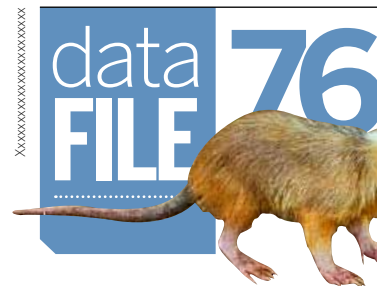




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FILE **76**

The number of millions of years that the Hispaniolan solenodon – a species of insectivore – has survived more or less unchanged. Today, the animal is threatened by habitat loss and predation by non-native cats and mongooses.

5.5 The length in metres of a dead oarfish found by a scientist from the Catalina Island Marine Institute in California. Oarfish normally live at great depths and are very rarely seen – either dead or alive.

14 The number of British cuckoos satellite-tagged for a BTO-research project – at the time of writing, eight of them were in the Congo rainforest.

► THE BIG PICTURE

BOLT ACTION

by *Pascal Beaudenon*

Taking pictures of wildfowl in the heart of Amsterdam one evening in mid-August, French nature photographer Pascal Beaudenon was shocked to see this coot going about its business – but with a crossbow bolt piercing its breast. Beaudenon teamed up with local vet Peter van Poelgeest in an attempt to catch the bird, but after three weeks it disappeared and was not seen again. Van Poelgeest has seen cases like this before – notably a duck with two bolts through its head and neck, which was caught and survived an operation to remove them. The RSPCA says anyone who sees an animal in such circumstances should try to catch it – if it is safe to do so – and then take it to a vet or RSPCA centre. **James Fair**



Gardens can be excellent homes for hedgehogs, but not if they are divided by fences or walls.



► SPECIES CONSERVATION

Home help for hedgehogs

Only co-operation between residents will save hedgehogs in towns and cities.

Suburbia still provides plenty of great habitat for hedgehogs, but home-owners must increasingly work together to help one of Britain's best-loved mammals, according to new research.

Dr Tom Moorhouse, of Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), studied the number of hedgehogs required for a self-sustaining population and the area of land they need.

Suburban gardens offer food, shelter and low risks of predation, he found, so the 'Minimum Viable Population' (MVP) is small – between 32 and 60 individuals.

But a single population still needs 0.9-2.4km² of continuous habitat, and even in leafy suburbs, such tracts of land are hard to find.

That's because gardens are increasingly carved up by hedgehog-hostile fencing. "Seen

from above, domestic gardens appear to offer a lot of habitat," Moorhouse told *BBC Wildlife*, "but hedgehogs aren't great jumpers, climbers or burrowers, and simple barriers break their habitat into unconnected pockets. An isolated hedgehog-friendly garden here or there just isn't enough."

Moorhouse's research provided the impetus for the 'Hedgehog Street' campaign, which was

► LOCAL ACTION

Hedgehog Street recommends several ways to help hedgehogs:

- Link different gardens by leaving gaps in fences and walls.
- Remove hazards such as netting. Create ramps as exits from ponds.
- Seek alternatives to slug pellets.
- Leave untidy corners with material for hibernation.
- Check piles of wood or leaves before burning them.
- www.hedgehogstreet.org

the brainchild of the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS). A website encourages homeowners to co-operate with each other on hedgehog-friendly approaches to garden management (see box, left).

Fears about the conservation status of hedgehogs in Britain are growing. A 2012 survey suggested that the population had dropped by a third in 10 years, and they appear to be declining at a rate of about 5 per cent every year.

Why this is happening is not understood – traffic, pesticides, development, hedgerow mismanagement, badgers, disease and climate change have all been mooted as factors. Further research is being carried out to tease out what's going on.

In the meantime, start talking to your neighbours. "None of us can save hedgehogs alone," pointed out PTES hedgehog officer Henry Johnson. **Amy-Jane Beer**