

Common name	Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec
Scientific name	<i>Echinops telfairi</i>
IUCN status	Least Concern by IUCN
Conservation threats	Although this species is considered widespread, they are threatened by several factors: - As much as 80% of the island's population lives below the poverty level and relies on subsistence farming, called <i>tavy</i>, or slash-and-burn agriculture. - Deforestation has affected about 80% of Madagascar's forests. - Madagascar is home to a wide diversity of plants and animals – about 95% of Madagascar's reptiles, 89% of its plants, and 92% of its mammals are endemic to the island (are found nowhere else in the world but Madagascar) - With so many exotic animals found nowhere else in the world, many animals are collected for the pet trade.
Primary conservation message/action	Our day-to-day choices have a local and global influence on wildlife and wild places. Not all animals should be pets! Do your research before buying a pet. Make sure you are not purchasing a wild-caught individual. And make sure you know how to properly care for any animal before you decide to buy it as a pet.
Physical description	Length: Around 5–6.5 inches long Weight: Up to 7 ounces Coloration: Their backs are covered in sharp spines of varying color, from tan or off-white to dark brown-black. The belly, face, and legs are covered with short, soft hair.

	Sexual dimorphism: The sexes look largely identical overall, particularly to a non-specialist.
Species notable features or adaptations	• Have sharp, barbed spines covering their back • Have short tails, prominent ears, 5-toed feet with sharp claws, and many whiskers on the face • Curl into a ball when threatened to expose the spines and protect their head • Will come out of defensive ball-posture during an attack to bite a particularly persistent predator • Rely on their excellent sense of smell and hearing to compensate for poor eyesight • Semi-arboreal: tenrecs are both terrestrial (ground-dwelling) and arboreal (tree-dwelling). They are excellent climbers. • Sharp nails facilitate climbing • Tenrecs enter torpor, or a state of inactivity, in which they lower their body temperature to save energy. See the “Activity” section below for more information. Hedgehog Tenrecs vs Hedgehogs • Although they are similar in appearance to hedgehogs, they are not closely related ◦ The closest relatives to tenrecs are otter shrews and golden moles. • The spines of hedgehogs and tenrecs are a good example of <i>convergent evolution</i>. Each species evolved spines independently as a result of adapting to similar conditions. • There are also behavioral differences between hedgehogs and tenrecs. For example, hedgehogs hiss at potential predators when rolled into a ball, while tenrecs will come out of the ball to bite and attack persistent threats. Other Tenrec Species

	• Virtually all tenrec species are endemic to Madagascar. (A group of species called otter shrews, which live in central and western Africa, are considered to be tenrecs by some scientists, but not by others.) • Tenrec Diversity: While most tenrecs are nocturnal, opportunistic feeders, there is great diversity among tenrec species in size, appearance, and activity. For example, some species are: ○ Large and bold, others small and well camouflaged ○ Range in size from 1.7 inches – 15 inches in length ○ Aquatic, terrestrial, or arboreal ○ Covered in soft fur, or covered in spines – resembling shrews, hedgehogs, and mice
Native habitat & range	Habitat • Prefer dry areas such as dry forests, scrublands, agricultural areas, dry coastal regions, and semi-desert regions Range • Found in southern and southwestern Madagascar
Natural diet & feeding behavior	Omnivore • Eat insects and their larvae, eggs, spiders, and occasionally fruit
Activity	Nocturnal: Often rest in hollow trees during the day Torpor: Tenrecs enter a state of torpor seasonally, and while sleeping. • during the cold season for 3-5 months • daily state torpor during the warmer season – while sleeping, their temperature drops to save energy
Social structure	Primarily solitary

Ecological relationships	Their predators: Include birds of prey, mammalian carnivores such as genets and civets, and snakes
Mating & reproduction	- Breeding season: Breeding occurs within several days after coming out of torpor, around October depending on temperatures - Gestation: about 1 1/2 months - Number of offspring: Typically 5-7 Maturation: - Newborns weigh approximately 8 grams - Females care for their young for about a month without assistance from males - Reach sexual maturity following their first cold season in torpor
Median life expectancy	About 10 years (<i>AZA Species Survival Statistics, May 2024</i>)