



the british
deer society

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY



2023
annual review

THROUGH THE YEAR 2023

A brief glimpse of our work – a small handful of the many events involving variously Board Members, Head Office and Branches. We are indebted to our many volunteers.

<p>JAN</p> <p>BDS Management planning meetings A rash of Branch AGMs First Aid at Work with Forestry, Stafford</p>	<p>FEB</p> <p>End of year accounts work Central Scotland Branch Best Practice day Sparsholt Game Managing Evening</p>	<p>MAR</p> <p>London BDS Group Purpose Day Walking with Deer, a Countryside introduction for Glasgow children Wild Boar Course, Altyre</p>	<p>APR</p> <p>BDS Members' Photo Competition Professional Membership Survey Introduction to Deer Stalking, Royston Newborn Deer Survey</p>
<p>MAY</p> <p>Society AGM DSC1 Hull Highclere Show 60 for 60 Online Auction</p>	<p>JUNE</p> <p>BDS Science & Research meeting Lonsdale Trust meeting Deer Awareness, Chasemore Country Park DSC1 Grayrigg HAD, Cirencester</p>	<p>JULY</p> <p>School Activity Day at Harewood Estate Scottish Game Fair, Scone The Game Fair at Ragley New Forest Show</p>	<p>AUG</p> <p>Scottish Country Fair, Moy Field Guide for Deer launch New Chair for SAC</p>
<p>SEPT</p> <p>Big Give Launch Chatsworth Show Newbury Show Westmorland Show ATV/Quad course, South Lakes DMC, Petersfield</p>	<p>OCT</p> <p>Board Strategy meeting in London Deer Initiative Partners meeting DSC1 Northern Ireland</p>	<p>NOV</p> <p>Finance Team meeting London Diamond Fundraising Dinner and Auction Big Give Campaign</p>	<p>DEC</p> <p>Countryside Learning event Staff pre-Christmas team meeting</p> 

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Registered as a charity in England and Wales, registered no. 1069663.

Registered as a charity in Scotland, registered no. SCO37817.

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The British Deer Society was founded in 1963 to protect the species of wild deer within the UK.

Front cover photograph: *There's something on our path!* by Deb Heath



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As we reflect on the achievements and milestones of the past year, I am delighted to present the Chairman's Report for 2023. We continue to expand our ongoing efforts in fostering deer welfare, conservation, and community engagement and I am really pleased with the progress the Society has made thanks to the hard work of all the team at Fordingbridge.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the Society. This past year has posed its challenges, and like many charitable organisations, the BDS is not immune to the current financial climate. However, through diligent financial management, such as the board's commitment to regular bi-monthly virtual Teams meetings, we have demonstrated an efficient and cost-effective approach to conducting business while upholding ever increasing governance standards.

A governance review day in early Spring 2023 prompted questions and reflections, guiding a comprehensive review of the board and governance. The outcomes set during this process will continue to shape the BDS's path into 2024, ensuring a solid foundation supported by strong leadership and governance practices.

2023 marked a year of transition as we bid farewell to esteemed Board members Dominic Griffith, John Bruce, Dorothy Ireland and Leigh Welch. Their dedication and contributions have indelibly impacted the BDS, and we express our sincere gratitude for their invaluable service. The board has initiated the process of finding suitable replacements to fill the void left by these retirements, and we eagerly anticipate growing and developing the strength of our trustees throughout 2024 and beyond. It is a core focus of mine and should be for all levels of leadership within the BDS, that we are nurturing the future leadership of the Society.

2023 has been a busy year for deer and government strategy. In Scotland we awaited the government response to the Deer Working Group recommendations and as I write, there is a consultation in place which we are working hard to put in place a BDS response to this consultation. It has been hugely pleasing to see how the SAC members have worked with their Scottish branches and our Policy Officer and SAC Chair, to formulate a response. In England, whilst we await the release of the English Deer Strategy, the Society, alongside our partners, remained actively engaged in advocating for deer welfare. The DEFRA/FC consultation provided a platform for the BDS to voice its stance, emphasising the importance of humane deer management aligned with local environmental goals. In furtherance of our advocacy efforts, our CEO and I have directly engaged in a number of meetings with ministers within DEFRA, to ensure that the BDS remains a key advocate for deer welfare and our members' voices are heard at the highest level of government. We want to work with government to help them achieve their broader aims but it cannot be at the expense of welfare. Most importantly, it seems that slowly the penny is dropping with government. Without an invigorated and thriving UK venison market, we will not see an increase in the annual UK deer cull. To achieve this, it will need government support, both strategic and financial.

