

Next week is Hedgehog Awareness Week so it was a pleasure on Tuesday to be able to support the launch of the Amazing Grace campaign to help save our prickly little friends. In my lifetime alone, the hedgehog population has declined from over 35 million to less than a million. If that decline continues then it is sad to think that my little Freddie may never see Mrs Tiggywinkle in the wild.

There are a whole host of reasons why the population has declined but the vast majority, if not all of them, are because of us humans. Over 100,000 hedgehogs are killed by the car each year, becoming the second most likely victim of road kill, and the increased use of pesticides has led to a decline in their food sources. There are things therefore that we can do as individuals to help improve the survival rates of hedgehogs such as check in piles of leaves and bonfires for sleeping hedgehogs, don't use slug pellets as they are poisonous and don't put out bread and milk for them – they are actually lactose intolerant.

It is universally understood that hedgehogs are a friend of the gardener, eating all the pesky insects that ruin your crops. Everyone can help smooth their passage across our gardens by ensuring there is a greetings card size hole in or under the fence. We can create safe areas for them to feed and hibernate and Government can work across departments to protect our natural wildlife for the future.

The hedgehog is an iconic creature. No humane person would want to harm a hedgehog on purpose yet we do by accident of modern life. So next week's awareness drive is important if we are to preserve our prickly wonders for the future and something we can perhaps all get involved with.