

# Doorstep Wildlife



Even if you live in a busy town or city, wildlife will be all around you, you just have to look to find it! If you search hard enough, you will probably find signs of **urban** creatures in your street, on your school playing field, through your window, at the park or in any busy, built-up space. Let's take a closer look at just some of the animals and birds that manage to survive in our towns and cities...

## Foxes

There are around 33,000 foxes living in urban areas in the UK. They are mammals, about the size of a small dog, with red fur and bushy tails. They are the most common wild **carnivore** found in our towns and cities mainly because they eat almost anything, including:

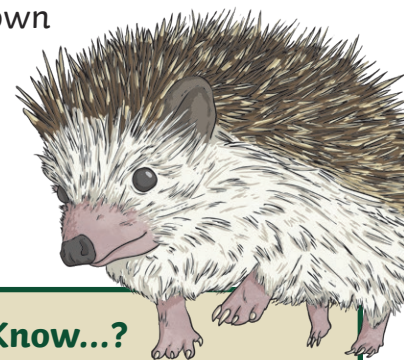
- food from dustbins, bird tables and compost heaps;
- wild mammals;
- birds;
- earthworms;
- beetles;
- fruit.

Foxes are mostly **nocturnal** animals but they are often seen in urban areas during the day. Sadly, many foxes are killed each year on busy roads.



## Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs can be found in almost all urban areas of the UK, except some areas of Scotland. The spiky mammals live in nests under hedges, where lots of insects and other **invertebrates** can be found. The hedgehog is often called the 'gardener's friend' as it loves eating small creatures, such as caterpillars, slugs and snails, which can often damage garden plants. Hedgehogs have sharp quills on their back. When they feel threatened, they contract two large muscles in their back. This causes these quills to straighten out. At the same time, the hedgehog also curls up into a ball, tucking its face and legs into its belly. This protects it from potential danger. Sadly, the number of hedgehogs has gone down a lot in the last 60 years. It is thought that there are just one million hedgehogs left in the UK.



### Did You Know...?

You should never feed hedgehogs milk as it can cause them to become very sick. Instead, try and give them fresh water in a shallow bowl along with tinned dog or cat food.

## Pigeons

Pigeons are stout-bodied birds of the Columbidae family and are likely to be one of the most common birds within the UK. They have a cooing call, which is a very familiar sound within most busy cities and town centres. They often eat food from pavements and litter bins, as well as eating insects, seeds and food from bird feeders in urban gardens. Pigeons are often called **vermin** because many people believe that:

- they spread illness;
- they damage houses and buildings;
- their droppings (poo) are not nice to look at.



Some cities have even tried to lower the number of pigeons by destroying nesting sites, removing pigeon eggs from nests and emptying litter bins more often.

### Glossary

<b>carnivore</b>	An animal that eats other creatures.
<b>invertebrate</b>	An animal without a backbone.
<b>nocturnal</b>	A creature that is active at night (and may sleep during daylight hours).
<b>urban</b>	A word to describe something that manages to survive in a busy place like a city or town.
<b>vermin</b>	An animal that causes harm or damage or is difficult to control.

### How Can We Help Urban Wildlife to Survive?

Over the last thirty years, the number of some urban animals has fallen because:

- there are fewer gardens, parks and fields where they can live and find food;
- patches of grass and gardens are now not connected so they find it difficult and dangerous to move around.

If you have any outdoor space or a garden, you could try to help urban animals by:

- making and hanging a simple bird feeder;
- making holes in fences;
- planting flowers and plants.

# Questions

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in our towns and cities? Tick one.

- hedgehog  
 pigeon  
 fox  
 badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.

hedgehogs

sometimes eat from pavements and litter bins

pigeons

are about the size of a small dog

foxes

live in nests under hedges

3. Find three things that pigeons might eat.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Find and copy a word from the **Foxes** section of the text that means **to eat meat**.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

Pigeons make a \_\_\_\_\_ sound, which is often heard in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

6. Why do you think some city councils have decided to empty their litter bins more often to try to control the number of pigeons?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why are hedgehogs called the '**gardener's friend**'?

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8. Who do you think the author has written the text for?

