



2021 Survey of Sightings

HEDGEHOGS IN STOKE FLEMING

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Sustainability Stoke Fleming

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Conclusions

Based on 61 responses to our questionnaire between October and November, here appears to be a very healthy hedgehog presence in Stoke Fleming Village with a high proportion of all respondents seeing them in their own gardens (69%) - many on a weekly or even daily basis.

Sightings do seem to be spread fairly evenly around the village and are not as concentrated in certain areas as might be supposed.

It is likely that the 'Prickles in a Pickle' hedgehog hospital run by Judy Oliphant is an important factor in this. Judy has about 150 hedgehogs in her care from all around the South West and most of those that recover get released back to their area of origin. Of course some of these will have originated from Stoke Fleming and when they have recovered will get released back into gardens around Stoke Fleming. This in itself will have reduced the local decline normally seen from sickness and injury.

Add to that the publicity about hedgehogs that comes from regular articles in the Parish Magazine and postings on the Community Facebook pages awareness of hedgehogs is likely to be high. This has manifested itself in a large proportion of respondents taking positive action to support hedgehogs in various ways. In addition to putting out food and water and ensuring that there are access routes through garden fences there are a surprisingly large number of people who have hedgehog houses in their gardens.

When compared with a similar survey in Shropshire, residents in Stoke Fleming Village do appear to be doing more for hedgehogs, which is excellent but we should not be complacent.

With hedgehogs being vulnerable to extinction in Britain it is important that we protect the population that we have and enable it to thrive.

Hedgehogs still get poisoned even though most said they either do not use pesticides (e.g. slug pellets) or rarely use them. They suffer from dog attacks, strimmers, mowers, destruction of nesting sites through building work and lack of hedgehog 'highways'.

Drivers do not always look out for small mammals crossing roads at night and a quarter of respondents have seen hedgehog road-kill. We will be applying for signs to warn drivers to be aware as they enter the village and approach known crossing sites.

The more we can increase awareness of how to help hedgehogs the safer our population will be.

Background and Objectives

Hedgehogs are suffering massive decline throughout the UK. The following is an extract from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) from 2011:

*"Although there has never been a full national census of hedgehogs, indications are that British populations have been in decline for some time. Estimated roughly to number about 30 million in the 1950s, a recalculation in the 1990s suggested only 1.5 million. For the current study, researchers at BTO analysed five different long-term data sets (including three bird surveys run by the BTO where volunteers record hedgehogs) and concluded that the proportion of sites with hedgehogs may have declined as much as 40% over the past ten years, based on current annual rates of change. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) has included selected mammals since 1996 and the overall decline in hedgehogs over the last 13 years is estimated at 66%."*¹

The hedgehog is now considered to be vulnerable to extinction in the UK and was added to the 'Red List for British Mammals' in July 2020.²

The Hedgehog is one of 11 of the 47 mammals native to Britain that are classified as being at imminent risk of extinction.



In 2019 Transport Secretary Chris Grayling unveiled a new traffic sign, featuring a hedgehog, which warns road users of hazards due to animals in the road ahead.

*"The road sign is also designed to reverse the decline in wildlife numbers, in particular, hedgehogs whose population in rural areas has halved since 2000."*³

In order to qualify for one of the new road signs, we have to demonstrate that we have a good population of hedgehogs that require protection.

Stoke Fleming, Devon, is home to a Hedgehog Hospital run by Judy Oliphant, "Prickles in a Pickle"⁴, which receives injured hedgehogs from throughout the South West. At time of writing she has 150 sick hedgehogs in her care. Hedgehogs are usually released back to their area of origin which will include Stoke Fleming village. As a result, we believe she is helping to reduce the local decline caused by sickness and injury.

Along with other communities throughout the UK we decided to conduct a survey of hedgehog sightings.

¹ <https://www.bto.org/our-science/monitoring/hedgehogs>

² <https://www.mammal.org.uk/2020/07/one-quarter-of-native-mammals-now-at-risk-of-extinction-in-britain/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-road-sign-to-improve-road-safety-and-protect-animals>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Prickles-in-a-Pickle-541444966301844/>

Methodology

Stoke Fleming is a Parish in South Devon, within the district of South Hams.

In 2020, Shropshire Wildlife Trust conducted a survey in 6 or more communities using a standard questionnaire.⁵ I adopted the same questionnaire to use in Stoke Fleming because it provided some form of bench-mark to measure against.

The questionnaire we used is shown in Appendix II.

