

## Irish Garden Hedgehog Survey – Trail Camera Method



*Garden Hedgehog. Photo courtesy of Claire Crowley.*

### Introduction

The Irish Hedgehog Survey is an initiative by researchers in NUI Galway and the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The aim of the survey is to gather information on the status of the Irish hedgehog population. Studies from Britain and elsewhere in Europe have shown that hedgehog numbers there are in steep decline due to habitat loss and fragmentation from changing farming practices and development. As the Irish environment faces similar challenges it is likely that the Irish hedgehog population may also show similar losses. However, very little research has been carried out on the hedgehog in Ireland so far. This study will provide baseline data in order to monitor their numbers in the future.

While hedgehogs are believed to be widespread and fairly common, because they are nocturnal and occur in low numbers, they can be difficult to count. Thus, citizen science is very helpful in developing an accurate image of the distribution and density of hedgehogs in Ireland. Casual records of live or dead hedgehogs from anywhere in Ireland can be submitted via the Biodiversity Ireland website [here](#). For the Garden Hedgehog survey, volunteers actively survey their gardens for hedgehog activity which will provide important information for how hedgehogs use these habitats. Over the next couple of years, volunteers will also help to survey parks, woodlands and farms using similar methods.



## Survey method

You can take part in the survey whether you believe you have hedgehogs in your garden or not. This project requires that you survey your garden with a trail camera for 5 nights in a row. The survey must take place between the start of May and the end of September.

You should submit your results via the online form here ([link](#)) as soon as possible after the survey.

**Negative results are just as important as positives so it is very important that you submit your results, even if you did not find any hedgehogs in your garden – this is vital information for the project.**

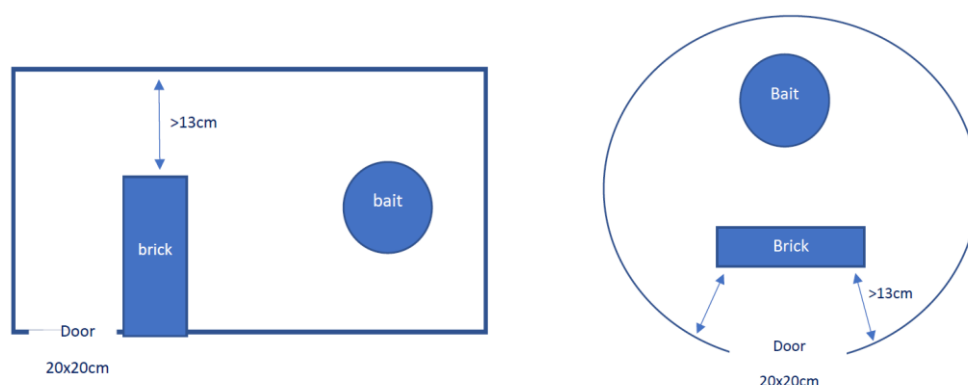
You should only complete one 5-night survey for each garden. You can survey as many gardens as you wish provided you have the home-owner's permission. You may also survey in public green spaces within housing estates, school gardens or other gardens. This does not include large public parks which will be surveyed in a future volunteer survey that you will be welcome to take part in (please contact the survey co-ordinator [elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie](mailto:elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie) for more information).

**Please ensure you comply with all current restrictions on movement and social distancing guidelines relating to the Covid 19 situation.**

## Survey using a trail camera

The camera survey also requires that you survey for 5 nights in a row. You should place your camera in the same spot every night of the survey. Hedgehogs are active at night, so you should prepare and set your camera before dusk. Hedgehogs like to move along linear features so if possible, choose a location which will give a clear view of the ground alongside a hedge, wall, fence, shed or a border between long and short grass.