Our training team accomplished yet another successful year, highlighted by the

launch of our inaugural online course. The overwhelmingly positive feedback received serves as a testament to the exceptional quality of BDS training programmes, positioning us to reach a broader audience than ever before.

Recognising the imperative to cultivate a more diverse membership base, we have redoubled our efforts to disseminate our narrative far and wide. The appointment of Charlotte Corcoran to our membership department, underscores our unwavering dedication to enhancing engagement and communications.

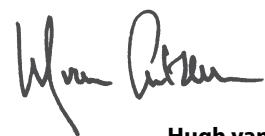
Moreover, the Board of Trustees remains steadfast in its commitment to investing in our core team, ensuring that we have the right individuals equipped to propel the society forward.

In November, we celebrated our 60th anniversary with a memorable Diamond Dinner in London. This event, combined with our end-of-year auction and the hugely successful Big Give fundraising campaign, collectively raised over £100,000. These funds will contribute significantly to supporting our ongoing initiatives and projects. I am hugely proud of the work everyone put in to make this such a successful year for fundraising and also my enormous thanks to all those who so kindly gave auction lots, as well as so generously kept bidding.

The development and initiation of our new 'Together for Deer' strategy marks a significant milestone. This strategy focuses on three core pillars – Education, Science & Research and Welfare & Ethics – underscoring our commitment to expanding our impact on deer welfare and conservation.

As we anticipate the opportunities that 2024 holds, my primary focus is on inspiring and educating others about deer, fostering a passion for their welfare and humane management. Together, let us continue to tell our story and attract new supporters, ensuring the BDS thrives for many more years to come.

With my very best wishes and thanks,



Hugh van Cutsem



Red Deer Group by Marc Baldwin

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Priorities in 2023

In 2023, the Board of Trustees identified two primary objectives. Firstly, they aimed to convene a face-to-face purpose day in early spring to initiate the process of refining the organisation's vision and strategy. Secondly, there was a strong emphasis on updating the current Articles of Association. The CEO was asked to set up the meeting to develop a new purpose, and in March 2023, this workshop took place, resulting in the Society adopting a fresh purpose statement: "to educate and inspire everyone about deer." Subsequently, in September, the CEO commenced the review of the Articles of Association. We are pleased to report that a new set of revised articles will be presented to the members at the May 2024 AGM.

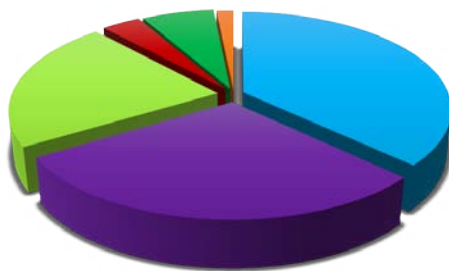
In our 60th year, the Charity set a goal to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to meet and celebrate this remarkable milestone. The central team surpassed all their objectives, culminating in an immensely successful 60th Anniversary Dinner, in November 2023, which raised nearly £100,000.

Our membership remains stable, and in 2023, we introduced a new monthly Direct Debit option to assist both current and prospective members in managing their financial commitments. This innovative payment service has garnered significant success, particularly in attracting a younger demographic. With a commitment to doubling our membership by 2030, coupled with a revitalised strategy, we are poised to achieve this ambitious target. Additionally, we are diligently working towards launching a new online interactive digital journal and have secured a contract with a new provider to transition to this platform by October 2024. This initiative not only aims to minimise our environmental impact but, in tandem with our newly implemented flexible working policy, also endeavours to reduce our carbon footprint.



