



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Time to give hedgehogs a helping hand

Born Free issues advice for keeping hedgehogs safe this autumn

Horsham-based international wildlife charity Born Free is reminding people to look out for hedgehogs who might be in trouble at this time of year.

At the end of October, hedgehogs start looking for a place to hibernate, and with Bonfire Night just around the corner, a pile of dry leaves in the garden or an unlit bonfire are attractive places for a sleepy hedgehog looking for somewhere to build its nest.

Born Free's Tarnya Knight, says: "Hedgehog populations are in decline in the UK, so it's important to be vigilant at this time of year and protect these amazing creatures. Hedgehogs can die or suffer awful injuries through contact with bonfires, so we're asking people to take some simple precautions to avoid causing them any harm."

Autumn is also a challenging time for young or underweight hedgehogs, as they have not gained enough fat reserves to enable them to survive hibernation and will need specialist care at a wildlife centre. Another sign that something isn't right is if you see a hedgehog out during the day. As nocturnal creatures, this is usually a sign that they need help.

This month, Tarnya, who has assisted with the rescue and release of many hedgehogs in Sussex, collected four tiny hoglets which had been found huddled next to their dead mother in a garden in Horley. Tarnya will take care of the orphans over the winter and they will be returned to the wild next spring.

She says: "We'd advise anyone who finds a young or underweight hedgehog at this time of year, or spots a hedgehog out during the day, to contact their local wildlife rescue centre, vet or the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk) for advice."

Born Free's tips for a hedgehog-friendly bonfire:

- Build your bonfire on the day it will be lit, putting the pile of material next to the bonfire site and rebuilding before lighting it if necessary.
- Choose clear ground, never on top of a pile of leaves or near to a pampas grass.
- If you are unable to build the fire on the day of lighting, use a broom handle to check the bonfire by gently lifting section by section and using a torch to look and listen for hedgehogs.
- If a bonfire has to be built in advance, prevent hedgehogs from getting in by putting chicken wire one metre high all the way around the bottom. This should be held in place with stakes and the wire should slope outwards at an angle to make it difficult to climb, as hedgehogs are good climbers!
- If you do find a hedgehog in your unlit bonfire, place it in a box with some leaves or shredded paper, with some water and meaty cat or dog food, and place it in a shed where it can be left in the quiet until the fireworks have finished and the bonfire dampened down.

-ENDS-

Image: © Born Free

About Born Free:

Born Free's mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild.

Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

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