

# Shelters and feeding houses

Ulli Seewald



[www.pro-igel.de](http://www.pro-igel.de)

1	General information .....	2
2	Hedgehog habitats today .....	2
3	Nesting sites in nature .....	2
4	Gardens that permit unhindered movement .....	3
5	Natural hiding places for hedgehogs in the garden .....	4
6	Homemade shelters.....	5
7	Hedgehog houses .....	6
8	Hedgehog feeding houses .....	7



## All leaflets from line IGELWISSEN kompakt 4:

- 4.1 Wild hedgehogs
- 4.2 Danger recognized – danger averted
- 4.3 Shelters and feeding houses**
- 4.4 Caring for hedgehogs in need
- 4.5 Feeding hedgehogs in our care
- 4.6 Rearing orphaned hoglets
- 4.7 Young hedgehogs in need of help in the Autumn
- 4.8 Hibernation in human care
- 4.9 Release of recovered hedgehogs
- 4.10 Legislation related to hedgehog conservation and hedgehog rescue



## 1 General information

If you want hedgehogs, the first thing you should do is to preserve their habitat and to make sure that they can find natural hiding places, nesting sites and shelters - instead of a cleared and often fragmented cultural landscape. Even in open landscapes, undergrowth and hedges between fields and at forest edges have to give way to non-intensive large-scale agriculture.



*Some undergrowth – a summer sleeping place*

Overgrown bushes, living fences, wild meadows, undergrowth and piles of wood can be left next to fields without any yield losses. By doing so, wild hedgehogs can find habitat, shelter, nesting sites and food animals. As a result, species protection and animal protection can be achieved.

## 2 Hedgehog habitats today

Protected wild hedgehogs need freedom of movement and space – a lot of room for a small mammal! In periods of activity, male hedgehogs roam areas of around 100 hectares in search of food and partners: females around 30 hectares.

As a response to changes in the environment, hedgehogs today prefer to live close to people, because human intervention in nature has created monocultures and decimated hiding and nesting

places in their original habitats.

## 3 Nesting sites in nature

Hedgehogs often find good hiding



*Bushy mixed forest edges – a hedgehog paradise*

places at the edge of mixed forests.

In leafy green areas on the edge of settlements, piles of branches offer hedgehogs retreat and nesting possibilities.



*Blackberry bush and undergrowth – ideal hedgehog nests*

Hedges belong to the so-called linear biotopes and give structure to the landscape. They contribute to species diversity and to the networking of biotopes in landscapes that have been cleared and have little or no forest or grassland. Hedges almost always consist of many different field trees and shrubs and are therefore equally attractive habitats for both birds and small mammals like hedgehogs.

Hedges therefore provide not only shelter for sleeping during the day and times of hibernation. They are also a rich source of food as numerous insects live and reproduce there.



Even within a small area they offer very different location factors, from humid/shady to sunny, and thus attract numerous living creatures.



*Natural hedge – hiding place and food source*

Benjes hedges have the same advantages: they structure landscapes, serve as habitat networks for native animals and also act as windbreaks. In contrast to the planting of shrubs and trees, the foundation of a Benjes hedge is a wall of branches on which plants that are adapted to the location grow and form a hedge.



*Benjes hedges provide shelter for many small animals*

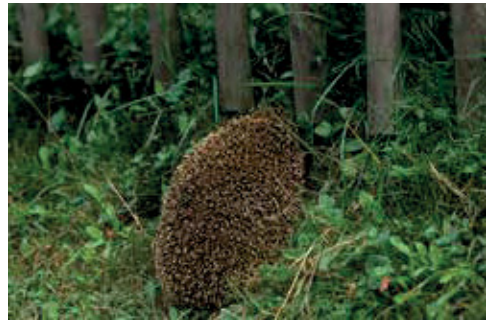
## 4 Gardens that permit unhindered movement

Today hedgehogs find shelter and food in green settlement areas and especially in parks and gardens designed in a way that is close to nature. But no one garden is sufficient for a hedgehog to live in, it is therefore important that fences and borders can be passed through. Green borders, i.e. hedges of native bushes best serve this function.



*Colourful garden hedge – a hedgehog friendly feast for the eyes*

In addition, wooden fences are recommended: picket, pillar or lattice work fences allow free passage during night-time roaming, as long as the gaps are at least 10 cm wide.



*Permeable fence – unhindered hedgehog hunting*

Garden walls can also be made passable for hedgehogs by removing one or two stones from one section of the masonry.

Likewise, modern metal fences can be adapted with little effort and expense to make them suitable for hedgehogs by creating 10x10 cm passages.



*With little effort – free passage for hedgehogs*

## 5 Natural hiding places for hedgehogs in the garden

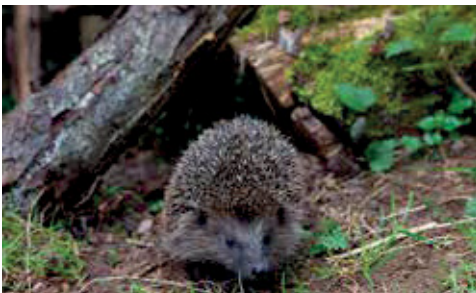
In order to enable hedgehogs the possibility to build a sleeping place or a nest for their litter in private gardens; small garden estates; and public green spaces and cemeteries, shelter can be created using the simplest of means. Often it is enough just to see the world through the eyes of a hedgehog and to simply refrain from destroying nesting places and instead encouraging them.

