

# How you can help save Mrs Tiggy-winkle

by poet PAM AYRES

**W**HEN I was 23, I lived in the village of Stanford in the Vale, and every day I drove my decrepit, fume-filled Morris 1000 to Witney in Oxfordshire, where I worked as a secretary.

My journey took me past a wood called Hatford Warren, and each spring and summer morning would reveal the grisly red remains of numerous squashed hedgehogs on the road.

Hundreds of them must have lived in that wood. Certainly hundreds of them died on the adjacent highway, especially around this time of year when they've just emerged from their long winter hibernation. It was horrible to see such carnage, but the slaughter just seemed to be a fact of life.

In those days, the early Seventies, I spent my spare time performing my poems around the folk clubs which had sprung up everywhere.

The eyes of landlords in remote pubs lit up at the idea; they whitewashed a shed, hung a horse collar on the wall and, on what would otherwise have been a slow night, sold a lot of beer.

One of the first pieces I wrote was called *In Defence Of Hedgehogs*. It went down a treat:

*'It is statistically proven, in chapter and in verse, That in a car and hedgehog fight, the hedgehog comes off worse.'*

It was a light-hearted appeal for people to take more care, and I cheerfully declaimed it for years, but I don't perform it any more. The tone is wrong.

At that time, I never thought hedgehogs could become extinct, but I do now. They can't compete. They are done for.

A report this year warned their numbers have fallen by half since the start of the 21st century, as hedgerows are lost, farming eats up their habitat, and pesticides kill off their food supply.

**A**ND I like hedgehogs. They are benign little creatures, emerging late at night to cruise our gardens, tug up a few earthworms and crunch beetles. They have cute faces, bright button eyes and a shiny black nose.

They are also Britain's only spiny mammal. As a child in rural Berkshire, it seemed



Picture: GETTY

wildlife was everywhere, limitless and for the most part, unprized. Birds' eggs, the rarer the better, were collected into sawdust-filled boxes by children including me, gangs of boys 'ragged out', or robbed, birds' nests, and though I never saw it, I heard of hedgehogs kicked about like footballs.

There was no help for injured wildlife. The most you could hope for was somebody who would hit your casualty on the head and 'put it out of its misery'.

So it was heartening when years later I met the wonderful Les Stocker MBE, who founded St Tiggywinkles in Buckinghamshire, the first wildlife teaching hospital — I took him several patients.

Ten years later, I became a supporter and, later, patron of our local wildlife rescue centre, Oak & Furrows, near Cricklade in Wiltshire.

They had hundreds of hedgehog patients and I started to learn about the ghastly fates which befall them — how they are burnt in bonfires, trapped in drains, attacked by dogs, drowned in pools, poisoned by slug pellets, injured by traffic and mutilated by the blades of mowers and strimmers.

Those hedgehogs, so poorly equipped to tackle modern life, gave me the idea for my book *The Last Hedgehog*. They made me determined to help, and I've learned there is plenty we can do, with even the smallest patch of space.

There are hedgehogs in my garden now, some of which were nursed back to health at the Oak & Furrows centre before being released here, and some of which, to my delight, have just turned up.

To help them, I leave out a shallow dish of clean water,

and food — Spikes Hedgehog Food and they like meaty dog or cat food, but not the fishy versions — when the weather is dry.

On damp nights, our untreated lawn is a fleshy lattice of earthworms, their favourite food.

**O**NE thing believed by all when I was growing up was that 'hedgehogs, they like a drop of bread and milk' but this is glaringly untrue. It makes them ill.

My neighbour Bill kindly made me two wooden hedgehog boxes, to the free pattern available on the British Hedgehog Preservation Society website.

This winter a hedgehog hibernated in one. Soon he will be looking for a mate and I am hoping Mrs Hedgehog will consider the box suitable for breeding purposes and that we might see babies.

In all my endeavours I am much helped by having a Detective Dog. I adopted a little terrier from Cheltenham Animal Shelter and trained her to find hedgehogs without harming them. She goes into the garden, sniffs the night air, scuttles over to any lurking hedgehog, then sits and waits for a treat. She is a dog genius.

I will continue to do all I can to help reverse the hedgehog's decline. They are an irreplaceable link in the complex, interdependent chain of our natural world.

And they have shiny black noses.

■ *The Last Hedgehog* by Pam Ayres, with illustrations by Alice Tait, is published by Picador on May 3, priced £6.99.

We took one volunteer and plastered different areas of her body with eight different fake tans. So is the result ...

# Proof that a £7 fake tan beats a £45 one?

## 1: Trusted streak-free mousse

*St Tropez Self-Tan Classic Bronzing Mousse, £31, sttropheztan.co.uk (Model's right arm)*

**THEY SAY:** Our most iconic, natural and healthy-looking tan, no self-tan smell, lightweight, streak-free, easy to apply, quick-drying and non-sticky.

**WE SAY:** This is the UK's best-selling brand, and it's the flagship product so you expect it to be good. It smelled nice on application, but as it developed it had more of the classic biscuity

odour. The colour has green undertones, which stops it looking orange, and as the product is tinted, it's easy to see what you're doing. (The best way to apply evenly is to use a tanning mitt — apply the tan to the mitt then smoothe it over the skin, blending with a circular motion.) The colour looked good and even — you could go straight out wearing it.

**BEST FOR:** Absolute beginners who don't mind paying a bit extra for guaranteed results.



## 2: Long-lasting budget buy

*St Moriz 5-in-1 Tanning Mousse, £6.99, superdrug.com (Model's chest)*

**THEY SAY:** Specialist multi-tasking formulation will provide extra moisturisation, a luxurious luminous finish and a longer lasting tan.