You will need to set up a bait station in view of the camera. This involves placing a small portion of cat or dog food or chopped up hot dog in a little dish. To prevent scavenging by pets or other wildlife, the dish can be covered by a cardboard box, plastic box or large plastic flower pot or bin (size at least 35 x 35cm) with a doorway (15 x 15cm) cut out to allow them to access the food. A brick or rock placed inside the entrance (as shown in diagram) will deter cats but allow the hedgehog to enter.



Cameras should be configured as outlined below and before being attached to a tree, fence post or other solid feature that will not blow over or be otherwise disturbed during the survey. Ensure you do a trial run to make sure you are well set up. You can do this by rolling a tennis ball along the

ground in front of the bait station and then checking the footage to ensure you have a good view of the bait station and surrounding area, and that your camera settings are correct.



*Trail camera secured to tree monitoring bait station set up alongside garden shed*

The crucial hours for recording are between 8pm and 8am. You may choose to turn the camera off during the day or automatically set it to come on in the evening and off in the morning.

You should remove any uneaten bait every morning to avoid it going bad in the heat and attracting pests. You can replace it each evening before dusk. You can leave the camera in the same place for the 5 nights. On the morning after the 5<sup>th</sup> night, check the images to see if you saw any hedgehogs or other visitors. Make a note of each night that hedgehogs were recorded and the maximum number seen at any one time.

**Please submit your results as soon as you can after you complete your survey – even if you did not record any hedgehogs. It should only take 5 minutes on the online form**

#### Camera settings

Cameras should be configured as follows:

##### *Mode, duration, photo series*

You should set the camera to record a short video clip (10seconds) if possible. You may choose to capture both video and photos if your camera allows

If you do not have video capacity, you should set the camera to capture three photos per series.

##### *PIR interval, sensitivity*

You should set the PIR interval between triggers at 1 minute. Sensitivity should be set to medium or high.

##### *Resolution*

You should use the highest resolution for video and at least 5MP for photos.

##### *Date and Time*

You should ensure that you have the correct date and time on your camera and if possible, date and time stamp the video/photos.

### Submitting your results

You submit your results via the online survey form at <https://forms.gle/aarmwtZpPtoPhFBv7> . The form is very straightforward and should take only about 5 minutes per survey. Please only complete one 5-night survey per garden. Use one form for each survey completed.

The form requires you to give your address (your Eircode will suffice). This will enable us to map the results and record hedgehog sightings accurately. It will also allow us to access additional information about geology, habitats and land use in your local area. You do not need to include your name or contact details unless you wish to hear updates from the project or would be interested in further survey work.

Your personal information (including address) will be used purely for academic research and will not be published or shared with any third party. It will be stored only for the duration of the project.

The first part of the form gathers information about your garden and the second part records the findings of your survey. You can upload photos, videos or PDF files on the form. We welcome photos or short video clips of your night-time visitors.

[Click here to enter online survey form](https://forms.gle/aarmwtZpPtoPhFBv7)

### Links and useful information

If you have any questions, please contact the lead researcher on the project – Elaine O’Riordan by email at [elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie](mailto:elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie)

You can find out about other surveys and keep up to date with the Irish Hedgehog Survey via the website:

<https://www.irishhedgehogsurvey.com/>

If you see a hedgehog anywhere in Ireland, alive or dead, you can record your sightings via the biodiversity Ireland page here:

<https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/additional-survey-schemes/irish-hedgehog-survey/>

Follow the Irish hedgehog survey on social media

<https://www.facebook.com/IrishHedgehogSurvey/>

[https://twitter.com/Irish\\_Hedgehogs](https://twitter.com/Irish_Hedgehogs)

If you find a sick or injured hedgehog, you should contact your local vet or ISPCA branch to see if they can help. If not, you can get advice and help from

Dublin Hedgehog Rescue      086 8810492

The Hogsprickle Wildlife Carers      086 8624511

Kildare Animal Foundation, Wildlife Unit      087 6201270

Advice on what to do if you find injured wildlife here      [www.irishwildlifematters.ie](http://www.irishwildlifematters.ie)