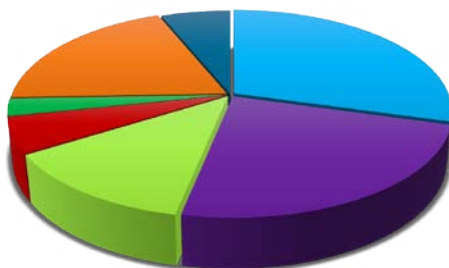
In the Morning Dew by Dominic Regan

How we raised our money



- Membership
- Fundraising & Legacies
- Training income
- Branch activities
- Trading income
- Investment Income

Where we spent our money



- Membership & Branch Support
- Technical Support & Public Affairs
- PR, Events & Website
- Fundraising
- Research
- Training Delivery
- Trading Costs

Our training initiatives remain robust and constitute a cornerstone of our charitable endeavours. In 2023, we successfully launched our inaugural online course, which has proven immensely popular and has prompted us to invest in a new, fully integrated digital learning platform. Throughout the year, we continued to refine and update our training programmes, with our dedicated training team unwaveringly committed to delivering excellence.

Despite a delay in July 2023 due to unforeseen circumstances, the installation of a new Customer Relations Management system (CRM) is now in its final stages and is anticipated to be fully operational by autumn 2024. Once implemented, this system will significantly enhance our staff's efficiency and communication capabilities.

Our marketing efforts utilised a multifaceted approach, including social media, regular emails, and the bi-weekly electronic newsletter, Deerbytes, to disseminate updates and information to our branches, members, and the wider public. Our quarterly journal, Deer, continued to provide a diverse array of editorials, scientific research, alongside valuable feedback from our branches and members.

Throughout the year, our Technical Advisor and External Affairs team diligently responded to numerous inquiries from various stakeholders, including media outlets, non-profits, businesses, government bodies,

and the general public. Notably, this included meeting with The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs to discuss ways to reinvigorate the venison market.

In Scotland, the BDS are going from strength to strength. In July, Alistair Monkman CBE DL MA was appointed to the Chair of the Scottish Area Council. Once appointed he set about bringing everyone together to share and support each other. James Scott has also been working to support Alistair and the Scottish members and we are beginning to see the benefits of their work. Throughout 2023 James and Alistair communicated and engaged with our partners and the Scottish Government. This has placed BDS Scotland in a primary position to react and support deer management and deer welfare in Scotland.

We are grateful to have received a substantial grant from The Berkeley Foundation to enhance our educational services, particularly aimed at inner-city children. This funding will support the training of our branch volunteers to deliver field educational programmes, furthering our mission to educate and inspire.

In November, the CEO and his team unveiled the new 'Together for Deer' 6-year strategy, signalling an exciting phase for our organisation. Throughout 2024, we will diligently work towards implementing this aspirational plan, seeking funding to support its execution. The Board will continue to review the strategy and set new objectives for the central team, ensuring alignment with our overarching goals and vision.

Significant activities contributing to the achievement of the objectives

Similar to many charitable organisations, we faced financial constraints necessitating prudent spending measures, which understandably raised concerns among some members. Throughout 2023 we implemented strategic initiatives aimed at allowing us to effectively reach our goals while remaining within our financial resources. In 2023, we strategically reduced our participation in shows, transitioned to virtual meetings, initiated online training programmes and scrutinised every expenditure for maximum impact.

Furthermore, recognising the need to diversify revenue streams, we welcomed a dedicated fundraiser to our team in May 2023. This investment yielded positive outcomes, enabling us to not only meet but exceed our financial targets for our 60th-anniversary celebrations. Our achievements were recognised when we were honoured to receive the Big Give's Outstanding Charity award for a noteworthy campaign.

Plans for future periods

Looking ahead, we are poised to capitalise on our accomplishments with the launch of the 'Together for Deer' 2024 to 2030 strategy. This forward-thinking blueprint sets out a comprehensive roadmap, positioning the society as the foremost authority on all matters concerning deer. We will be taking this new strategy to all our 2024 events, to help to communicate the new strategy and consolidate our position as the pre-eminent resource for deer-related endeavours.

IT Update

Website Development and Enhancements

Dedication to providing an exceptional online experience led to a content restructure and layout refresh, elevating user experience with easier access to information about the charity's work.

A proactive approach to security resulted in the implementation of a monthly check and update programme to ensure our website remains a secure and compliant space. Introducing online direct debit sign-ups for monthly and annual memberships was a significant milestone. In the face of economic challenges, this initiative guarantees that BDS membership remains an affordable option for everyone.

Efficiency increased as we fine-tuned the integration between our accounts and website, streamlining processes for a more effective operation.