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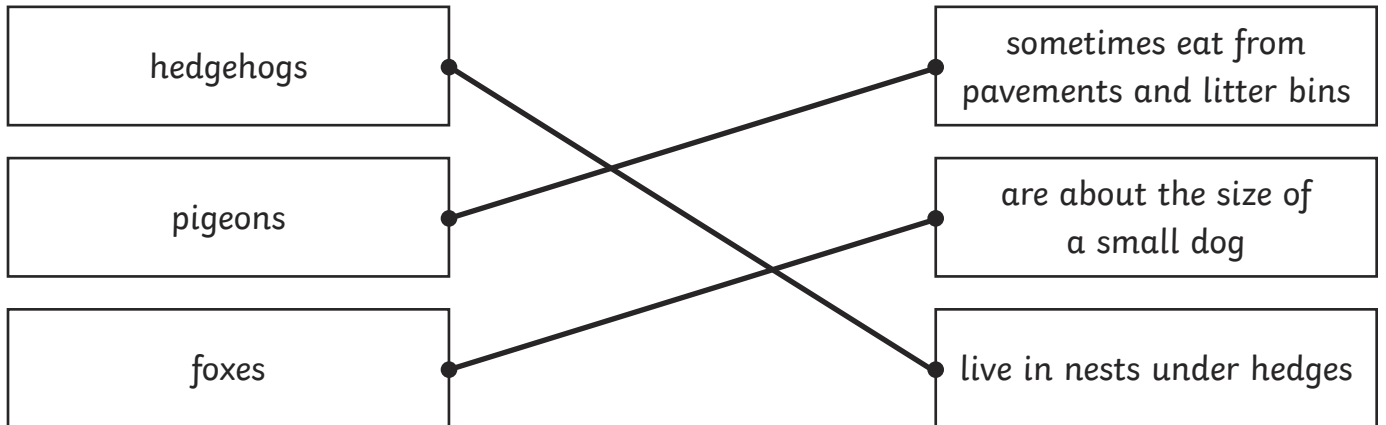
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# Answers

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in our towns and cities? Tick one.

- hedgehog  
 pigeon  
 **fox**  
 badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.



3. Find three things that pigeons might eat.

**Accept any two of the following; food from pavements and litter bins; insects; seeds; food from bird feeders.**

4. Find and copy a word from the **Foxes** section of the text that means **to eat meat**.  
**carnivore**

5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

Pigeons make a **cooing** sound, which is often heard in **towns** and **cities**.

6. Why do you think some city councils have decided to empty their litter bins more often to try to control the number of pigeons?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that some city councils have decided to collect their rubbish more often so that pigeons have to go to other places to look for food rather than taking it from the bins.**

7. Why are hedgehogs called the '**gardener's friend**'?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Hedgehogs are appreciated by gardeners because they eat creatures like snails and slugs, which often feed on garden plants.**

8. Who do you think the author has written the text for?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author has written the text for children who are interested in wildlife, who would like to try to help stop animals like hedgehogs from dying out.**



# Doorstep Wildlife

Even if you live in a busy town or city, wildlife will be all around you as it manages to survive pretty much everywhere; you just have to look to find it! If you search hard enough, you will probably find signs of urban creatures in your street, on your school playing field, through your window, at the park or in any busy, built-up space. Let's take a closer look at just some of the animals and birds that manage to survive in our towns and cities...

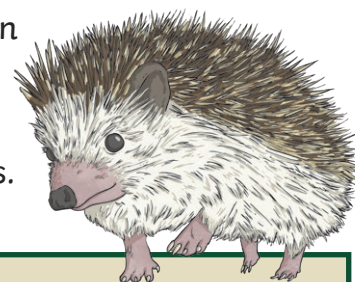
## Foxes

It is estimated that there are around 33,000 foxes (mammals with reddish orange fur and bushy tails) living in and around urban areas in the UK. They are the most common wild **carnivore** found in our towns and cities and have adapted brilliantly to life in busy surroundings. They eat a wide and varied diet, which includes food stolen from dustbins, bird tables and compost heaps, as well as wild mammals, birds, earthworms, beetles and fruit. Foxes are mostly **nocturnal** animals but they are often seen in urban areas during the day. Unfortunately, many foxes are sadly killed on the roads each year in the UK.



## Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs can be found in almost all urban areas of the UK, except some areas of Scotland. The spiky mammals live in nests under hedges, where lots of insects and other **invertebrates** can be found. Unlike foxes and pigeons, hedgehogs are well-liked in the UK and are often called the 'gardener's friend' as they love eating creatures such as caterpillars, slugs and snails, which can often be very damaging to garden plants. Hedgehogs have sharp quills on their back. When they feel threatened, they contract two large muscles in their back. This causes these quills to straighten out. At the same time, the hedgehog also curls up into a ball, tucking its face and legs into its belly. This protects it from potential danger. Sadly, it is estimated that just one million hedgehogs are left in the UK, which is a 97% decrease since the 1950s.

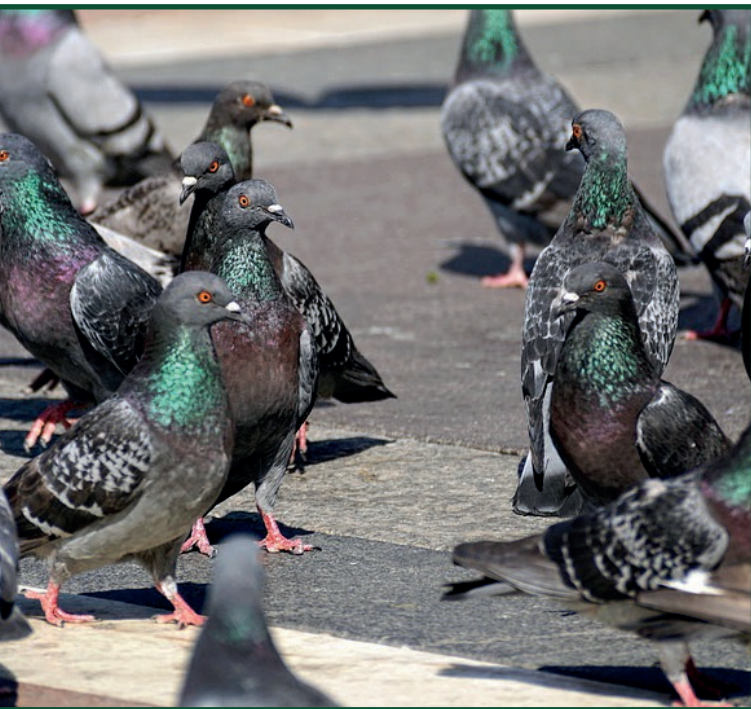


## Did You Know...?

Thinking it is good for them, people often leave bread and milk out in their gardens for urban hedgehogs to snack on but actually you should never feed hedgehogs milk as it can cause them to become terribly ill. Instead, try and provide them with plain, fresh water in a shallow bowl along with tinned dog or cat food.

## Pigeons

Pigeons are one of the most common birds within the UK. Their cooing calls are a very familiar sound within most cities and town centres. They survive by eating dropped food and litter, as well as insects, seeds and food from bird feeders in urban gardens. Pigeons are often considered to be **vermin**, with many people believing that they carry disease, damage property and pollute urban areas with their droppings. Some city councils have even tried to reduce the number of pigeons by destroying nesting sites, removing pigeon eggs from nests and introducing more regular litter collections.



## Glossary

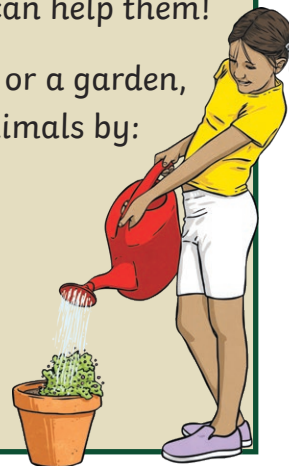
- carnivore** An animal that eats other creatures.
- invertebrate** An animal without a backbone.
- nocturnal** A creature that is active at night (and may sleep during daylight hours).
- vermin** An animal that causes harm or damage or is difficult to control.

