NHMP Winter 2024-5 Update: Otford

Thank you for taking part in the National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme this year. We are extremely grateful to all of our hub managers, site co-ordinators, citizen scientists and camera hosts. Without the hard work of the NHMP volunteers, the project simply would not be possible.



Together, last year we have surveyed 40 sites across England, Scotland and Wales. This is fantastic news, as it means we have already reached our target for the whole three-year pilot, with another year to go! The surveys have generated a huge number of images; over 8 million have been uploaded to MammalWeb so far, with lots more to be added. Hedgehogs have been spotted at over half the sites surveyed, but this number is likely to rise as more photos are uploaded and classified. Whilst we work our way through all the data to produce the first hedgehog population density estimates, we wanted to give you a quick update on your local site.

In July, thirty cameras were placed out in Otford, and left on for 30 days to photograph anything passing in front of them. Over 200 000 images were uploaded to MammalWeb from these cameras. AI filtered out pictures of humans and blank images, and the rest were made available for volunteers to look through and identify what species had been snapped. This is a crucial step to identify which of the images contain hedgehogs and therefore need to be analysed. Over 400 volunteers have helped with this process, becoming 'Spotters' to classify the image sequences from Otford, so thank you very much if you're one of them. There are still lots of sequences left for spotting, so please do take a look if you can on MammalWeb.

Of the images classified so far, 24 species of bird and mammal have been spotted at Otford (excluding livestock, dogs, cats and people). So far, Grey Squirrel and Red fox appear on the most cameras from the site, each appearing at 19 of the 30 cameras. The least frequently spotted species on the cameras are birds including Tawny Owl, Bullfinch and Great Tit appearing at single cameras.



So far, Red Fox is one of the most frequently spotted mammal species in images from Otford.



This inquisitive Tawny Owl appeared at one camera in Otford.

We're pleased to report that so far, hedgehogs have been spotted at two of the cameras at Otford, making them the 15th spotted species across the site, and the least frequently spotted mammal species. It's likely that there are more that haven't been spotted yet, so do have a look.



So far, hedgehogs have been spotted at two of the 30 cameras.

Please note that these are preliminary results and need to be verified. Part of that verification comes from several Spotters agreeing with each other and the AI on what species is in the image. The more Spotters we have viewing and classifying the images, and the more agreement we have between Spotters on what they've seen, the more confident we can be in the identifications and the faster we can produce density estimates. Another reason to take part and classify the NHMP images on MammalWeb. Plus, it's good fun and you can see what your local wildlife gets up to when you're not looking! Thank you so much to everyone who has had a go at Spotting so far, if you'd like to have a go, you can find instructions here.

We're currently generating the first population density estimates for the project, from the sites surveyed in 2023, with 2024 estimates to follow later in the year.

Thanks again, and we'll be in touch soon with more updates and plans for the upcoming field season.

The National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme is run by The British Hedgehog Preservation Society and People's Trust for Endangered Species, in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, Zoological Society of London, London Hogwatch, MammalWeb and Durham University, and co-funded by Natural England.