A garden house with a raised floor can provide a home for hedgehogs in the „basement“: In autumn, leaves (or oat straw without awns) should be added as nesting material.



*A fine garden house – and the hedgehog lives downstairs!*

Woodpiles and the niches they provide serve as an inviting accommodation option for every prickly knight.



*Cavities in woodpiles – hedgehog apartment*



*Tree cave as single-family house*

Leaves that are not removed in autumn provide nesting material for hibernation nests.



*Leaves – nesting material for hedgehogs*

Even a compost box, when the bottom board is off the ground, makes an attractive hiding place, where there are plenty of food animals like worms right in front of the hedgehog's nose.



*Compost – Living below, snacking above*



## 6 Homemade shelters

With little effort and material, every hedgehog lover can build hiding places for them in the garden. Whether a spiny friend will really move in is never guaranteed, but offering the animals a dry place to hibernate is in itself a worthwhile thing to do.

A pile of leaves together with branches and twigs (from trees and green cuttings) and protected from the weather by a plastic sheet is a simple and effective shelter. Firstly dry leaves are piled up, followed by twigs. Then the plastic sheet - which should reach to the ground - is weighed down with stones. Lastly the whole thing is covered with bushes or grass sods.



*A pile of branches with leaves and plastic sheet – good place to sleep*

A simple yet very helpful assistance for spiny knights is a board or piece of corrugated iron: This protective hedgehog shelter „roof“ is placed diagonally against a house wall – but not on the warm sunny side – and the niche created then filled with nesting material such as straw or dry leaves: that's it! The hedgehog builds the nest!



*Protective roof for the spiny friend*

A hedgehog house can also be easily constructed using stones: Natural stones<sup>5</sup>, bricks or interlocking paving stones can be stacked to the desired height, a board weighted with stones, or a stone slab serving as a roof – skilled house builders could even construct a solid wall. The more or less square interior space should be about 25x25 cm. The finished hedgehog castle should be covered with earth or sods of grass, so that the outside of the shelter becomes “overgrown”



*Abb. Stone villa with straw bed – still under construction*

Wooden garden border rolls are also well suited to building hedgehog houses: The material can be laid or bent to create a nest-sized interior and entrance that are the right size for a hedgehog.

With about 1 metre of wooden garden border roll, you can create two sleeping places with a diameter of about 35 cm. The entrances should be 10–12 cm wide. If the material is 25 cm high, place it directly on the ground. Wooden garden border rolls that are 30 cm high are buried at a depth of 5 cm. To keep the hedgehog boxes dry, dig out some soil and replace it with gravel to aid drainage. On top of the drainage put a layer of sand, and then above that some nesting material. A wooden board or a formwork panel, which covers the whole shelter, is suitable as a roof. The roof can be made weatherproof with overhanging roofing felt. Ivy, ferns or evergreens can be used to green the structure.



A hut out of wooden garden border rolls (without roof)– Two room apartment



Hedgehog-house by "Denk" needs thermal insulation

## 7 Hedgehog houses

Not every animal lover has the skills or the possibility to create natural hedgehog shelters in the garden. One of the best options for prickly knights would be a hedgehog sleeping house. These are best placed in a sheltered spot where bushes and plants obscure them from view. Covering the house as much as possible makes it a real hiding place for the prickly gardener, a place where it belongs. Hedgehogs will never accept even the most beautiful hedgehog house as a place to sleep or nest if it is located in an open area!



Hedgehog house "Douglas Fir" - sturdy, with fold up roof

For the various – often quite attractive – houses on the market, it is advisable to cover them with earth, branches and sods so that they are sufficiently thermally insulated; this goes especially for shelters made of ceramic or wickerwork.

It is important that the houses are large enough for the hedgehog to build a nest that meets their needs, whether as a day nest, hibernation nest or even a litter nest for mother and children. A floor space of at least 30x30 cm is desirable. The entrance should be on the side away from the weather (mostly south-east). If the roof is not already sloped, the house should be placed on a slope so that rain-water can drain off.



Hedgehog house by "Neudorff" – sensibly constructed

In order to be able to clean the hedgehog house easily, a fold-up or removable roof – which most products also offer – is useful.

These days there are many, many ty-



Hedgehog house by "Sassen" – comfortable all round



A simple wooden hedgehog house– off into the bushes

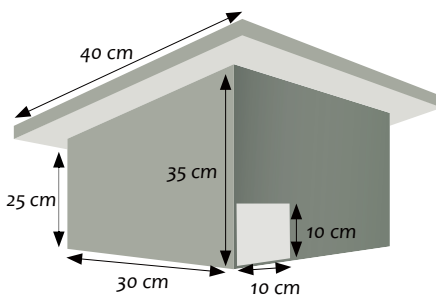
## houses

pes of hedgehog castles, sleeping houses etc. on the market. Numerous manufacturers offer well suited products, even exquisite hedgehog villas! Others offer beautiful but useless designs of a low quality. The animal lover should first orientate themselves on the functional specifications, and only after that indulge in aesthetics and taste.