## How Can We Help Urban Wildlife to Survive?

Over the last few decades, the number of many urban animals has dropped, which is due mainly to the reduced numbers of gardens, parks and open green spaces. It is now much more dangerous for urban animals to find food and move from place to place than it was fifty years ago... but you can help them!

If you have any outdoor space or a garden, you could try to help urban animals by:

- making and hanging a simple bird feeder;
- making holes in fences;
- planting flowers and plants.





# Questions

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in the UK? Tick one.

- hedgehog  
 pigeon  
 fox  
 badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.

hedgehogs	cause pollution in town and city centres with their droppings
pigeons	sometimes eat wild mammals and birds
foxes	like to live in places where there are lots of invertebrates

3. In the UK, how many hedgehogs are in the wild now?

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4. Find and copy a phrase from the **Foxes** section of the text that relates to **how much foxes have changed to live in towns and cities**.

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5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

In \_\_\_\_\_ centres, you know that pigeons are around because of their \_\_\_\_\_ and their \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Why do councils want to control the number of pigeons in towns and cities?

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7. Why are hedgehogs well-liked in the UK?

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8. Which of these animals would you most like to see? Why?

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9. Why has the author included a glossary? Choose one other word to include and write a definition for it.

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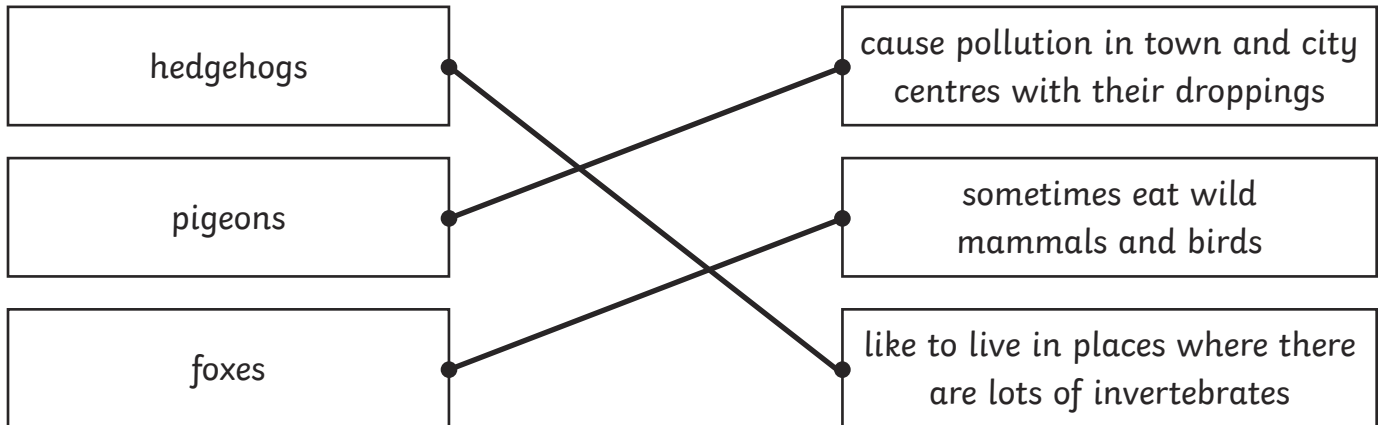
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# Answers

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in the UK? Tick one.

- hedgehog
- pigeon
- fox**
- badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.



3. In the UK, how many hedgehogs are in the wild now?

**In the UK, there about one million hedgehogs in the wild.**

4. Find and copy a phrase from the **Foxes** section of the text that relates to **how much foxes have changed to live in towns and cities.**  
**adapted brilliantly**

5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

In **town and city** centres, you know that pigeons are around because of their **cooing calls** and their **droppings**.

