



The Hedgehog's Dilemma: A Tale of Obsession, Nostalgia, and the World's Most Charming Mammal

Hugh Warwick

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A hilarious, baffling, and entertaining celebration of the world's favorite rodent, the hedgehog.

In *The Hedgehog's Dilemma*, Warwick gets to the bottom of the sudden boom in hedgehog popularity and examines the relationship between the hedgehog and man, covering both the mammal's natural and unnatural evolution, from despised vermin to much-beloved beast. A historical and cultural exploration of the hedgehog, this is an engaging, informative, and charming look at the fascinating world of hedgehogs.

For more than twenty years, Hugh Warwick has tracked hedgehogs across the globe in the slim hopes of coming across the hedgehog's tiny, but unmistakable, pawprints. Warwick isn't alone in his endeavors. In England and Wales, the Environment Agency, Great Britain's leading environmental group, recently selected the hedgehog as its new mascot; while in America, which lacks a native hedgehog species, fanciers flock to the biannual Mile High Hedgehog Show to celebrate en masse the little spiny urchin. But why does the hedgehog seem to have such universal appeal?

The Hedgehog's Dilemma: A Tale of Obsession, Nostalgia, and the World's Most Charming Mammal Details

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From Reader Review The Hedgehog's Dilemma: A Tale of Obsession, Nostalgia, and the World's Most Charming Mammal for online ebook

David says

Cheeky, wildly digressive, but worth the read. This passage, describing a sheep roundup on North Ronaldsay in the Orkneys, will give you an idea of how far afield Warwick can roam:

Now, I have helped on farms before, I have helped with sheep before, and on the whole, when confronted with a line of people being noisy and aggressive, sheep tend to do what is required. Not this lot: like the islanders, they are a belligerent bunch of free-thinkers who paused, sized up weaknesses in the barrier and then charged straight at us, some managing to leap over by barging the human fence posts to the ground. (p. 72)

But though he may roam, Warwick brings it back to his—somewhat smelly and noisy but endearing—subject, the wild hedgehog.

There is a tendency to overestimate our understanding of the everyday and to underestimate its importance. There is much we can all gain from hedgehogs. (p. 263)

Joe Silber says

"The Hedgehog's Dilemma" is a quirky, very British-feeling book that examines the relationships between hedgehogs and humans. It starts with the author telling his stories about hedgehog field research, then segues into stories about how humans have and still do interact with hedgehogs - by culling them, rescuing them, obsessing over them, keeping them as pets, altering their environment - before finishing up with a story of Warwick's trip to China to attempt to find his "namesake hedgehog" (*Mesechinus hughii* - Hugh's hedgehog).

Warwick is a compassionate and thoughtful writer, though perhaps not a terribly skilled one. His book's organization is very informal, a bit sloppy, and his writing is full of asides and segues that are not handled as deftly as they might be. I feel like tighter editing might have transformed this from an ok book into a very good book. Nonetheless, his enthusiasm for the subject is infectious, though, and you do learn a decent amount about hedgehogs over the course of the book, even if the knowledge is scattered throughout.

GoldGato says

Hedgehogs are very happy being Hedgehogs

If you have ever wanted to read about Hedgehogs, this is the book for you. There is a little bit of everything in this one. Biology of the Hedgehog, History of the Hedgehog, Obsessions with Hedgehogs, Hedgehog Olympic Games. Just about everything.

Hugh Warwick is passionate about his subject matter and this certainly comes across to the reader. He believes the Hedgehog is the most *charismatic creature on the planet*. He may be right. He sounds the alarm on their possible decline and what we humans can do to help. He travels to China in search of a species named after him and he also takes us to the United States, where people tend to dress up their Hedgehogs and place them in competitions...which is more of a reflection on Americans than the poor Hedgies.

I enjoyed reading this book. My knowledge of this animal was formed by Beatrix Potter, so it was wonderful to learn so much more. The section on Hedgehog rescue organizations was enlightening. These are people with heart.

Look into those wild Hedgehog eyes and, if you are lucky, catch a glimpse of a special something, a spark that can change your entire life.

Book Season = Spring (the prudence of the Hedgehog)

Teri says

Having thoroughly enjoyed reading about the Wild Snail, and being a Miss Tiggywinkle fan, I thought I'd give another micro-zoology book a try. This has many charming moments, but the author does tend to wander around the subject, which is obviously dear to his heart. No doubt this is more fascinating for UK readers who may actually see a hedgehog since they do not inhabit the US other than as pets. Should I come across a hedgehog, I will certainly be more interested than I might otherwise have been.

Melody says

I was charmed at first, but Warwick's too-too British dottiness began to wear on me before long. He went to China to get his photo taken with a hedgehog. Do I have to say more? I hoped it would get as cute at the end as it was in the beginning, but not so much. I liked his message about how to help hedgehogs stay wild, and help them thrive. I was less enamored of his eyebrow cocking at some of the odder human specimens who care for the rescued hogs.

Alexi says

Warwick's sense of humor lost me but this book is an easy to read gold mine on the little creatures. I knew only of hedgehogs from the cute photos of Azuki on Instagram but after reading this book I understand the

species' personality and way of life. It's a nice blend of nature writing and memoir.

