



# Earwi'GO! (again)

US  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX



Earwigs are an important part of garden ecosystems, providing **pest control** and possibly pollination services. They also have an interesting life cycle, showing a level of parental care that is unusual amongst insects. While they can cause minor damage to soft plants, they definitely don't deserve their bad press – and we want to prove it, in our new earwig-focused investigations.



Earwi'GO!

The first part of this project is to find the best way to make **earwig hotels**, to provide habitat for these helpful insects.

We are going to make **two** types, and see which one earwigs like best.

The project starts in **June**, as this is when young earwigs tend to climb up trees as part of their life cycle (see <https://www.thebuzzclub.uk/earwigo>).

**Ideally** this project should be done on **a tree**. If you don't have a tree, you **can** still take part, with the hotels attached to **sticks** or other vertical things (e.g. a fence).

## Equipment

- **Plant pots:** 2, of approx. 9cm. These can be plastic (reused) or terracotta.
- **String.** For tying pots in place / holding filling inside. Try and avoid plastic!
- **Cardboard toilet roll tubes.** Approx. 10, depending on cardboard thickness.
- **Straw/dried grass.** Or dry leaves / other dry plant material.

You will be making **two** earwig hotels, which should look like the examples below:



1. Cardboard hotel.



2. Straw hotel.

## Making the hotels

- 1) Thread string **through** the pot bases, so they can be tied in place.
- 2) For the **cardboard hotel**. Trim toilet roll tubes to fit the pots without sticking out. Squash tubes in half and pack into the pot until there is a snug fit (see 1 above).
- 3) For the **straw hotel**. Push the straw (or other dry plant matter) into the plant pot, until reasonably firm. It should not be *extremely* dense, but should not shake out really easily (see 2 above).
- 4) For **all hotels**. Use string to secure the filling in place so it does not fall out when held upside down.

Add a cover to the top if they start getting very wet (see right). Do the same thing to both hotels for consistency.



*Example of a lid, (J. Nell 2021).*

## Positioning the hotels

(Please note - you only need to do **one** of these locations. Ideally on a tree!)

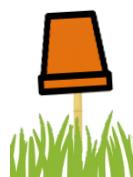
**For all hotels:** Put both of your hotels in the **same** location. E.g. under branches of the same tree / around the trunk of the same tree. The bottom of the pot should be angled upwards, or fully pointing upwards, depending on the positions available.

**For all hotels:** Make sure that the hotels are positioned in **shady places**, so they do not heat up in the day. Earwigs like it cool and damp!



### Option 1: Branches.

Tied to a tree where a branch meets the trunk, as close to the bark as possible. Please only do this on safely reachable branches!



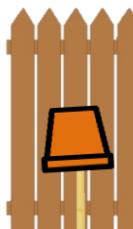
### Option 3: Over ground cover.

Put the hotel upside down on a stick, approx. **50cm high**. Secure the stick in the ground over some dense ground cover plants.



### Option 2: Trunk.

Put the hotel upside down on a stick, approx. **50cm high**. Rest against the tree trunk and secure in place.



### Option 4: On a fence.

Put the hotel upside down on a stick, approx. **50cm high**. Rest against a fence and secure in place.

If a hotel's filling goes very **mouldy** or otherwise gets damaged, please replace it.

# Data collection – counting invertebrates

Counting will be **once a week**, June – October. Your first count will be **one week** after you have installed the hotels.

To count a hotel:

- 1) Remove hotel from its position, and place into a tray / container that will let you catch and count any residents.
- 2) Carefully remove the filling and put it on the tray.
- 3) Record any invertebrates that fall out (see recording sheet attached).
- 4) Place the filling material back inside. Don't try and put the invertebrates back.
- 5) Release the invertebrates on the ground beneath the hotel location.
- 6) Replace hotels.

Earwigs are very distinctive, but please try and at least broadly identify any other invertebrates you find. **Photographs** are always useful to us, because we can either identify creatures ourselves, or pass them to experts on different types.

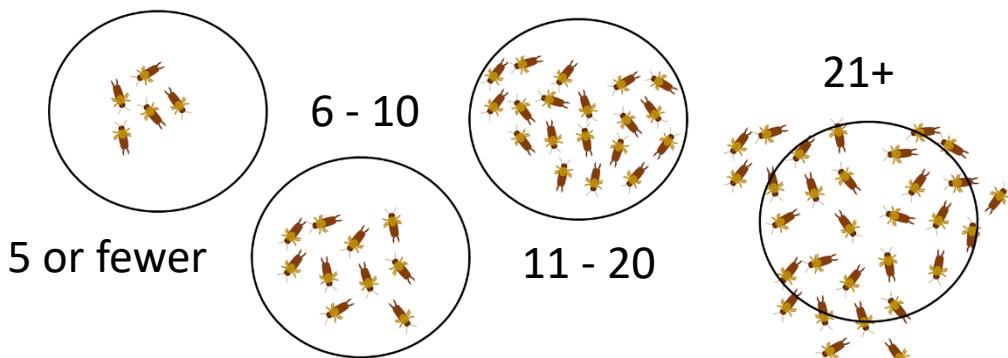
**Please note** – if you miss / are unable to do a week's count, please mark it as **skipped** on the recording sheet. It's important for us to know if a blank is 'no insects' or 'not counted', because the analysis needed is different.

## Alternative counting methods

If your earwigs are too energetic or numerous to count easily, you could try:

- 1) Tip the earwigs into a tray and take a photo of them quickly before they escape, then count from that.
- 2) Do an **approximate** count. Ideally use categories of:  
5 or less                  6 – 10                  11 – 20                  21+

These might not seem big brackets, so to illustrate why we've chosen these categories, here are this many earwigs on 'trays':



**Any questions? Contact us!**

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## Recording sheet

(print as many as you need)



**Your name:**

**Location of hotels (tick)**

**Recording month:**

Tree branches  Ground cover

**Type of tree used:**

Tree trunk  On a fence

Date of each recording (write)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
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**Insects seen** (in counts / tallies). Please take photographs if you can!

CARDBOARD hotel	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Earwigs				
Other invertebrates <i>(Try to identify if possible, even if broad; e.g. 'beetle')</i>				

STRAW hotel	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Earwigs				
Other invertebrates <i>(Try to identify if possible, even if broad; e.g. 'beetle')</i>				

**Remember –** you can do approximate counts. Use:

5 or less      6 – 10  
11 -20      21+

If you miss / are unable to do a week's count, please mark it as **skipped**.