



Has there been a Hedgehog in Your Garden?

The hedgehog is one of Britain's most iconic animals - its charismatic demeanour and voracious appetite for insect pests in gardens make it a firm favourite. Although mainly nocturnal it used to be a common sight. Nick Allen of the Farnham Biodiversity Group recalls how he once had the rare treat of seeing not one but three. As an amateur wildlife enthusiast he had purchased a camera trap (a small device that records a video when triggered by movement) for his garden. It showed him visitors that he never knew he had, including badgers on the patio and deer munching fallen apples in the autumn. One day, while reviewing the footage from this, to his great delight he saw a hedgehog, something he had been hoping to see for a long time, even trying to entice them by erecting a hogitat (hedgehog home). He was thrilled by this sighting and over the next few months the videos confirmed he had a regular hedgehog visitor and enabled him to begin to understand its routine: a snuffle around the flowerbeds looking for insects before heading to the pond to have a drink. Then one day there was not only one hedgehog but three: a mother plus two hoglets that were orbiting her like small satellites.

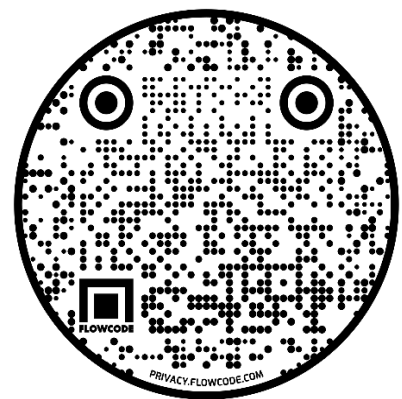


Photo courtesy of David Allen

Shortly afterwards the hedgehogs disappeared and sadly this is something that has happened in gardens all over the UK including Farnham in the last 30 years. There are thought to be many reasons for this including habitat loss through building, road kills because of heavy traffic and increased use of pesticides that get into the food chain through consumption of garden insects that have been poisoned. It is also due to habitat fragmentation. This occurs when links between gardens have diminished as residents have replaced hedgerows with fences and walls that are impenetrable to the hedgehog. It is estimated that, for a population to be sustainable and stable, at least 33 individual hedgehogs must be in contact with one another.

However, there is hope. When living in Richmond, Nick became aware of a local project where residents worked together to create a hedgehog highway by boring small hedgehog sized holes between gardens to connect up micro habitats. The project has been so successful that the hedgehog population there is not only stable but increasing.

To replicate that in Farnham, the first step is to find out what is present as it is likely that some are still finding solace in the town and the Biodiversity Group, has launched a study to map the hedgehogs present in the Town as it is thought some are still finding solace here. This is where you can help: if you are in your garden or out walking and you see a hedgehog please report it. You can do that by using the QR code shown here or by using the contact address given. This will help to provide a better understanding of the distribution of the animals and perhaps enable stabilisation of the population through creation of suitable corridors.



**Using your phone camera
copy this QR code and follow
the link to report any
hedgehog sightings to
contact@farnhambap.org.**