

Jersey Hedgehog Survey 2022 - 2023 Report

Previous surveys were commissioned in Jersey in 2007 and 2012, to ascertain the number of sightings and areas where hedgehogs were most prevalent. Following a reported decline in the UK mainland hedgehog population, and a decline in admission figures to the Hedgehog Group at White Lodge, plus it was 10 years since the last survey in Jersey, it was decided it was time to conduct another survey in 2022.

The primarily on-line survey was set up through Survey Monkey. It was posted on the Jersey Hedgehog Preservation Group website, and via facebook and press releases went out to all 12 Parish Magazine Editors, as well as the local television and radio stations (BBC Jersey, Channel 103 and Channel TV) the Jersey Evening Post, Bailiwick Express, Rural Magazine and the National Trust Discovery magazine. The survey ran from 1 April 2022 to the end of November 2022, and initial publicity successfully generated the first wave of sightings. Further reminders went out during the summer and autumn also reminding people to put out water and food due to the hot, dry summer. Participants retained anonymity but were asked which Parish they lived in.

The survey requested information on

1. sightings of both live and dead hedgehogs,
2. grid reference of sightings on the map attached to the form
3. whether they had previously seen hedgehogs but no longer did
4. any habitat changes which may have affected sightings.

Not all questions were answered by participants therefore we have concentrated on the number of sightings, number of hedgehogs (dead and alive) and areas where they are most prolific.

Survey results

The 2007 and 2012 surveys were mainly paper-based with forms being distributed through veterinary practices, pet shops, mail etc. Reports of sightings were also received by telephone, e-mail and in person. The results included the numbers of hedgehogs admitted to the Hedgehog Group. In 2007 there were 1,661 replies but only 761 in 2012. It is acknowledged that not everyone is computer literate, however we felt that the 2022 survey was relatively easy to access and complete, and well publicised. In 2022/23 we received 993 on-line replies to the survey.

The number of actual sightings in 2007 totalled 2,328 as opposed to just 1,119 (less than half) in 2012 and 1,735 in 2022. The 2022 findings seemingly back up the numerical decline in hedgehogs admitted to the Hedgehog Group between 2007 and 2022, but show an increase on the 2012 results.

The main difference over the three surveys is the number of dead hedgehogs sighted. In 2007 46% (1,063) of those sighted were dead, or died following admission to the Hedgehog Group. In 2012 hedgehog deaths accounted for 40% (443) of the sightings. However, in the 2022 survey just 9% of sightings were fatalities, totalling 159 of the total reported sightings. The majority of deaths reported were still on the road, but interestingly in 2007 there were 709 deaths in gardens compared to just 23 in 2022.

If we surmise the possible causes, we could point to greater awareness of harmful pesticides (slug pellets for instance), and the campaigns by the Jersey Hedgehog Group educating the parishes about the safest way to conduct the branchage while protecting the wildlife that lives in our banks and hedgerows, plus the leaflet regarding the danger of strimmers. Strimmer injuries sadly are still commonplace, but have reduced., and our banks and hedgerows are not all shaved down to bare earth although far too many still are.

Although the first Green Lane was introduced in 1993, these have continued to extend throughout all the parishes, particularly through our rural lanes, where the reduced speed limit and priority for horses, pedestrians and cyclists reduces and slows traffic which must be helpful for meandering hogs.

I note that many parishes have introduced traffic calming measures (such as speed bumps) and reduced speed limits, which again assists in reducing wildlife fatalities.

A further possibility is the re-emergence of raptors in the skies above Jersey. Red kites, marsh harriers, kestrels, etc are becoming more common. Roadkill is generally cleaned up by magpies and crows, but although raptors prefer fresh meat, they will eat fresh carrion if they come across it and are hungry enough.

Demographics.

There are certain areas where the sightings were more prolific. My thanks to Matthew Reynolds for producing comparison heatmaps of the Hedgehog aggregations over the 3 surveys. St Brelade, the third largest Parish population-wise, which has both rural and built up areas, had by far the most recorded sightings (over 130). I am aware that the parish has plenty of street lighting making it easier to see hedgehogs, who are of course nocturnal by nature, plus we know a lot of people in St Brelade are feeding their hedgehogs.

The street lighting theory stands scrutiny given that the next highest number of sightings occurred in St Saviour (just over 80) followed by St Helier and St Peter (both just over 50). St Mary (our least populated parish) had the least sightings (10), yet it is likely that the rural areas are home to many hedgehogs that are not seen after dark because people do not frequent those areas. An example would be Crabbe, in St Mary, where hedgehog scat can be seen on the shooting ranges, but no reported hedgehog sightings.

Thus the number of sightings may say more about the number of observers around to spot hedgehogs after dark, rather than the number of hedgehogs living in those areas.

Conclusion

It has been difficult to compare like for like over the three surveys. If we compare 2022 to the 2007 survey, it appears there has been a **decline** in hedgehog numbers, and yet also a decline in hedgehog deaths.

If we compare 2022 to the 2012 survey there is an **increase** in hedgehog numbers but a decline in hedgehog deaths.

Taking the statistics from the admissions to the Hedgehog Group, it would appear there has been a decline in admissions which would suggest that overall hedgehog numbers are down. Alternatively, the education campaigns mounted by the Jersey Hedgehog Group, with help from the local media and the parishes might mean that people are more aware of the dangers to wildlife in general and are better able to help their survival. Only time will tell. What the survey tells us is that we still have hedgehogs in Jersey and they are widespread throughout all 12 parishes.

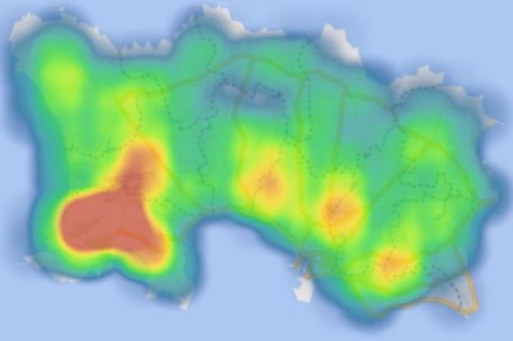
Gill Morgan
April 2023

Compiled with the help of Matthew Reynolds (for making sense of the statistics) and Dru Burdon at White Lodge, Jersey Hedgehog Group, and with thanks to them, all survey participants and our hard working volunteers.

Sightings and deaths in Garden/road/fields:

Year	Total Sightings (Including deaths and ones that have since died post care)					Total alive	Deaths				
	Roads	Fields	Garden	Other/Unclassified	Total		Roads	Fields	Garden	Total	% Dead
2007	1077	226	1015	10	2318	1255	277	77	709	1063	46%
2012	506	31	546	36	1119	676	403	12	28	443	40%
2023	439	182	875	181	1677	1518	128	8	23	159	10%

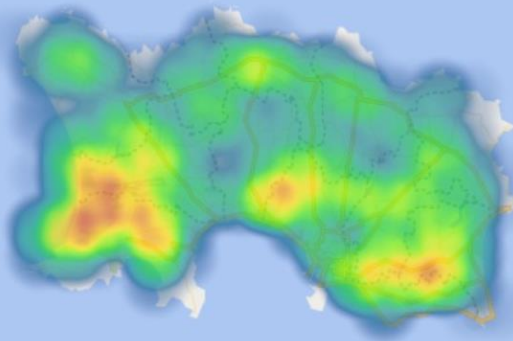
2007



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2012



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2023



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