



MEDIA RELEASE

HEDGEHOG ROADKILLS HOLD THE KEY TO LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE TINY MAMMAL - Ireland's first survey of hedgehogs undertaken in County Clare

County Clare, IRELAND, 9th July 07 – The Clare Heritage Office in association with the Clare Biodiversity Group is hoping that the significant number of hedgehogs killed on Irish roads each year will help them produce the country's first every audit of the tiny mammal. The aim of the survey, which is co-funded by Clare County Council and The Heritage Council, is to assess population numbers, as well as to identify the threat posed to the species by the widespread use of pesticides.

John Murphy, Biodiversity Officer, Clare County Council explained, *“Members of the public will play a major role in determining the overall success of this survey. We are asking the public to record any sightings of hedgehogs on a reference map that has been established on the Clare Biodiversity Group website www.clarebiodiversity.ie. These records will help us build a comprehensive map of where populations of the mammal are concentrated.”*

Mr. Murphy said that the Clare Biodiversity office would use the survey as an opportunity to raise awareness about the hedgehog and the many misconceptions that exist about the mammal.

He said, *“In areas where hedgehogs have been introduced, such as New Zealand and some of the Scottish islands, the hedgehog itself has become a pest. In New Zealand it causes immense damage to native species including insects, snails and ground nesting birds, particularly shore birds, as with many introduced animals, it lacks natural predators. Attempts to eliminate hedgehogs from bird colonies on the Scottish islands of North Uist and Berbecula in the Outer Hebrides have met with considerable opposition. Thankfully, we have no such problems with hedgehogs in Ireland.”*

Mr. Murphy warned, however, that the increased use of pesticides was having a detrimental effect on native hedgehog population numbers.

“It is ironic that hedgehogs are being killed by pesticides when in fact they are the best pest control we have got”, indicated Mr. Murphy.

He continued, *“Pesticides such as slug pellets are known to kill hedgehogs, along with other species such as thrushes and frogs. Hopefully this survey can raise sufficient public awareness to instigate a shift in opinion and a reduction in the use of pesticides.”*

Produced by the Clare Heritage Office, the **Clare Hedgehog Survey** follows less than six months after another inaugural survey was completed in Clare. **The Clare Cuckoo Survey**, which was undertaken by Clare Biodiversity Group and Clare County Council, found that the bird has made a resurgent comeback in the west of the country.

According to Mr. John Murphy, *“We would appeal to the people of Clare and anyone who visits the county to take part in the hedgehog survey. The hedgehog records will add to the significant amount of records accumulated over the last number of years for many other species, all of which are available to view on interactive distribution maps on our website www.clarebiodiversity.ie.”*

Clare is the first county in Ireland to have a web-based Biological Records Centre, which along with the **Clare Hedgehog Survey** forms part of the Clare Local Biodiversity Action Plan – the first of its kind in the country.

For further information on the **Clare Hedgehog Survey** please contact John Murphy (Biodiversity Officer, Clare County Council) at 086-3208965/jmurphy@clarecoco.ie. Further details are available from www.clarebiodiversity.ie.