6. Why do councils want to control the number of pigeons in towns and cities?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Pigeons are thought of as vermin by many people so councils want to control their numbers so they don't get too high.**

7. Why are hedgehogs well-liked in the UK?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Hedgehogs are well-respected in the UK because they help to control garden 'pests' and protect plants so gardeners appreciate them.**

8. Which of these animals would you most like to see? Why?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to see a hedgehog because I've never seen one in the wild and I can try to encourage one into my garden by leaving out some tinned cat food.**

9. Why has the author included a glossary? Choose one other word to include and write a definition for it.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The author has included a glossary to explain the meanings of some of the trickier words.**

**urban: Relating to a town or a city.**



# Doorstep Wildlife

Even if you live in a busy town or city, wildlife will be all around you as it manages to survive pretty much everywhere; you just have to look to find it! If you search hard enough, you will probably find signs of urban creatures in your street, on your school playing field, through your window, at the park and all around our town and city centres. However, many challenges face birds and animals that live in these places – can you think what they might be? Let's take a closer look at just some of the species that manage to successfully inhabit urban environments...

## Pigeons

Pigeons are one of the most common birds within the UK. Their cooing calls are a very familiar sound within most busy built-up areas, where they have adapted to life by scavenging food in city and town centres as well as eating insects, seeds and food from bird feeders in urban gardens. Pigeons are often considered to be vermin with many people believing that they carry disease, damage property and pollute urban areas with their droppings.

Some cities have even tried to reduce their pigeon population by reducing nesting sites, removing pigeon eggs from nests and introducing more efficient litter collections to limit their food supplies.



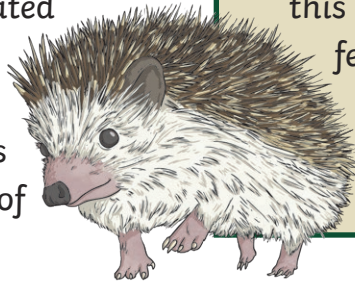
## Foxes

They are the most common wild carnivore (an animal that eats other creatures) found in our towns and cities and they have adapted brilliantly to life in busy surroundings. They thrive because of their wide and varied diet: eating scavenged food from dustbins, bird tables and compost heaps whilst also regularly consuming wild mammals, birds, earthworms, beetles and fruit. Foxes are mostly nocturnal animals, which means that they are usually only active at night, but actually they are often seen in urban areas during the day. Unfortunately, many foxes are sadly killed on the busy roads of the UK each year.



## Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs can be found in almost all urban areas of the UK, except some areas of Scotland. They prefer moist habitats in farmlands, gardens or even parks. The spiky mammals live in nests under hedges, where ground-dwelling insects and other invertebrates (animals with no backbone) are in large quantity. In contrast to the urban fox and pigeon, the hedgehog has a more-respected reputation with it being considered the 'gardener's friend', as it loves eating so many 'pests'. Some of their favourite foods are small creatures such as caterpillars, slugs and snails, which can often be very damaging to garden plants. Hedgehogs have sharp quills on their back. When they feel threatened, they contract two large muscles in their back. This causes these quills to straighten out. At the same time, the hedgehog also curls up into a ball, tucking its face and legs into its belly. This protects it from potential danger. Despite having their own in-built defence mechanisms, hedgehogs are in serious decline. It is estimated that just one million hedgehogs are left in the UK, which shows a 97% decrease since the 1950s when there was a population of 30 million.



Trying to be helpful, people often leave bread and milk out in their gardens and outdoor spaces for urban hedgehogs to snack on, but actually you should never feed hedgehogs milk as it can cause them terrible stomach problems. Instead, try and provide them with plain, fresh water in a shallow bowl along with tinned dog or cat food.

### How Can We Help Urban Wildlife to Survive?

Over the last few decades, many urban animal species have declined, which is due mainly to the reduced numbers of gardens, parks and open green spaces. The loss of connected wild and grassy areas makes it more hazardous for urban animals to find food and move from place to place... but you can help them!

If you live in a built-up neighbourhood, try to turn any outdoor space or garden that you have into a wildlife-friendly area. You can do this by making and hanging a simple bird feeder, making holes in fences to help hedgehogs and other small mammals travel between spaces or planting flowers to encourage insect life.

# Questions

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in the UK? Tick one.

- hedgehog  
 pigeon  
 fox  
 badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.

hedgehogs ●

● are considered to be vermin

pigeons ●

● are usually only seen at night

foxes ●

● have vastly declined in numbers in recent years in the UK

3. Find and copy a word or phrase from the text that tells you that **hedgehogs are valued**.

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4. Find and copy a word from the **Foxes** section of the text that means **to do well or succeed**.

