



Hedgehog



Latin: *Erinaceus europaeus*
Irish: *Gráinneog*

Size: An adult hedgehog is about 25cm long and has over 5,000 hard spines (modified hairs) across its back for protection. Its body is very bulky and weighs about 1kg.

Months seen: From April to October, mainly at night although young or sick hedgehogs may be seen in the daytime. Hedgehogs usually hibernate through the winter months when food sources are low.

Habitat: Habitats include gardens, woodlands, hedgerows and meadows.

Food: A hedgehog's diet mainly consists of caterpillars, beetles and earthworms, but will also eat snails, earwigs, birds' eggs, small mammals and fruits. It is a welcomed guest by many gardeners as it eats many of the creatures considered as pests. Hunting usually takes place at night.

Features: The hedgehog is recognised by its coat of spines, and a row of muscles on its underneath allows it to roll itself up in a tight, spiky ball for protection from predators. Although their eyesight is poor, hedgehogs have a good sense of smell and hearing. They are also good swimmers, can climb very steep walls and can run at a speed of up to 2 metres per second.

Mating takes place between May and June, when the male makes snorting noises and shuffles close to the female to gain her attention. A litter of 5 to 7 young is produced about a month later. They are born with short white hairs that will gradually turn into the hard spines. Hedgehogs usually produce two litters each year.

Hedgehogs are nocturnal animals, which means they come out at night. Males are called boars and females are called sows.