CRM Systems – A strategic move was the selection of Microsoft Dynamics as our platform, coupled with a partnership with SilverCloud. Seamless processes for integration were scoped out, weaving our website into the CRM build and promising a more connected and efficient future for BDS operations.

BDS App – Exploring options and costs led to a decision to reboot the SmartDeer app. Developed at Dublin University, the refreshed app is scheduled for launch in 2024 and will redefine the user experience.

Marketing

Socials – The BDS online community flourished in 2023, with a substantial growth of 3.2K new followers and fans. The collective reach across Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) touched an impressive 2.3 million users. With over 2.1K engaging posts, we generated a staggering 3.4 million impressions.

Weekly Deer Trivia Series and seasonal awareness campaigns were highlights of our social media presence with a reindeer advent campaign adding a festive touch.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS IN 2023

OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY FLOURISHED IN 2023

- 3.2K NEW FOLLOWERS
- 2.3 MILLION USERS
- 2.1K ENGAGING POSTS
- 3.4 MILLION IMPRESSIONS

british deer society

Newsletter – The growth trajectory extended to our BDS newsletter, with nearly 1K new subscribers. Deerbytes has evolved into a bi-weekly bulletin, an essential channel for keeping our community updated on all things related to the charity, deer welfare, and more.

Website – The 2023 restructuring contributed to an enhanced experience with a notable 40% increase in visitors and particular interest shown in our six deer species.

Surveys – The voice of our community echoed through surveys, with insights from Your BDS and Professional Membership surveys playing a pivotal role in shaping future plans. The ongoing Birth Dates survey launched in 2023, continues gathering vital data, contributing to our understanding of deer birthing seasons across the UK.



RESEARCH

BDS contributed financially to several projects and gave practical support to others. BDS members assisted with the collection of various types of deer samples to aid researchers in their work.

Using camera traps to quantify the effect of deer on woodland restoration – Dr Elisa Fuentes-Montemayor, University of Stirling

Outcomes from this BDS Research Grant include:

- ▶ 87 woodland creation sites surveyed with camera traps in England and Scotland between 2019/2022, each site surveyed for 6–8 months totalling 17,987 trap-days.



- ▶ Development of a bespoke 'image processing app'.
- ▶ 42,733 animal detections; 20+ mammal species and 5+ bird species identified so far.
- ▶ Preliminary analyses have enabled the identification of local (e.g. woodland age and patch size) and landscape-level attributes (e.g. amount of surrounding woodland) associated with woodland use by deer.
- ▶ Rich datasets to address additional research questions e.g.: how other wild herbivores (e.g. rabbits and hares) and mammals (e.g. foxes, badgers, pine martens and squirrels) utilise woodland creation sites; the impact that wild deer and domestic livestock are having on tree recruitment and natural regeneration processes in woodland creation sites; potential cascading impacts of deer on other woodland biodiversity using the extensive existing datasets from the WrEN project.
- ▶ This grant supported three field assistants and one research assistant whose salaries were covered (based at the University of Stirling); two have gone on to longer term employment at Forest Research as a result.

- ▶ Eight student dissertation projects were conducted on this topic and four student volunteers actively engaged in processing the image datasets (all based at the University of Stirling). Their participation enabled data collection over winter (in addition to the summer data collection funded by the BDS).
- ▶ Leveraging on the data collected as part of this grant, an additional £20,000 was secured from the Woodland Trust in 2021 for a research grant to assess impacts of wild herbivores on natural regeneration processes in woodland creation sites.
- ▶ Article published in the BDS Deer journal summer 2022 edition.

Two scientific papers are currently in preparation for submission to peer-reviewed journals.

Holocene record of deforestation using collagen isotope ratios in roe deer from the UK – Professor Darren Gröcke, Stable Isotope Biogeochemistry Laboratory (SIBL), Department of Archaeology, Durham University

Archaeological deer samples from previous research by Dr Karis Baker were processed for collagen extraction and then isotopic analysis. BDS members supplied deer samples to generate a greater understanding of modern roe deer isotopes in the UK. As a result:

- ▶ Carbon, nitrogen and sulphur isotope analysis of over 250 modern UK deer was performed.
- ▶ Carbon, nitrogen and sulphur isotope analysis of over 100 archaeological deer have been generated.
- ▶ A compilation of archaeological UK deer isotope results (more than 200) has been extracted from the literature.
- ▶ No major change in carbon isotopes occur over the past 8,000 years before present (BP), and indicate a forested environment.
- ▶ Nitrogen isotopes decrease in archaeological deer from around 2,000 years BP to present, suggesting a major change in nitrogen cycling in soil.
- ▶ Sulphur isotopes remain relatively constant but decrease in modern deer caused by industrialisation and sulphur pollution.
- ▶ Research on this topic is continuing with an article for Deer expected later in 2024.