The questionnaire was circulated around the Parish of Stoke Fleming by 3 methods:

1. Posting on the Community Facebook page
2. Questionnaires left at the Village Shop
3. Insert in the Parish Magazine with a circulation of nearly 600

This is a self-completion questionnaire and I recognize that it will favour those who have seen hedgehogs. Nevertheless, this enables comparison with the benchmarks from the Shropshire surveys.

We received a total of 61 completed questionnaires between October and November 2021. Only 6 were received from outside the village of Stoke Fleming, from Blackpool, Ash, Bowden and Bugford. As a result, these findings mainly reflect the Village of Stoke Fleming.

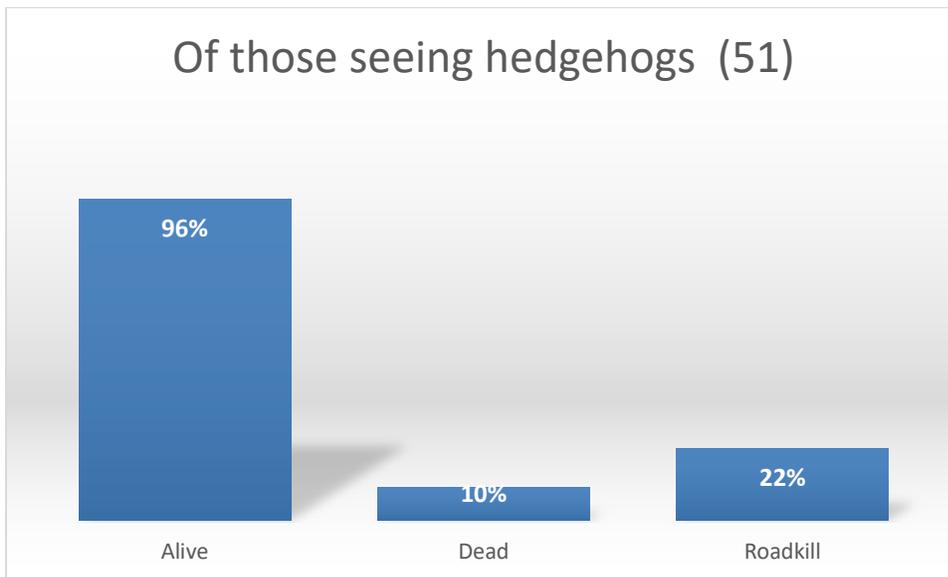
⁵ <https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/hedgehog-surveys>

Findings

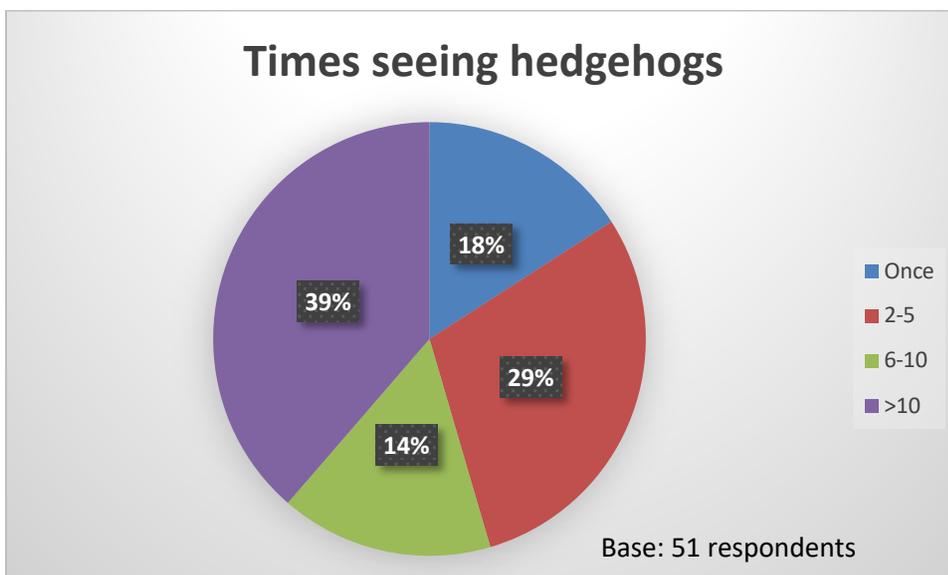
Sightings of hedgehogs

Most, 51 out of 61 (84%) respondents reported having seen a hedgehog in the past 12 months. Some of those who said they haven't seen a hedgehog have seen signs, such as droppings in their garden.

Nearly all of these (96%) have seen live hedgehogs and nearly a quarter (22%) have seen roadkill.

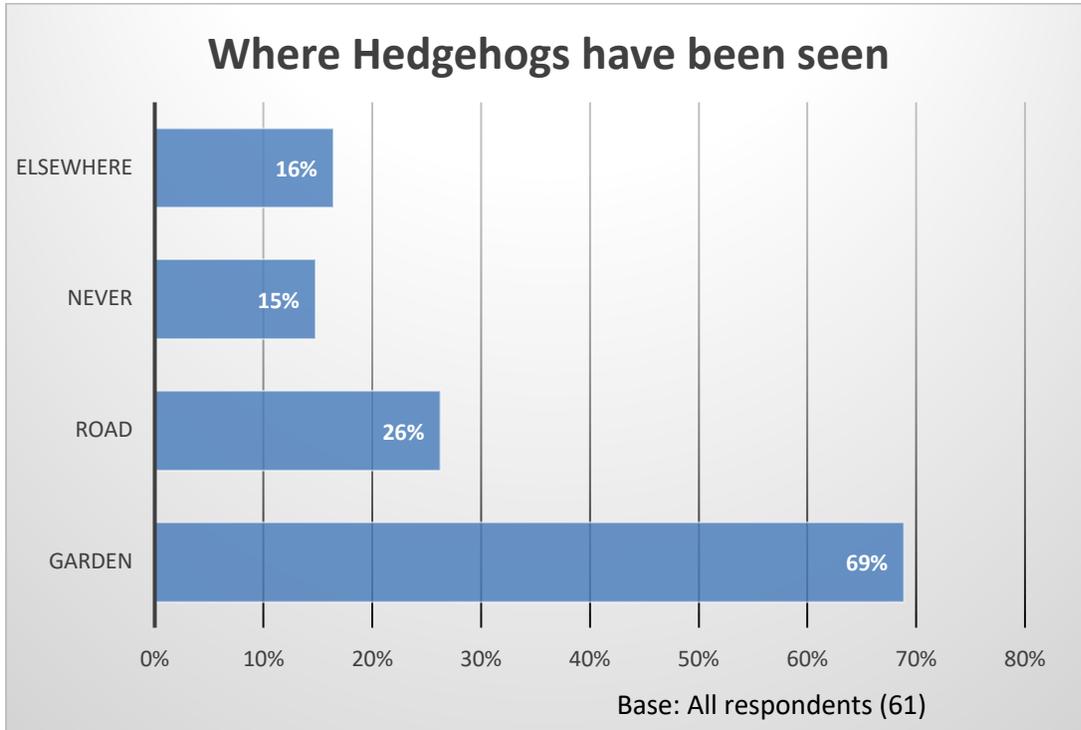


Of those sighting hedgehogs, few (18%) have only had a single sighting ... most have frequent sightings.

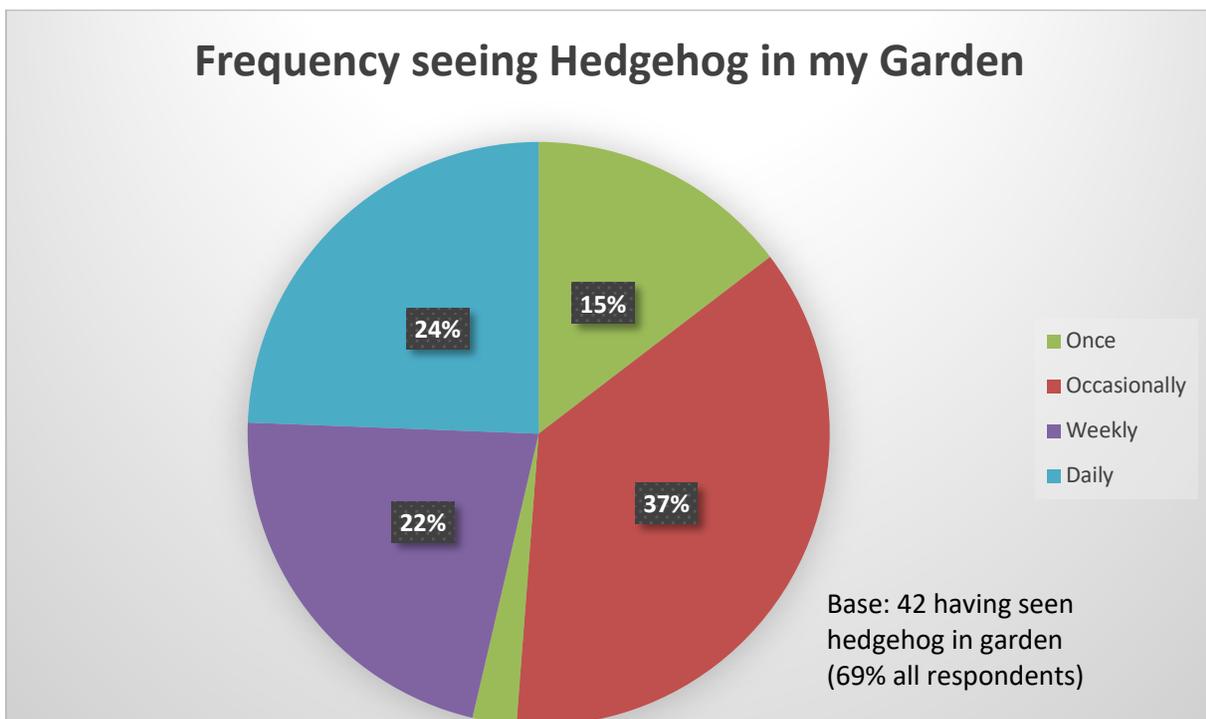


Sightings in Gardens

The majority of those having seen a hedgehog, 82%, have seen them in their own garden – that represents two out of three (42) of *all* respondents.

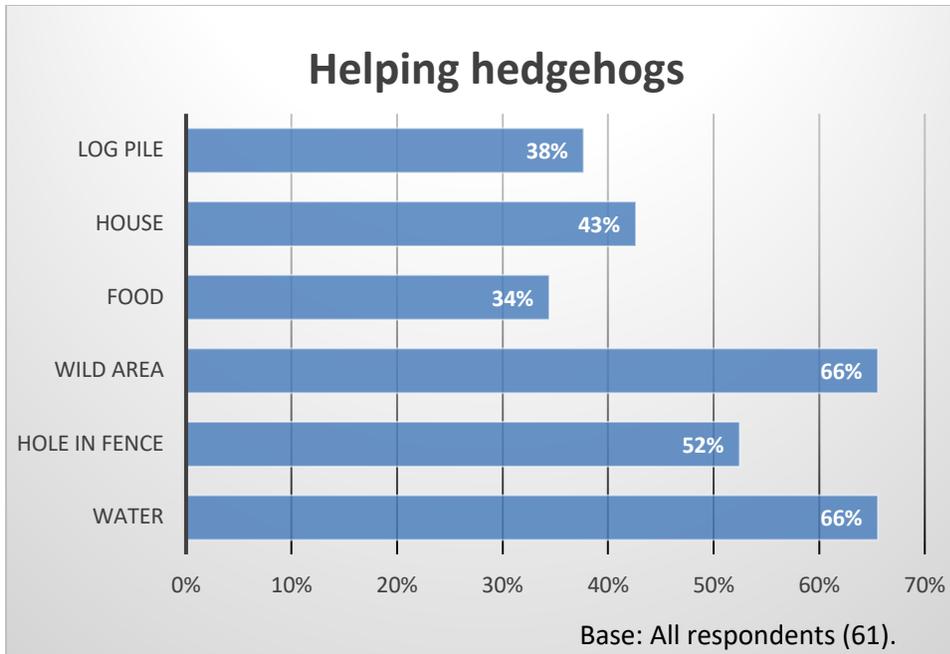


These garden sightings are in many cases frequent occurrences with about half seeing them *every week or more often ...* and 10 reporting *daily sightings*.



Support for hedgehogs

Most respondents (84% of all respondents and all of those reporting seeing hedgehogs) have done something to support the hedgehogs.

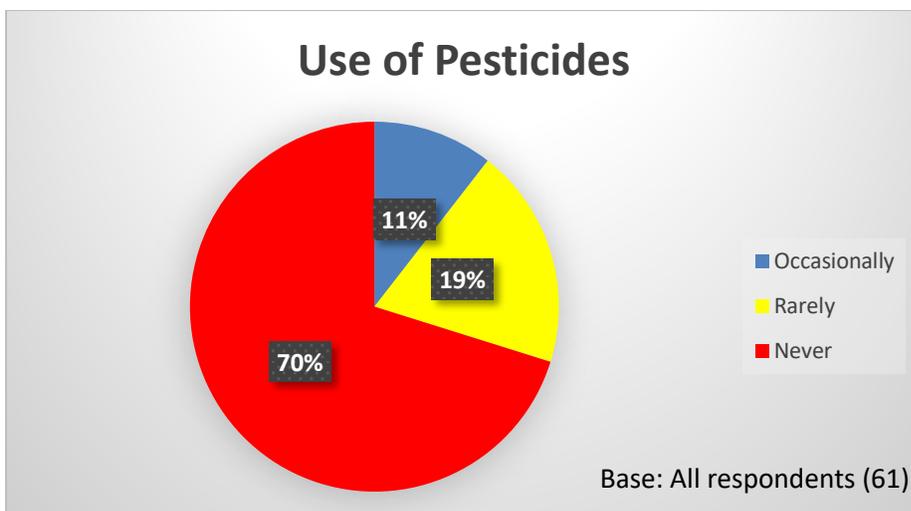


It is pleasing to see that half have a hole in their fence to enable hedgehog travel and a surprisingly high proportion (43%) actually have a hedgehog house in their garden.

Putting out water and, to a lesser extent, food is also fairly common.

It is uncertain whether the 'wild areas' are a positive decision on the part of households or a natural part of gardens in this area.

Very few use pesticides in their garden.



Distribution throughout Stoke Fleming Village

Only two respondents from outside the village of Stoke Fleming (Bugford and Ash) record having seen hedgehogs in their garden so the distribution is really concentrated within the village.

The map in Appendix III shows how evenly spread sightings are across the village of Stoke Fleming. The red symbols show the location (and number) of respondents seeing hedgehogs daily or weekly and the yellow symbols seeing them less frequently.

Those seeing Hedgehogs in Garden			
Location	Seeing daily or weekly	Less frequent	Total
Venn Lane	2	3	5
Deer Park Road	2	2	4
Bidders Close	2		2
Rectory Lane	2		2
Glebe Park	1	2	3
Bay View Estate	1	1	2
Harefield Drive	1	1	2
New Road	1	1	2
Bugford	1		1
Chapel Lane	1		1
Gratton Close	1		1
Hockey Field	1		1
Redlap	1		1
Venn Park	1		1
Well Park Place	1		1
School Road	1		1
Shady Lane		3	3
Blackpool		1	1
Old Road		1	1
Bailey's Meadow		1	1
Dartmouth Road		1	1
Deer Park		1	1
Manor Court		1	1
Ravensbourne Lane		1	1
Venn Way		1	1
Ash		1	1
All	20	22	42

Comparison with Shropshire Benchmark

The questionnaire we used was virtually identical to the one used by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 6 locations. The following shows the comparisons with Stoke Fleming on various criteria:

Location	Radbrook area	Oswestry	Pontesbury	Grinshill	Little Wenlock	Clive Village	Total	Stoke Fleming
Respondents	38	23	25	23	64	61	234	61
Seen								
hedgehog	34%	48%	16%	43%	54%	52%	45%	84%
Road Kill	11%	13%	4%	9%	14%	33%	17%	18%
Wild area	61%	57%	56%	52%	47%	56%	54%	66%
Water	34%	48%	32%	65%	44%	44%	44%	66%
Holes	45%	35%	24%	48%	41%	44%	41%	52%
Food	11%	13%	4%	22%	19%	26%	18%	34%
House	11%	26%	4%	30%	13%	15%	15%	43%
Any	61%	52%	40%	74%	65%	74%	64%	84%
No								
Pesticides	74%	87%	48%	87%	86%	80%	79%	66%

Sightings of hedgehogs in Stoke Fleming Village (only 4 were from outside the village) are higher than in any of the locations surveyed in Shropshire. There has also been more support for hedgehogs in the form of food and housing.

This is good evidence to suggest that we have a healthy population of hedgehogs.

Some Anecdotes

A number of respondents wrote short anecdotes on the questionnaires. A selection are included here.

"One (hedgehog) was living in our chicken coup with the chickens, eating the eggs!"

"We had a mum and 5 babies and a large male (we think). She took the babies out. She came back and 3 weeks later two babies came back. We now have three living in our garden."

"Looking at the hedgehogs that I used to see in the '70s to today, I would say a 95%+ decline"

"Pregnant and subsequently gave birth in garden. Happened several times now – unusual as I have 3 dogs, all very curious of her and yet they remain quite happy to share space with each other"

"Most of my garden is wild and untended LOL"

"Happy to share a bed with our tortoise most days"

"We had three small hogs. One left, one died and I fed the other one every evening with cat food and biscuit – he is fat"



1. Photo of pregnant hedgehog submitted by respondent in New Road.

Appendix I: Red List for British Mammals - July 2020⁶

Threat level in GB	Species
Critically endangered	Wildcat Greater mouse-eared bat
Endangered	Beaver Red Squirrel Water vole Grey long-eared bat
Vulnerable	Hedgehog Hazel dormouse Orkney Vole* Serotine bat Barbastelle bat
Near threatened	Mountain hare Harvest mouse Lesser white-toothed shrew** Leisler's bat Nathusius' pipistrelle
Extinct	European wolf

* Included in Red List as formally classified as an island endemic species (probably introduced around 5,000 years ago)

** Included in formal Red List as potentially native species (though may have been introduced in Bronze Age)

⁶ <https://www.mammal.org.uk/science-research/red-list/>.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

Stoke Fleming Hedgehog Survey 2021

Hedgehogs are in steep decline in Britain. Estimates indicate that they have fallen from approximately 30 millions in the 1950's to only 1.5 millions in the 1990's and by a further 40% in the last 10 years.

Last year the British hedgehog was officially classified as vulnerable to extinction.

We know we have hedgehogs in Stoke Fleming but we don't know how widespread they are, hence this survey. The results will help us get official support with road signs that will help protect the few we have.

IF YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN A HEDGEHOG YOUR RESPONSE IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT!

This survey is being conducted in conjunction with '*Sustainability Stoke Fleming*' and '*Prickles in a Pickle*'. Please help by spending a few minutes answering the following questions:

During the last 12 months, have you seen a hedgehog in Stoke Fleming Parish?

YES [] NO []

If YES: How many times have you seen a hedgehog in Stoke Fleming Parish?

ONCE [] 2-5 TIMES [] 6-10 TIMES [] MORE THAN 10 TIMES []

Was the hedgehog(s) you saw alive, dead or roadkill? (*tick all that apply if more than one*)

ALIVE [] DEAD [] ROADKILL []

Where did you see the hedgehog(s)? (*tick all that apply*)

IN YOUR GARDEN** [] ON THE ROAD [] SOMEWHERE ELSE* []

*(Please specify)

**If you answered IN YOUR GARDEN, how often do you see a hedgehog(s) in your garden (outside winter)?

ONCE [] OCCASIONALLY [] MONTHLY [] WEEKLY [] DAILY []

Have you done any of the following? (*tick all that apply*)

PUT OUT FRESH WATER [] PUT OUT FOOD FOR HEDGEHOGS []
MADE/LEFT A HOLE UNDER A FENCE [] PROVIDED A HEDGEHOG HOUSE []
LEFT A 'WILD' AREA IN YOUR GARDEN [] HAVE A LOG PILE []

Do you use pesticides or slug pellets in your garden?

OCCASIONALLY [] RARELY [] NEVER []

Thank you very much for your help. The following details will help us to identify important 'hedgehog areas' within Stoke Fleming. You do not need to add your full details but the road/location name will be greatly important to help 'map' the hedgehogs, as will your post code.

Name (optional): Post Code:

Address (village and road name is VERY useful):

Email (to receive a copy of our findings):

Please return the completed questionnaire to the Stoke Fleming Village Shop or photo/scan it and email to me at david.holmes@davion.plus.com.

Appendix IV: Further Information

1. Report by David Wembridge on the state of British hedgehogs in 2011
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/leaflets/sobh.pdf>
2. Update of State of British Hedgehogs 2018 https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SoBH-2018_final-1.pdf
3. Red-list of British Mammals <https://www.mammal.org.uk/science-research/red-list/>
4. In 2015, Hedgehog Street launched the BIG Hedgehog Map, the only real-time map that shows hedgehog distribution UK wide.
<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/> <https://bighedgehogmap.org/>
5. Basic facts from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/the-basic-facts-2/>
6. Shropshire Wildlife Trust hedgehog survey
<https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/hedgehog-surveys>
7. Devon Wildlife Trust 'Help a Hog' <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/take-action/garden-wildlife/help-hog>
8. Wild about Gardens Hedgehog Guide
<https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Hedgehogs.pdf>
9. 'Prickles in a Pickle' Facebook link to Judy Oliphant's Hedgehog Hospital
<https://www.facebook.com/Prickles-in-a-Pickle-541444966301844/>