from cow's udders, this is false and you must never give a hedgehog milk. This is because milk contains a type of sugar called lactose which hedgehogs cannot digest. Drinking milk could make a hedgehog seriously ill.

Questions

1. ... the hedgehogs that we see today are relatively unchanged from their ancient ancestors.

Which sentence is closest in meaning to the phrase 'relatively unchanged'? Tick one.

- The hedgehogs that we see today are nothing like their relatives.
- The hedgehogs that we see today are very different.
- The hedgehogs that we see today have never changed.
- The hedgehogs that we see today have only changed slightly.

2. Draw **four** lines and match each section to a summary of its contents.

**The West
European Hedgehog**

Information about what hedgehogs do following hibernation.

A Hedgehog's Habitat

Information about what food is best to feed hedgehogs.

**Are Hedgehogs
Endangered?**

Specific information about the type of hedgehog found in mainland UK.

**What Can We Do
to Help Hedgehogs?**

Information about why hedgehog numbers are in decline.

3. Look at the section titled **The West European Hedgehog**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'available'.

4. How long will a female hedgehog care for her young before leaving them to fend for themselves?

5. **With insects and shelter in abundance...**

What does the word 'abundance' tell you about the insects and shelter?

6. Summarise what you have learnt about what can be done to help hedgehogs using 25 words or fewer.

7. Who do you think was the intended audience for this text? Fully explain your answer.

8. What do you think will happen to hedgehog populations in the future? Explain your answer.

9. What do you think is the author's opinion about hedgehogs? Explain your answer fully using evidence from the text.

10. Would you like to see a hedgehog in the wild? Explain your answer.

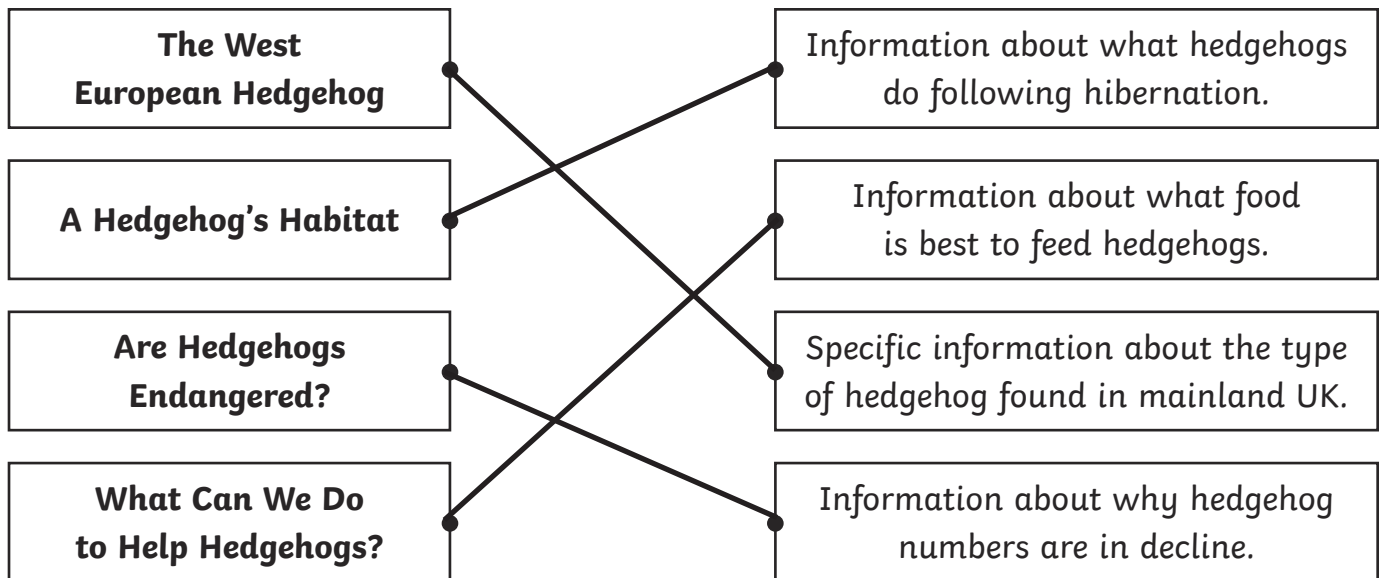
Answers

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3. Look at the section titled **The West European Hedgehog**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'available'.

obtainable

4. How long will a female hedgehog care for her young before leaving them to fend for themselves?

Female hedgehogs will look after their young for a total of eight weeks before leaving them to fend for themselves.

5. **With insects and shelter in abundance...**

What does the word 'abundance' tell you about the insects and shelter?

The word 'abundance' tells us that there are lots of insects and lots of places to shelter.

6. Summarise what you have learnt about what can be done to help hedgehogs using 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: People can make their gardens hedgehog-friendly with overgrown areas, leave out suitable food and make a small gap in their garden fence.

7. Who do you think was the intended audience for this text? Fully explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the intended audience for this text is people who are interested in animals and what they can do to help animals because it contains lots of information about what you can do to help hedgehogs. I also think it is aimed at children because it says '...which is the same material as your fingernails!' which adults might not find as exciting.

8. What do you think will happen to hedgehog populations in the future? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that hedgehog populations will improve in the future because more people will become aware of how they can help hedgehogs by reading things like this text. I also think that more people are interested in helping wildlife and the steps to help hedgehogs are easy to take.

9. What do you think is the author's opinion about hedgehogs? Explain your answer fully using evidence from the text.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author likes hedgehogs because they have written a lot about how to help them. One paragraph starts with 'Luckily,...' which shows that the author is happy that hedgehogs can be helped. The section about hedgehogs being endangered also begins with the word 'Unfortunately,...' which shows that the author is unhappy about hedgehogs being at risk of extinction.

10. Would you like to see a hedgehog in the wild? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would like to see a hedgehog in the wild because it would be good to see that they are doing well in my local area. It would also be exciting because I now know what food is suitable for them so I could leave some out and see if I can watch them eating.