

The British Deer Society



As the leading wild deer organisation in the UK, the British Deer Society works to enable the deer of the United Kingdom to exist and flourish in today's environment ensuring their future is secure for generations to come.

The British Deer Society:

- Runs courses and provides training to ensure that, whatever your interest in deer, you will receive the best quality training to develop your individual skills and knowledge.
- Undertakes and funds research projects ensuring that deer, their issues and their threats are scientifically explored and understood.
- Provides a team of technical experts that work to prime and influence governmental and public bodies to ensure that any legislation or regulation is practical and sensible and has deer welfare as its primary objective.
- Works to ensure that there is a sustainable, healthy population of deer in the UK that can exist in harmony with the environment and the people that live there, look after it, or visit it.

Membership

Over 6,000 members support our charitable remit to promote the welfare of British deer. It's easy to join and as a member you will also receive a copy of our journal, *Deer*, four times a year, as well as membership of a local branch with its social activities, range days, talks and demonstrations.

Join us online at www.bds.org.uk



Shop

You'll find a wide range of books, DVDs, and stalking essentials in our online shop as well as BDS clothing, seasonal gifts and cards.

Shop online at www.bds.org.uk

British Deer Society – the deer experts

There are six species of deer living freely in the British countryside. Each species has specific characteristics which make it well-suited for the variety of habitats found across the country and highly adaptable to environmental changes. A mixture of native and introduced species, they make a valuable contribution to Britain's biodiversity and are some of our most engaging British mammals.



Photo courtesy of Rob Donaldson-Webster



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Wild Deer of the UK



IDENTIFYING Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis*



Photo courtesy of Charles Smith-Jones

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What you will see



Size

Chinese water deer are a small species of deer that stand at around 0.50m to 0.55m tall at the shoulder. When fully grown they weigh between 11 to 18kg. Male and female deer are of similar size and weight. By comparison an average adult man in Britain is 1.77m high and weighs 79kg.

Coat

Chinese water deer are a russet brown colour for most of the year, their coat turning a dull grey in winter.

Rear

Chinese water deer lack any distinguishable markings at the rear. They have short tails.

Head

Chinese water deer do not have antlers but males (bucks) do have prominent 'tusks' and females have shorter, less visible ones. These are used in a similar fashion to antlers for display and as weapons. Facially, they have large rounded ears and a teddy bear-like appearance.

What you'll hear



Vocalisation

Both sexes make a short dog-like bark when alarmed. Bucks make 'whickering' noises (a rapid chattering) when defending their territory from intruders. During courtship, bucks also whistle and squeak at the females (does).

Look out for



Tracks and Signs

Chinese water deer make small hoof prints (slots), about 4cm long.



Lifestyle



Feeding

Chinese water deer feed on a wide variety of vegetation from herbs and grasses to woody plants and sedges. Deer do not have a top set of front incisors but instead have a hard pad that acts to tear vegetation rather than cut it.

Social organisation

Chinese water deer are generally solitary except during the breeding season. Occasionally they will form small groups but the bucks can be aggressive and do not tolerate others nearby. The deer are active throughout the day and night but are most likely to be active at dawn and dusk.



Photo courtesy of Sue Westlake-Guy

Breeding

Does usually have up to three offspring at a time (but up to six young have been recorded) following a pregnancy of six to seven months. They give birth between June and July when conditions are best for their young to thrive.

Pairing between bucks and does happens in late autumn (November to December) and they jointly defend a territory until April the following year.

Humans and Deer

Chinese water deer occur in a restricted region of Britain and at low densities. Their numbers are so small that they inflict very little damage to vegetation and provide a negligible source of food.

Where you'll find them



Origins

The Chinese water deer is a very primitive form of deer. This is indicated by its tusks which evolved prior to antlers as a form of defence. As the name implies the species originated in China and Korea. It was introduced to the British countryside following accidental and deliberate releases from 1890s onwards.

Population & Distribution

In its native country, the Chinese Water deer is classified in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red Data Book for endangered species. In fact, the population now living in Britain accounts for some 10% of the worldwide population. They are predominant in the east of England although there are periodic sightings in other areas.



Distribution of Chinese Water deer in the UK

Habitat

Chinese water deer are, as their name suggests, principally found in wetter areas such as reedbeds, lakes and riverbanks. They can also be found where there is well-developed low-level vegetation.