If you don't want to buy a hedgehog house, you can build one yourself with a little craftsmanship out of wooden boards. You can then decorate it as creatively as you wish.

house, you can build one yourself with a little craftsmanship out of wooden boards. You can then decorate it as creatively as you wish.



Building sketch of a simple hedgehog sleeping house

Only in the short periods of low nutrition in autumn before hibernation and in spring is it sensible to feed hedgehogs. Recommended high calorie foods are listed in leaflet 4.5 NUTRITION.

If you want to offer the prickly garden friend an evening snack, it should be placed in a hedgehog food house so that no other animals can enjoy it. Leftovers should be disposed of the next morning. Hygiene is of utmost importance so that no diseases are transmitted at the feeding places. It is best to put the bowls on newspaper which is changed daily. The feeding dishes must be rinsed hot after each meal.

The simplest feeding hut is a fruit crate turned upside down and weighted down with a stone. A pallet "restaurant" is more stable: A whole (or half) Euro pallet is covered from above with roofing felt or welding mat on top, ready to go!

There are plenty of hedgehog food



Pallet restaurant– simple and cat-proof



houses on offer in pet shops and garden centres. For hygiene reasons, you should look for products without a floor which can be placed on easy to clean garden slabs. In addition, labyrinth entrances are desirable, as this will prevent cats gaining access to the food. For your own cat you should place the food higher up so that the animals do not sniff.

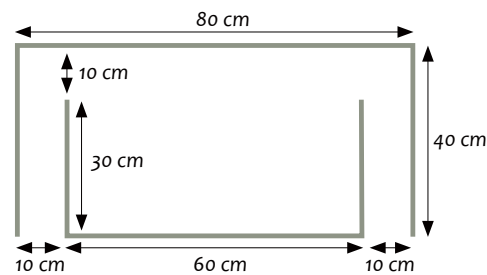
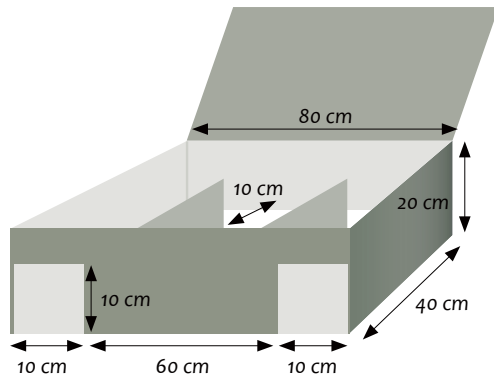
If you wish to watch the hedgehog



*“Bistro Heckengarten” – practical and attractive*

while feeding, you should buy a model with a skylight made of acrylic glass. You can also convert an aquarium into a glass feeding palace.

With a little craftsmanship you can build a cat-safe hedgehog food house yourself:



*Construction sketch for a cat-safe hedgehog food house*



*“Bistro Heckengarten” – with labyrinth entrances*

#### Imprint

© 1997 Pro Igel e.V., Munster/Westf.

11., new edition 2016, revised reprint 03|2022

1st English edition, reprint 03|2022

ISBN 978-3-940377-15-9 (complete set of leaflets)

**Photo credits:** S. Barrien Wikimedia-commons: 3 left (bottom); K. Dudziak, Wuppertal: 3 right (bottom); Hannana pixelio.de: 2 left; Denk Keramische Stätten, Coburg: 6 right (top); B. Hansen, Neumünster: 7 right (top); Igelzentrum Zürich: 5 left (top); Th. Knepel, Grävenwiesbach: 3 left (top); Lebensgemeinschaft e.V. Sassen, Schlitz: 7 left (top); U. Lindenau, Berlin: 6 left (top); K. Narten, Hannover: 2 right (bottom), 4 right (middle); M. Neumeier, Lindau/B.: 5 right (bottom); Sanimalis Naturprodukte, Heinsberg: 6 left (bottom); Fa. Neudorff, Emmerthal: 6 right (bottom); U. Seewald, Münster: 2 right (top), 4 left (top), 4 right (bottom),

5 left (bottom), 7 right (bottom), 8 left; Tierfoto Reinhard, Heiligenkreuzsteinach: 3 right (middle), 4 left (top), 4 right (top); L. Tomispin fotolia.com: 1; „Waldbühne u. Garten“, (location unknown): 7 left (middle)

**Editor:** Ulli Seewald, Münster/Westf.

**Translation:** Monika Neumeier; Michael J. Sansom

**Layout and typesetting:**

schriftwerk p Pamela Kröhl, Niestetal; SeewaldDesignMST Ulli Seewald, Münster

**Print and binding:** Häuser KG, Köln

**Correspondance:** Pro Igel e.V., E-Mail: verlag@pro-igel.de

**For current information see:**  
[www.pro-igel.depro-igel.de](http://www.pro-igel.depro-igel.de)