Development of a cost-effective protocol for MHC genotyping in red deer – Dr Sílvia Pérez-Espona, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, The University of Edinburgh

- ▶ Two further samples of red deer have been sequenced using the Min-ION handheld portable sequencer. Bioinformatic analyses of these two sequences are congruent with the results with the previous samples i.e. high functional MHC DRB variation with the potential of more than 3 loci for red deer.
- ▶ Primers to amplify two exons of the DRB loci in the six samples used for the assessment (TF1-TF6) using genomic DNA, have been designed and PCR products will be sequenced using the Min-ION in coming weeks. The resulting data will represent validation of the data obtained from analyses assessing functional MHC DRB variation using RNA as starting template. The aim is to focus on generating and analysing the data generated from genomic DNA in March to finalise the manuscript on the first official nomenclature of MHC alleles in red deer by July 2024.
- ▶ Currently requesting more spleen samples to be sequenced for functional MHC DRB to generate data for a second publication assessing variation in different populations. The aim is to generate the data for multiple individuals from different populations during summer to complete the project with outputs of a second manuscript and a final report for BDS by the end of 2024.
- ▶ Articles for Deer journal will be prepared once each of the manuscripts has been accepted for publication.

Assessing the scale of the impacts of disturbance on red deer – Professor Phil Stephens, Durham University with PhD student Eilidh Smith

- ▶ An article about the Glen Lyon Red Deer project was included in Spring 2023 Deer.
- ▶ The project is currently in a write-up phase. Based on results from the last few years of data collection, it's clear that deer avoided the hillwalker path, moving further from the path and acting more vigilant when hillwalker numbers were higher. Deer were also less likely to be active when hillwalker numbers were higher; this is consistent with previous literature showing that deer reduce activity in the presence of human disturbance, and that nocturnality can be an adaptation to a human-dominated landscape.

- ▶ Previous research in the area using remote camera traps suggested a temporal avoidance of hillwalker activity and the hillwalker path. In addition, we were able to get 24-hour data on activity from the collared deer. These showed peaks in activity very early and very late in the day, when human activity is lower. The dip in activity in the middle of the day was longer in the summer months when the days are longer, but also coinciding with the summer tourist season. The collared deer was predominantly a lowland deer, so this activity pattern may have been affected by living in closer proximity to human activity than the hill deer.

The use of genomics to inform management of woodland roe deer populations in Scotland – PhD student Christopher Hirst, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, The University of Edinburgh

- ▶ **Lab Work** – DNA analysis work to determine the bacteria present in the rumen microbiome and the plants in the diet was repeated due to initial technical errors. Re-analysis focusing on 200 roe, was completed by October 2023. A high-quality sequence dataset was generated as planned with the time for reflection resulting in a more robust dataset showing interesting results in preliminary analysis. Saliva samples collected from roe for proteomic analyses remain banked for analysis in the future, should resources become available.
- ▶ **Microbiome Analysis** – Preliminary results on the data chapter regarding the microbiome analysis of rumen samples indicate a strong seasonal influence on rumen microbial community structure and diversity, with winter driving the most significant shifts. There is also evidence of spatial and weight-class differences that are both independent and modulating of seasonal effects on the rumen microbiome.
- ▶ **Diet Analysis** – Initial results indicate seasonal and spatial differences in plant taxa, with some differences in the taxa detected between markers. The first draft of this chapter is due for completion by April 2024.
- ▶ **The Influence of Diet on the Roe Deer Microbiome** – This chapter will look at integrating results from the microbiome and diet chapters, mainly through assessments of the functionality of bacteria in the rumen and correlations with dietary components. This will provide greater insight into how the microbiome can promote nutritional adaptation strategies in Scottish roe deer.