**WE SAY:** This is one of the best budget tan brands, and this formula claims to be longer-lasting, moisture-rich, skin-smoothing, give a 'BB skin finish', and include a mood-enhancing fragrance.

Whew! Although not overpowering, the smell didn't seem that mood-enhancing — clean, with nutty undertones. The tinted formulation meant you could see where it was going, but the guide colour was a bit streaky until washed off.

It's not the sort of tan you could apply and then go out in, and it got noticeably greener as it developed. However, it ended up very even after a good rinse, and was the darkest of all the ones we tried.

**BEST FOR:** Bargain hunters who don't have to be in public after applying it.





### 3: Natural-smelling organic gel

*Green People Self-Tan Lotion, £19, greenpeople.co.uk (Model's torso)*

**THEY SAY:** A revolutionary natural self tan – the first certified organic one in the UK, quick-drying, non-greasy, and lightly scented with natural essential oils.

**WE SAY:** A gel-cream that glides easily over

the skin. It smells very naturally of geranium. The only issue is not knowing if it's gone on evenly, and whether it will turn out patchy. Fortunately it developed into an even, natural golden shade.

**BEST FOR:** Charitable types (10 per cent of profits go to charity) who don't normally like the smell and feel of fake tans.

### 4: Innovative but pricey roller-ball

*Tan-Luxe Wonder Oil in Medium to Dark, £45, tan-luxe.com (Top of model's right leg)*

**THEY SAY:** The world's first true oil-based self-tanner with a cooling roller-ball applicator. Slims and stimulates skin to improve elasticity and texture, hydrating for up to 48 hours.

**WE SAY:** The roller-ball is a fun innovation, but the product drips a little so you need to rub it in carefully as you go along.

They suggest using your hands, but a mitt is a better option as you're less likely to end up with brown palms.

It feels very moisturising and soft, and gives

a good sheen, but as it's clear when you first apply, it's hard to see where you've done already.

It smells good – like a sweet lemonade – and although it was an oil, it didn't feel sticky. The colour developed over time to a pleasant golden brown.

At £45 it was more than six times the price of our cheapest tanning product – although on the plus side, it was the only product packaged in a glass bottle, rather than plastic, and would look very elegant on a bathroom shelf.

**BEST FOR:** Luxury-lovers who want the spa-like feel of an oil-based massage, and hang the cost!



### 5: Hydrating coconut serum

*Fake Bake Flawless Coconut Tanning Serum in Medium, £29.95, fakebake.co.uk (Bottom of model's right leg)*

**THEY SAY:** With superfood coconut oil, a fast-drying, refreshing, hydrating and moisturising serum that takes luxury tanning to the next level.

**WE SAY:** This comes out looking like molasses. It makes it very easy to see where it's been applied, and

it rubs in easily with no streaks. In fact, the guide colour was quite a bit darker than the finished result, so don't panic if it looks strong at first.

Compared to other products, the undertones were a little red, and while the coconut fragrance was strong, there was still a waft of fake tan.

**BEST FOR:** Those with olive skin tones – the red undertones won't flatter people who are already rosy, and could make them look sunburned.



### 6: Fragranced water

*Isle of Paradise Medium Self-Tanning Water, £18.95, isleofparadise.co.uk (Model's left arm)*

**THEY SAY:** Self-tanning water with colour correcting actives and a violet base for a natural, bronzed glow with no streaks, no smells or orange tones.

**WE SAY:** Really fresh smelling, almost like a deodorant or facial spritz – you wouldn't think it was a tan and, despite being very liquid, it doesn't drip off the skin. The clear

colour makes it hard to see where it's been applied, though, and despite giving the impression of being very light, it didn't feel like it dried quickly. The end result was pretty subtle – although, like most of the tans we tested here, there are darker formulations available.

**BEST FOR:** Anyone who hates the classic smell of fake tans, and wants the look to err on the side of 'weekend in Brighton' rather than 'fortnight in Barbados'.



### 7: Moisturising mist that dries fast



*Bondi Sands Self-Tanning Mist Light/Medium, £10.49, bondisands.co.uk (Top of model's left leg)*

**THEY SAY:** Enriched with Vitamin E to moisturise and rejuvenate your skin, goes on light and leaves skin glowing. Almost effortless application results in a natural bronzed look.

**WE SAY:** A tinted spray that smells of sun cream with a slight chemical undertone.

The instructions say to spray it on from 12 inches away – but it's much easier to

spray on to a mitt then apply as normal, otherwise you could easily coat the bathroom, plus you feel like you're inhaling quite a lot of it.

The shade is a cool brown with ashier undertones, but it dried quickly to give a non-streaky, natural colour.

Again, the guide colour was darker than the end result – 'I thought it was going to make me look like a bronzed goddess, but it didn't,' said our model Amber.

**BEST FOR:** When you want to walk out the door looking tanned straightaway.

### 8: Eco-friendly anti-ageing foam

*Vita Liberata Invisi Foaming Tan Water in Medium/Dark, £25, vitaliberata.co.uk (Bottom of model's left leg)*

**THEY SAY:** Full of organic botanicals... for the most hydrating and anti-ageing skin treatment. Clear as water and super-fast drying.

**WE SAY:** Clear 'water-like' formulations are a big tanning trend this summer – this one looks like water in the bottle but is

dispensed as a light foam. That makes it easier to apply, but it's difficult to see where it's gone already.

The citrus scent was one of our favourites – although it did develop the classic fake tan smell later. The makers say it's fast drying, but it felt tacky to the touch long after other tans had dried.

**BEST FOR:** Those who want to go green – not literally. Most ingredients are organic.



Words: CLARE COLEMAN

Picture: L+R