Nesting behaviour of hedgehogs (Erinaceus europaeus) in an urban zoo

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Abstract

Hedgehogs which are still widely distributed in Europe are particularly well adapted to urban landscapes. Nevertheless, highly dynamic processes such as urbanization put pressure on hedgehog populations and require a constant adaption on alterations in urban landscapes. This study has several goals, as it attempts to investigate nesting behaviour on various scales. Nest use behaviour, nest site preferences, as well as habitat selection, under characteristics of an urban landscape-zoo, are examined to gain new insights about habitat requirements of hedgehogs. Data on nest locations were sampled by using radio-tracking as a method. For quantifying habitat selection, different maps of vegetation cover and habitat characteristics were plotted as well as points randomly generated. Therefore, the use of resources was estimated by associating each telemetry-point (nests) and random point with the related vegetation type and the distance from resource features such as roads and artificial food sources. Additionally, nest sites were characterised descriptively and nest use behaviour was analysed to assess behavioural differences in spatial use.

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