Dominika says

Written by an ecologist that specializes in hedgehogs, this is part memoirs of the projects he has been part of and his journeys, as well as the history of our relationship with this animal. I like hedgehogs, definitely more than I like many small mammals, and there's a lot about the animal and it's habits in here, but there's a lot about general ecology as well. I also loved the little tangent: the cultist nature of birding societies, Brain May having an astrophysics PhD, the philosophical nature of the Hedgehog Dilemma, and why the marketing of what animal you use effects the impact. I really enjoyed this book and have actually felt like I learned a lot, which isn't always the case with non-fiction. Hugh is rather cheery in that quintessentially British sort of way, so this was a lively and pleasant read (except for the ecological impact of humans, which is harrowing and somewhat relevant to the "hedgehog dilemma").

As an aside, the tarot card I identify with the most is the Queen of Pentacles (in terms of not Major Arcana), and the new deck I have has a hedgehog as our queen.

Angie Drake says

This is a charming book about a charming creature... without being sickly! I have always loved hedgehogs but didn't know much about them. The author does a great job of teaching us about hedgehogs without sounding like a teacher. He shares lots of anecdotes about people and their interactions with hedgehogs and shares his own story of the hunt for the mysterious *Hemiechinus hughii* in China. By the end of the book, he ties the story of the hedgehog to that of humankind and reminds us that our actions are all that stand between the hedgehog and it's survival.

Allyson says

I read this book hoping it would help me understand my love of these creatures. Turns out it's all Beatrix Potter's fault, and apparently I am just one in a very long line of people with the same problem. Fortunately, thanks to Hugh Warwick's endearing writing style, I now understand the animal and myself much better.

Aglaia says

Hugh Warwick writes, "Love affairs do not spring out of nowhere, there has to be a seduction." *The Hedgehog's Dilemma* is Warwick's account of his seduction by these prickly little mammals, and he writes with wit and affection that quickly engages readers. Structurally, Warwick often meanders off into amusing, though sometimes only tangentially, related anecdotes in the middle of a chapter. Yet somehow these stories make the creatures more interesting and alluring. He balances serious stories such as the attempt to exterminate hedgehogs with light-hearted tales of the Hedgehog Olympics and inspiring information about hedgehog rescuers.

This book is in no way meant to be an authoritative text on the biology or habits of hedgehogs. Warwick

openly admits that other books better cover such information. Instead, Warwick tries to show why an entire country holds such an affinity for such an odd little creature. It is, as he points out, because, unlike exotic and often times regal creatures like elephants or lions or pandas, hedgehogs are more like the "the girl or boy next door." They are approachable, attainable, and lovable.

I found this book entertaining, but perhaps best read in chunks. Because there is no strict structure beyond arbitrarily created chapters or necessarily any particular unified information that Warwick is attempting to relate, it does feel as though the text wanders about a bit. However, for someone who did not grow up in a continent that has native hedgehogs, *The Hedgehog's Dilemma* made me appreciate and even admire the tenacity and lovability of these always wild yet somehow approachable animals.

Elaine says

Kind of a cute little book. It was clearly not edited for the US market. Very full of Britishisms. Apparently there's some badger name that represents all of badgerdom, for example. Bradley or something. I enjoyed the part set in China. I stumbled across this was I was searching my library site for *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*.

Alison C says

Hugh Warwick is a British ecologist who became fascinated with (nay, enamoured of) hedgehogs, and began tracking and studying them primarily in Great Britain but also in other parts of the world. One result of his obsession is *The Hedgehog's Dilemma: A Tale of Obsession, Nostalgia and the World's Most Charming Mammal*, a sort of memoir about his delvings into the worlds of hedgehogs, hedgehog "carers" in Britain (of whom there are many, and an eccentric bunch they are), the to him painful phenomenon of hedgehogs as pets in North America (which has no wild hedgehogs of its own), a trip to China to find the rarely seen hedgehog "hughi," named not after the author but after a priest in the early 20th century who discovered this unlikely fellow. In a broader sense, the book is all about the interconnections of wildlife and humans, and the damage human encroachments do without meaning to at all. Probably a book that would make a bigger impact on Brits who are familiar with this wild creature living in their back yards, gardens and fields than it does with an urban North American, but I still very much appreciated the scientific information and enjoyed Warwick's enthusiasm as an advocate for this small beastie. It's a pity there are no photographs of the creatures, but otoh there are wonderfully evocative line drawings on almost every page, mostly of hedgehogs but also some of badgers and other interesting creatures, meant I think to emulate Beatrix Potter's drawings - and Warwick divides hedgehog time in Britain into BBP and ABP, Before Beatrix Potter and After Beatrix Potter, and credits her tales of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle et al., with changing forever British attitudes toward this small mammal. A delight to read, even if you don't love hedgehogs!

penny shima glanz says

Warwick definitely has a love of the hedgehog and his writing often meanders as they might through a night of foraging and adventure. There were nuggets of information about our prickly friends across the pond and I was pleased that that the author attempted to shed light onto the American obsession of this new pet. Overall, however, I felt it was too scattered and superficial to really give justice to a charming mammal I first met as Mrs Tiggy-Winkle.

Jenna says

I stumbled on this one at the library. I almost didn't make it through the intro, but so glad I did! Poignant and hilarious-- not to mention charmingly British and self-effacing when it counts. Finished it in two sittings. An un-looked- for gem among hedgerows.

Armelle says

Everything you wanted to know about the life and times of the hedgehog - and the people who love them.

This is actually a serious look at "the world's most charming mammal."

It's very interesting and easy to read. I recommend it.