- ▶ **Systematic Review of Roe Deer Diet** – an updated version of the review chapter of micro histological analysis of roe deer diet across Europe has been drafted.
- ▶ **Conferences/Visits** – research presentations are planned at the 2024 UK DNA Working Group Conference in Inverness in April, and the 2024 European Conservation Genetics Meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, in August 2024.
- ▶ A brief research visit is also planned to the Department of Ecology and Genetics at Uppsala University in May 2024.

Rewilding Scotland: Dilemmas for wild deer management and the rural economy – Professor Terence Dawson, King's College, London with PhD student Connor Lovell

This PhD project aims to:

- ▶ Investigate the dynamics of a Scottish ungulate community on a rewilding site, including land cover preference and interspecific relationships.
- ▶ Investigate the role of ungulates in altering soil carbon storage on a rewilding site, both directly and indirectly by altering plant communities.
- ▶ Use agent-based modelling to simulate ungulate dispersal across Scotland: to both simulate the impact of future land cover changes and climate warming, and to identify potential locations of heightened human-wildlife conflict.

The Bunloit rewilding project is being used as a case study site, having an ungulate community of four species: sika (*Cervus nippon*), red (*Cervus elaphus*), roe (*Capreolus capreolus*), and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and so it is hoped to



Sika stag evicting a rival by Ron Perkins

contribute towards a better understanding of the role of ungulate communities in rewilding, now and into the future.



www.highlandsrewilding.co.uk

- ▶ The first chapter has been published in the journal of Ecology and Evolution. Camera traps were used to assess the land cover preferences of ungulates, the impact of human disturbance on ungulates, and the spatiotemporal relationships between the four species found on the Bunloit rewilding project. Findings are reported within the paper: Lovell, C., Pettorelli, N., & Dawson, T. P. (2024). Land cover preferences and spatiotemporal associations of ungulates within a Scottish mammal community. Ecology and Evolution, 14, e11015. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.11015>
- ▶ For the second chapter, soil organic carbon concentrations have been estimated from all 72 onsite plots with each plot now having an estimate of sika deer and wild boar visit frequency (from camera traps present within a larger land cover parcel encompassing the plot), the community-weighted means for plant functional traits, plant species richness and diversity, and soil organic carbon. Sika were selected as the most abundant deer species on Bunloit by far, whilst wild boar are investigated because of the environmental impact of their unique rooting behaviour. Structural equation modelling was then used to try and detect how sika deer and wild boar could impact soil carbon either 1) directly, or 2) by altering the functional traits, species richness, or species diversity of plants, which in turn can alter the soil carbon. A discussion of the results is currently being written up.
- ▶ For the third chapter, the researcher attended an agent-based modelling course to gain an understanding of agent-based modelling and to generate ideas of exactly how this could be used and questions to be asked. Initial research has begun.



TRAINING AND EDUCATION

2023 saw another productive year for the BDS training department with just under 700 course enrolments. Emphasis was on expansion and development, with new courses alongside those with a solely deer focused remit.

The suite of training modules now also includes an online Wild Boar Course, coupled with an assessment day run by one of our experienced Assessors in line with DMQ standards. The purpose is to assist Society members and others, by providing crucial knowledge empowering them to undertake other aspects of UK wildlife and conservation management.



DMC, Petersfield

Behind the scenes, work for the Head of Training included participating in the DMQ working group and Certified British Quality Wild Venison group, assisting with the revision of Best Practice Guides, holding standardisation meetings for the training team and setting up a new training scheme in West Norfolk.

Additionally, participation in Deer(pod)casts, show events and venison promotion work made for a packed calendar. Plus, a new sponsorship deal was brokered with Vortex which included the supply of spotting scopes

with tripods to BDS course managers or branches having a need for such equipment.

Technical/Educational/ Spreading the Word

Meanwhile press activity and/or interviews for our Technical Adviser included Countryfile Magazine, Sunday Times, Daily Express, Southern Daily Echo, Jeremy Vine on 5, BBC (national), BBC Wales, BBC Look North, BBC Radio London, BBC Radio Lincolnshire, BBC Radio Stoke.

