



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

# **We are the Hedgehog Champions!**

## **Charity neighbourhood watch scheme to help save hedgehogs surpasses 30,000 volunteers**

Wildlife campaign *Hedgehog Street* is celebrating its third anniversary by reaching a landmark figure of 30,000 volunteers, at a time when hedgehogs need more help than ever. The initiative, set up by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS), aims to empower whole communities, encouraged by volunteer 'Hedgehog Champions', to take small steps to improve their neighbourhood for hedgehogs and create a giant patchwork of hedgehog-friendly areas across Britain.

PTES conducts several citizen science surveys each year calling upon volunteers to monitor animal species in their backyard environments. The recent results of their 2013 *Living with Mammals* survey revealed hedgehog records continued a downward trend with the figure of reported sightings being the second lowest since the survey started in 2002.

### *Why are hedgehog numbers plummeting in the UK?*

One of the reasons for the decline in UK hedgehog numbers in urban and suburban areas is the move towards tidy, sterile gardens which inhibits feeding, nesting and mating opportunities. Gardens paved over for parking or with increasing amounts of concrete reduce the availability of food and suitable nesting sites, and enclosed spaces with impenetrable fences and walls make it difficult for hedgehogs to forage and search for mates.

### *How can you help?*

The *Hedgehog Street* campaign encourages people to create access routes for hedgehogs in their backyards. Henry Johnson, PTES Hedgehog Officer says, "Hedgehogs typically travel about a mile each night in order to gather food and search for a mate. A simple step that volunteers can take when they become a hedgehog champion is to link gardens in their neighbourhood by making a small hole in shared boundaries. A hole that is 13cm<sup>2</sup> in size at ground level will be big enough for a hedgehog to pass through and will enable them to search a wider area to find food and mates."

BHPS and PTES launched *Hedgehog Street* in 2011 with a mere 16 volunteers working to recruit friends, family and neighbours to undertake simple conservation tasks in the green spaces on their doorsteps to create hedgehog-friendly environments. Now, over 30,000 'Hedgehog Champions' across the UK have registered to aid the ongoing campaign, but more help is needed to make a difference.

Fay Vass, CEO of BHPS says, "It is fantastic to have hit 30,000 Champions and have so many volunteers who care about hedgehogs. If every one of our champions could recruit a friend or a neighbour who could put a small hedgehog hole in their fence, then hedgehog pathways could start to open up all across the country which will really benefit them."

To become a Hedgehog Champion and continue the fight to save Britain's hedgehogs visit [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)

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#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

For further information, images to arrange interviews contact: Jane Bevan or Susannah Penn at Firebird PR on 01235 835297 / 07977 459547 or via email to [jb@firebirdpr.co.uk](mailto:jb@firebirdpr.co.uk)

#### **AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW**

- Henry Johnson, PTES Hedgehog Officer
- Fay Vass, CEO of BHPS
- Case studies of Hedgehog Champions and their activities are available upon request

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- Wildlife charities PTES and BHPS launched *Hedgehog Street* in June 2011 to encourage hedgehog conservation action at a local community or neighbourhood level. Nearly 30,000 volunteer "Hedgehog Champions" up and down the country have registered to help to date and the campaign is ongoing, but we still need your help to make a difference.
- A long-term trend analysis by PTES based on their *Living with Mammals* and *Mammals on Roads* surveys shows that hedgehog populations have plummeted by over a third in the last ten years.
- The reasons for the decline in UK hedgehog numbers are complex, but are thought to be associated with the loss of hedgerows and permanent grasslands; the intensification of agriculture and larger field sizes; and the use of pesticides which reduce the amount of prey available. Urban and suburban areas are becoming increasingly important for hedgehogs, but the move towards tidy, sterile gardens isolated from one another by impermeable boundaries has also contributed to their demise.
- A range of academic research projects, funded by PTES and BHPS, also aim to further scientific understanding about the causes for the decline in hedgehog numbers and most importantly what can be done to reverse this threat to this iconic species.

- The public can view the *Hedgehog Street* summer garden at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show from 8-13 July 2014. Tickets for the Show are available to buy at: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)
- The hedgehog was voted as Britain's National Species in a 2013 BBC Wildlife poll.

About PTES - [www.ptes.org](http://www.ptes.org)

PTES is a UK conservation charity created in 1977 to ensure a future for endangered species throughout the world. Working to protect some of our most threatened wildlife species and habitats, it provides practical conservation support through research, grant-aid and educational programmes, including wildlife surveys, publications and public events.

About BHPS - [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk)

BHPS is a UK charity founded in 1982 dedicated to helping & protecting hedgehogs native to the UK. They run a helpline offering advice on caring for & encouraging hedgehogs in the wild and in gardens. They aim to educate the public on how best to help hedgehogs and fund research into the behavioural habits of hedgehogs to ascertain the best methods of assisting their survival.