

## The Hedgehog

Hedgehogs are one of the best known creatures that can be found in our gardens. They are the only British mammal with spines, which are very useful as protection against predators such as foxes. When faced with an enemy a hedgehog will roll up into a tight ball and the sharp spines make it almost impossible to attack it.



Sometimes they cover their spines with saliva, but no-one knows the reason for this.

Hedgehogs are nocturnal, sleeping during the day and foraging for food at night. Their eyesight is weak and they rely on their sense of smell and hearing to find food. Small creatures such as insects, worms and snails are favourite foods but they have also been known to eat birds' eggs, mice, frogs and even small snakes. They hibernate during the winter months, when their heartbeat can drop from about 190 beats to 20 beats per minute.

The young are born in nests of leaves and up to eleven babies, or hoglets, can be born at one time. They are born blind and rely on their mother to provide milk for the first six or seven weeks of their lives. They then set off on their own to find food and shelter.



Hedgehogs used to be quite common in our gardens, but there are far fewer of them today and they are considered an endangered species. There are two things in particular that humans do that have a bad effect on hedgehogs. One is to put slug pellets on the garden. The second is to try and feed them with milk, as they are lactose intolerant.

1. Describe a hedgehog and how it protects itself?
2. What do hedgehogs eat?
3. What do hedgehogs do during the winter?
4. What is the name of the baby hedgehog?
5. Name two things that humans do that is bad for hedgehogs?
6. Use the dictionary (online/paper copy) and find the meaning of the following words:
  - Lactose tolerant:
  - predator: