



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Wyre Forest Local Group

Newsletter summer/autumn 2026

Fun facts about our spiky hedgehog friends

There are 17 recognised species of hedgehogs, found naturally in Europe, Asia and Africa, with some species now introduced to New Zealand

The Latin word for hedgehogs is *Erinaceus* and our own British hedgehog is scientifically known as *Erinaceus europaeus*. In Britain it's found almost everywhere except some of the Scottish islands but tends to be scarce or absent from wet areas and pine forests.

Hedgehogs are small, stout mammals with bodies covered in keratinised spines or quills – typically around 6,000 per individual – that provide protection from predators.

Most have five toes on their front feet and four on their back feet, except for the African four-toed hedgehog. They also have a small tail.

Hedgehogs are good runners, proficient climbers and can also swim. They have a top speed of 5mph. The average lifespan of a hedgehog is two to three but this is dramatically reduced by losing their lives on roads or to garden chemicals, lawnmowers and strimmers.

Hedgehogs belong to the ancient mammal order Eulipotyphla, making them closer to shrews and moles than rodents. They first evolved around 15 million years ago; one of the oldest surviving mammal lineages.

We used to think hedgehogs were witches

Back in the Middle Ages, hedgehogs were seen as harbingers of doom: spotting a hedgehog meant that you were in for a rough time! Historian of witchcraft, Professor Owen Davies, states that our ancestors believed that witches could shapeshift, transforming themselves into hedgehogs, so what looked like a hedgehog could actually be a witch in disguise.

Beatrix Potter's Mrs Tiggy-Winkle changed the way the world felt about hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs used to be known as "urchins"

The origin of the name hedgehog came into use in around 1450. The Middle English name for our spiny friend was "heyghoge", with the "heyg" a reference to its love of hedgerows and "hoge" deriving from its pig-like snout. Other early names for the animal include "urchin" (due to its likeness to the sea creature), "hedgepig" and "furze-pig" (with "furze" being the Old English for gorse).

Hedgehogs were mentioned in several of Shakespeare's plays, including A Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth and Richard III, mainly as insults.

Seen a hedgehog?

Let us know? The Trust has teamed up with Worcestershire Biological Records Centre to map sightings of hedgehogs across Worcestershire – just fill a form at www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/hedgehogs

Talks

Everyone is welcome to join us at Holy Innocents Community Hall, Kidderminster. DY11 6LA
Meet at 7.30 pm. Admission £3.00.

Thursday 3rd September 'Don't count your butterflies before they pupate' Mel Mason – Mel is Chairman of the West Midlands branch of the Butterfly Conservation Society.

Thursday 1st October 'Journey to the Arctic – Svalbard & Beyond' Nigel Spencer – Nigel is a wildlife photographer who has put together a fascinating talk based on his seven week journey from Northern Norway to Svalbard and beyond.

Thursday 5th November 'The restoration of Burlish Meadows' Adam Wright – A talk by Wyre Forest District Council countryside ranger about the local nature reserve at Burlish. Adam will look at the restoration work to recreate and conserve a local natural environment, including encouraging wildflowers to establish.

Thursday 3rd December – Christmas social event.

Walks

All start at 10am. Donations to WWT. Well behaved dogs on a lead welcome.

Sunday 12th July 'Upper Arley circular walk to Trimpley Reservoir & Eyemore Wood' Led by Gail Devries
Meet: car park at Arley Arboretum; please park in lefthand corner adjacent to fencing. DY12 1SQ / GR: S0764804

Some level riverside and woodland walking with a number of steep sections. One unmanned Seven Valley Railway crossing and a short section on the road. No steps or stiles. Approx. four miles.

Sunday 13th September 'A 'slow' walk around Pound Green' Led by Catharine Jarvis

Meet: Hawkbatch car park on the Button Oak road B4194 DY12 3AF / GR: S0761776

Some ascents and descents of around 75ft. Covering parts of Pound Green Common (with the chance to inspect refugia for slow-worms), some sheep fields and then largely along forest tracks. May be muddy in places and slippery after rain. There are two road crossings. Approx. four miles. Five stiles and two gates.

Sunday 11th October 'Discovering Blakedown' Led by Paul Carpenter & Jacky Sharp

Meet: Lower car park at Blakedown Parish Rooms, 18 Belbroughton Road DY10 3JG / GR: S0881783
A small amount of walking on a quiet lane without a path and a little along a bigger road with a path.

Sunday 15th November 'Hartlebury' Led by Glyn Walters

Meet: Hartlebury Common car park DY13 9JB / GR: S0825715

Some short stretches along a road / a steepish set of steps that can be slippery when wet. A walk through a nature reserve, along the canal and disused railway line before returning via Hartlebury Castle. Approx. three miles. One stile.

Sunday 13th December 'Ribbesford Revealed' Led by Chris Morris & Roma Bubb

Meet: Blackstone Riverside Park car park at DY12 2TQ / GR: S0789742

A walk around Ribbesford looking at the natural history, local history and folklore. One incline. One road crossing. Approx. three miles. No stiles.

For more information about our walks, please contact either:

Roma Bubb: bubb.roma@outlook.com or Chris Morris: chrismorris222@btinternet.com

For further information about the group, please contact Joan Kearton-Jones: joan.kj@sky.com

You can also find out more information at: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

Your editor – Caris Hawkley