

# Hedgehogs

## By Ron Crompton

A report last year on Britain's hedgehog population estimated that since 2000 they have declined by at least half in rural areas and a third in urban areas.



Photo from [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)

Regent's Park is the only one of London's Royal Parks known to have a breeding population. Research conducted there last year found a small population of 30-40 hedgehogs, including young hoglets (yes, that's what they're called!). The researchers used thermal imaging cameras, radio tagging and GPS tracking to record their movements and behaviour.

Not surprisingly, the hedgehogs were found to prefer foraging in shrubberies and hedges and avoided the very short open grassland in public areas and sports pitches. They also travelled up to a mile a night to forage. They were found nesting in dense scrub and used up to four different day nests during the week-long survey. The study was featured on BBC *Springwatch* last year.

So why are there no hedgehogs in Richmond Park?

There are occasional sightings; last year a hedgehog was found having fallen through a cattle grid and some were seen in the garden of one of the gate lodges on the edge of the Park. These few may either be coming through the gates from the surrounding area or have been released into the Park.

No one knows quite why there are so few here but it is likely that the walls are a big obstacle to hedgehogs getting into the Park and badgers and foxes may prey on any that do make it through. No past records exist, other than vague anecdotal evidence. Hedgehogs do live in Bushy Park where they were re-introduced, or the existing population boosted, in recent years.

Based on the research findings, The Royal Parks are making changes to habitat management in Regent's Park and trialing the use of nest boxes. Further monitoring is planned for 2016. Maybe as a result of the current interest we will welcome hedgehogs back to Richmond Park one day.

You can find out more about the hedgehog research at [http://www.supporttheroyalparks.org/visit\\_the\\_parks/the\\_regents\\_park/hedgehogs](http://www.supporttheroyalparks.org/visit_the_parks/the_regents_park/hedgehogs)

**For simple things that you can do to help your local hedgehogs see [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)**