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5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

Due to their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ diet, foxes are able to \_\_\_\_\_ in urban habitats.

6. The author uses the word **vermin** to describe pigeons. What impression does this give us about how many people feel about the birds?

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7. **Despite having their own in-built defence mechanisms**

Explain what is meant by this phrase.

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8. Why do you think that hedgehogs should only be provided with water in a shallow bowl?

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9. What could you do to help urban wildlife?

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10. Look at the section entitled **How Can We Help Urban Wildlife to Survive?**. Why has this been included in the text?

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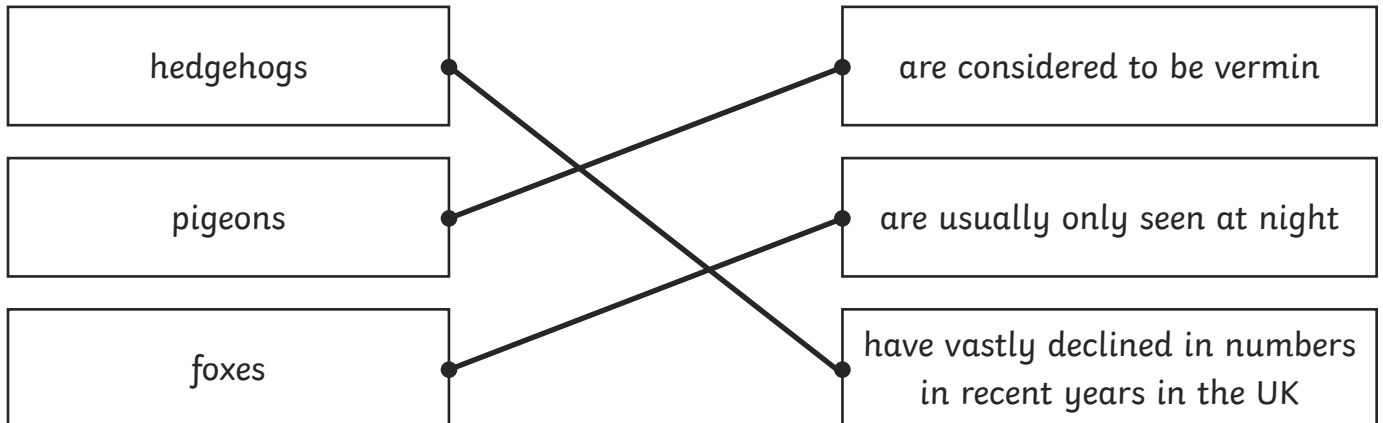


# Answers

1. Which animal is the most common wild carnivore found in the UK? Tick one.

- hedgehog  
 pigeon  
 **fox**  
 badger

2. Join the boxes to match the urban animal to one statement only.



3. Find and copy a word or phrase from the text that tells you that **hedgehogs are valued more-respected**

4. Find and copy a word from the **Foxes** section of the text that means **to do well or succeed. thrive**

5. Fill in the missing words in this sentence.

Due to their **wide** and **varied** diet, foxes are able to **survive** in urban habitats.

6. The author uses the word **vermin** to describe pigeons. What impression does this give us about how many people feel about the birds?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The author uses the word vermin to show how strongly some people dislike pigeons.**

7. **Despite having their own in-built defence mechanisms**

Explain what is meant by this phrase.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The sentence means that hedgehogs have their own way of using their bodies to defend themselves by using their muscles to curl up into a ball when they are feeling frightened.**

8. Why do you think that hedgehogs should only be provided with water in a shallow bowl?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Hedgehogs should not be given a deep dish of water in case they fall into it and can't get out.**

9. What could you do to help urban wildlife?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I could create a wildlife area in my garden and I will put out water for the hedgehogs and bird food for the birds.**

10. Look at the section entitled **How Can We Help Urban Wildlife to Survive?**. Why has this been included in the text?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: This section has been included to try and make me think about urban animals in my town and gives me simple ways that I can help to protect animals, like hedgehogs, from dying out because their numbers are declining.**