

Erinaceus europaeus LINNAEUS, 1758



V. Ree

Distribution

Endemic to Europe. From south-western and central Scandinavia (introduced to Finland), Britain and Ireland, the Iberian Peninsula to Italy, western Slovenia, central and western Austria, western Poland and in the northern Baltic region east to the Urals. Present also on Mediterranean Islands (Corsica, Sardinia, Elba, Sicily), on most of the French Atlantic islands as well as on British islands (autochthonous and introduced). For zones of sympatric occurrence with *E. concolor* see that species.

Geographic variation

Seven geographic races have been described, but their status is still uncertain. A preliminary allozymic study of some of these races suggests the validity of *E. erinaceus europaeus* Linnaeus, 1758 and *E. e. italicus* Barrett-Hamilton, 1900, while *E. e. hispanicus* Barrett-Hamilton, 1900 might even be a full species.

Habitat

Prefers lowlands and hills up to 400–600 m, but is also locally present on mountains, exceptionally up to 1500–2000 m (Alps and Pyrénées). Seems to be more common in suburban than in rural areas. Locally very abundant in orchards, vineyards and gardens. Outside cultivated land it prefers marginal zones of forests, particularly ecotonal scrub and grass vegetation. In the Mediterranean region it maintains these environmental preferences, but is usually less common in dry habitats.

Western hedgehog

AL	-	LT	Paprastasis ežys
BG	Обикновен таралеж	LJ	Kéisécker
CZ	Ježek západní	LV	Brūnkrūtains ezis
DE	Braunbrustigel; Westigel	MK	-
DK	Pindsvin	MT	Qanfud
EE	Harilik siil; Tavasiil	NL	Egel
ES	Erizo europeo occidental	NO	Piggsvin
FI	Siili	PL	Jeż zachodni
FO	Tindasvín	PT	Ouriço-cacheiro
FR	Hérisson d'Europe	RO	Ariciul-european
GR	-	RU	Обыкновенный ёж
HR	Tamnoprski jež	SE	Igelkott
HU	Európai sün	SI	Rjavoprsi jež
IR	Grainneog	SK	Jež tmavý
IS	Broddgöltur	TR	Kirpi
IT	Riccio europeo	YU	-

Population status

The species has no serious conservation problems, but in the northern parts of its range and at higher altitudes it may be relatively rare. This may be due to the climate. Road mortality may locally diminish its population density, but the principal cause for mortality of this hedgehog is probably starvation during hibernation, particularly during its first winter.

International legal & conservation status

Bern Convention, Appendix III.

Other information

May hybridize in captivity with *Erinaceus concolor*, but in nature no genetic introgression between these two *Erinaceus* species, which are separated by a genetic distance of about one million years, has been found.

Literature

- Filippucci & Lapini (1988)
- Filippucci & Simson (1996)
- Holz & Niethammer (1990b) – review
- Lapini (1989)
- Lapini *et al.* (1996)
- Petrov (1989)

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