The technical department routinely fielded a barrage of queries from press and the public on a variety of topics:

- ▶ White deer – species identification and rarity (or not)
- ▶ Requests for identification
- ▶ Building, road developments, solar farms and their effect on deer
- ▶ Dog attacks on wild deer
- ▶ Human interactions with park deer
- ▶ Hunting deer with hounds
- ▶ Trophy export & hunting visitors to the UK – statistics
- ▶ Various legal queries (from night shooting to FAC grants)
- ▶ Injured or trapped deer
- ▶ Darting & rescue issues
- ▶ Grant availability for tree planting & larder facilities
- ▶ Health & disease



- ▶ Deer damage prevention (garden & agricultural)
- ▶ Deer numbers and distribution
- ▶ Public concern over local DVCs
- ▶ Individual DVC involvement
- ▶ Feeding deer in gardens
- ▶ Concern over condition of captive deer
- ▶ Excluding deer from gardens
- ▶ High deer densities (particularly fallow)
- ▶ Sources of venison – including for feeding polar bears in a zoo!

Other work areas for our Technical Adviser included publication of the BDS Field Guide to British Deer; assistance to local authorities confirming deer presence for road signage etc.; assistance to local constabularies with impact statements and advice re- poaching prosecution; captive deer survey (ongoing project to update & identify locations); social media material (regular items of deer trivia, also preparation & fact checking of other items); social media monitoring & response (where appropriate); Deer Queries, book reviews etc for Deer journal; general deer articles for other publications on behalf of BDS.

Inspiring and Educating our Young!

Educational days were in high demand. One collaboration resulted in a brilliant day of activities for local primary school children when BDS Yorkshire branch linked up with Harewood Estate, the Plant A Tree Today (PATT) Foundation and its operational arm The Green Task Force. Using a map to navigate different areas of the estate, year six pupils experienced a Deer Park nature walk observing red and fallow with their young. A stalking challenge set within estate woodland introduced technology and the use of binoculars, spotting scope, thermal imaging devices and drone footage. Underpinned by field craft, the children were challenged in teams and evaluated which technology was the most effective in spotting fellow pupils.

Further primary events were held elsewhere in conjunction with Countryside Learning. Additional educational opportunities, made possible by generous sponsorship from the Berkeley Foundation, are being planned across branches and themed particularly to introduce inner city youngsters to the countryside.



60TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR FUNDRAISING AND MORE

In celebrating 60 years of the BDS, our focus was very much on fundraising, the crucial element to ensuring a healthy future, by providing support for the next 60 years!

Auctions and Diamond Dinner

A successful online auction in May was followed by a second in November, which was linked to the highly popular and successful London Diamond Dinner and live auction when a fantastic evening of celebration raised almost £100K. We are hugely grateful to the organising team led by Andy Hay with Hugh van Cutsem, Dominic Griffith and Michael Sworder assisted by Sarah Stride plus a brilliant head office support team. Particular thanks are due to our generous champagne



reception sponsors, Sky Park Farm, and to the small number of private sponsors who helped make it all happen. We

also thank warmly the many contributors, whether attendees on the night, donors of some amazing lots or those bidding, for their brilliant support.

New Position

Andrea Barden joined the BDS team in mid-May as our Marketing and Fundraising Executive, bringing solid experience from within the private sector in developing and implementing impactful marketing campaigns. With a degree in conservation biology and ecology, she has both voluntary and professional experience in the wildlife charity sector and will ultimately focus on major fundraising, acquiring grants, legacies and donations. Her first campaign was the Big Give.



Big Give

Over the last decade, the Big Give match-funding platform has helped thousands of UK charities. For the first time, BDS took part in a Big Give annual event: The Christmas Challenge. Our campaign aimed at raising funds to initiate a series of deer counting drone surveys at selected locations across the country through 2024/2025. The purpose is not just to count deer and help to inform local and national management but also to double up as an opportunity to offer unique and highly engaging awareness and educational public events country wide, focused on deer and ethical, evidence-based approaches to deer management.

Thanks to an amazing group of members, branches and supporters, and The Reed Foundation, we surpassed our £10,000 target raising a total of £13,348. We then entered The Big Give's Christmas Challenge Awards and against stiff competition from a wide range of charities, won the Outstanding Charity Award! This wouldn't have been possible without our members' and donors' support, so thank you again for helping us!

Donations, Legacies and Trusts

In 2023 BDS received a generous bequest of £24,628 from the estate of the late BK Roy, an avid Society member for very many years. This generous act of remembering BDS will help us to engage in more research and increase our educational reach.

