

YounGnats Newsletter August 2016

Build a sandpit for wildlife

Hopefully during the summer you may have hedgehogs exploring your garden at night, looking for food such as slugs, snails and other insects. Hedgehogs need to make sure they build up enough weight over the summer before they go into hibernation in about October/ November. The number of hedgehogs in the United Kingdom is continuing to decline for several reasons; these include the loss of hedgerows and woodlands where hedgehogs live. Also an increase in the use of pesticides or weed killers which means there are less slugs and other insects for them to eat. So it is really important to try to make your garden as hedgehog friendly as possible by providing holes in fences (about 13cm diameter) so they have access, a compost heap or pile of logs where they can find insects to feed on.

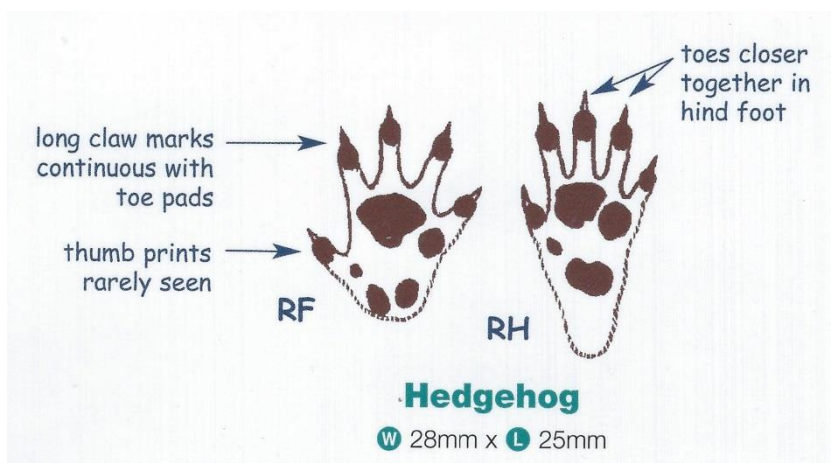


Why not see if you have hedgehogs in your garden by building a sandpit.

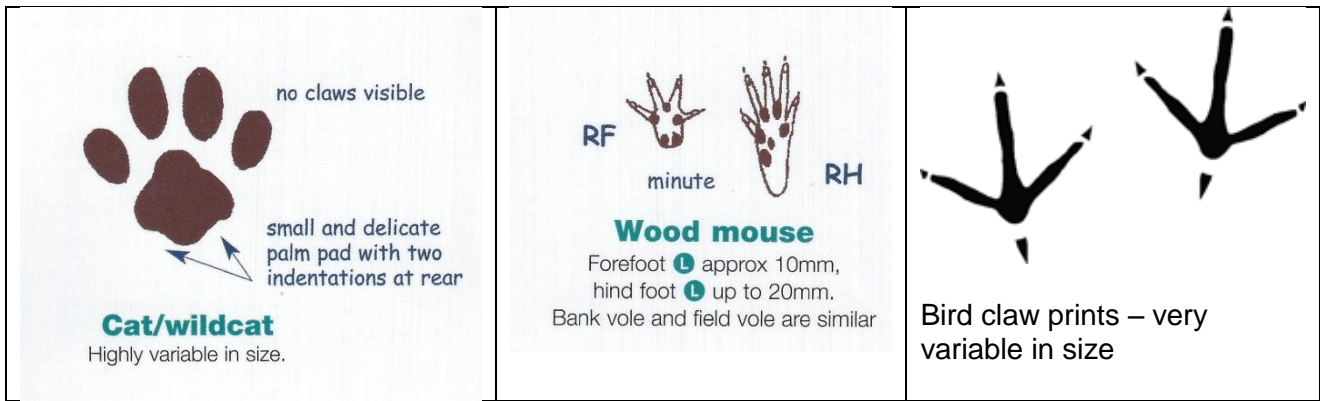


Use an old tea-tray or baking tray that is only about 1cm deep and fill it with building sand. Make sure the surface of the sand is smooth by pulling a ruler or similar across it. Place a small shallow bowl of food that hedgehogs like in the sand. This can be meat based cat or dog food, a hedgehog mix which can be purchased from most garden centres or pet shops, alternatively you could make up your own mixture of ingredients such as crushed unsalted peanuts, raisins and mealworms.

If a hedgehog visits your feeding station they will leave their paw-prints in the sand for you to identify. The diagram below shows the average size of hedgehog prints and some key features.



However other mammals may visit your feeding station too, such as cats in your neighbourhood, mice and voles or even birds. So why not try using the pictures overleaf to see if you can identify the paw or claw prints.



RF = right front foot, RH = Right hind foot

Paw print images from FSC Guide to British mammal tracks and signs.

We also covered hedgehogs in our July 2015 newsletter, so if you want more information go to the BNHS website at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/newsletter-jul15-v2.pdf> . There is also a set of small mammal fact cards on the website at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/learn/small-mammal-facts/>

If you think you have hedgehogs using your sandpit you can submit your records via the BNHS website at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/adnoto/forms/mammals.php> using the Living Record facility.

See www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/ for more details and a selection of interesting articles

Have you been to one of our YounGnats events? The next one you may like to come along to is:

- Sunday 14th August – Rushmere Summer Fair at Rushmere Country Park LU7 0EB, 11am – 3pm. Visit the BNHS stand to see the nature table, quizzes etc. There is a £2 parking fee.
- Saturday 20th August – Houghton Regis Chalk Pit 10am – 12.30pm. To look at geology & wildlife in this Wildlife Trust Reserve. Meet in Lake View Road LU5 5GJ.
- Sunday 25th September – Priory Country Park, Bedford, MK41 9DJ, 10am – 12.30pm. An autumn walk to observe the varied wildlife. Meet at the visitors centre car park

These events are FREE, why not bring along your friends.

Also in Bedfordshire there are the following Wildlife Watch groups for young people interested in wildlife.

- **Flit Vale Watch** Wildlife Watch, Maulden. Meet one Tuesday a month, from 6.30 to 8pm. For more information please contact Watch Leader Nigel Pollard on 01525 753170.
- **Houghton Regis** Wildlife Watch, Houghton Hall Park and Moore Crescent Pavilion. Meet on the last Friday of each month from 6 to 8pm. Contact Watch Leader Tracey McMahon on 07948 532662 or wildlifewatch.houghtonregis@gmail.com
- **Stockgrove** Wildlife Watch, Stockgrove Country Park, Heath and Reach, near Leighton Buzzard. Meet on the second Wednesday of each month from 6 to 8pm. Contact Watch Leader Esther Clarke on 01525 237760.
- **Stotfold** Wildlife Watch, Stotfold Mill, Stotfold. Meet on the third Saturday of each month, 10am to midday. Contact Watch Leader Gemma Waghorn on 07793 867922.