We were delighted in 2023 to receive an increasing number of donations through our online portal, all of which helped contribute towards our project work. Additionally, by donors (where eligible) signing Gift Aid forms, BDS is able to claim back tax from the Treasury, so increasing the contribution to

2023 Awards

Awards were made during the year to the following:

- ▶ **BDS Fellowships** – awarded to John Bruce, Dave Goffin and Dominic Griffith
- ▶ **The Balfour Browne Trophy** – awarded to Dominic Griffith
- ▶ **Jim Taylor Page Trophy** – awarded to Iain Semple, Central Scotland Branch
- ▶ **Volunteer Citation** – Dr James Vestey
- ▶ **BDS Photographer of the Year** – awarded to Ron Perkins



John Bruce



Iain Semple

our funds. In 2023 this amounted to £56,318 in Gift Aid donations.

During 2023 we were fortunate to receive grants from The Berkeley Foundation, Mr & Mrs TCS Haywood Charitable Trust, The Lonsdale Trust and The Stonewall Park Charitable Trust.

BDS is unbelievably grateful to all our generous members and supporters who donate in whatever way to the Society, so helping us to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for our deer population.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Review for the Year ended 31 December 2023

The financial performance of the Society for 2023, as detailed in the attached pages, comprises the consolidated financial statements of The British Deer Society including all the Society's branches. The financial results are presented in the same general format as in previous years. The support costs have been reallocated over the direct charitable and other expenditure in accordance with the current best practice for Charities and the FRS 102 SORP, and on a consistent basis to previous years.

The current economic climate resulting in higher costs have impacted the financial outcomes of the Society throughout 2023. Huge efforts from our small staff team, coupled with the generous support of our branches, members, donors and partners has enabled us to cope with many of the challenges these financial pressures presented. Our strong reserves position has enabled us to maintain our financial stability for the future, however, we have introduced a new strategy to improve our outcomes.

Charity – The British Deer Society

In light of the ongoing economic challenges, this year has proven to be demanding for our Society and affecting our revenue generating initiatives. However, thanks to the unwavering support from our valued members, our subscription income remained robust. Additionally, our high-quality training programme successfully trained over 696 individuals throughout the year, with some participants attending multiple courses. We were extremely grateful to receive funding from the Berkeley Foundation. This money will be used to fund educational projects for inner-city and disadvantaged children.

In honour of our 60th anniversary, fundraising events were held at our branches, and we hosted a special auction dinner in London, increasing our donation income significantly. Moreover, we received higher legacy income and a substantial grant which contributed to our funding income.

Overall, our total income for 2023 was £813,627 (2022 £744,606).

The Board and staff have been working extremely hard to minimise the impact of these challenges on the Society and we continue to be confident that we will be able to overcome the short-term operational difficulties that these challenges present and move forward as a more financially sustainable operation.



Waterlily feast by Christine Golightly

We continue to recognise that administration costs generally, as well of those of membership, are a significant element of the Society's outgoings. We strive to contain and reduce costs where possible whilst also improving financial information for efficient and effective management of the Society. This includes additional non-financial information such as regular reporting on membership and training numbers.

Our funds are held in Investment accounts with a certain level remaining in bank deposit accounts to ensure we have adequate liquidity for our operations. Our portfolio generated unrealised losses of £32,323 in the year. Our investments

are monitored regularly, and the relevant risks considered by the Board as and when necessary. We continue to make improvements to our working practices, enhancing our financial and non-financial processes and systems, and enabling the Society to be more effective and have more impact.

I would like to record my deepest appreciation to all the Society's staff, volunteers and other individuals whose collective contributions have been instrumental in sustaining our position and have paved the way for continued impact in 2024 and beyond.

Sarah Gubbins, Treasurer

Financial Report 2023

These Summarised Accounts are an extract from, and are consistent with, the Statutory Accounts but may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Society.

Geoffrey Thomas, FCA, has given an unqualified Independent Examiner's Report on the full Statutory Accounts, which were approved by the Directors (who also act as trustees for the charitable activities of the British Deer Society) on 26 March 2024. They will be presented for approval of the members at the AGM on 19 May 2024. The full Statutory Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102).

Copies of the full Statutory Accounts will be lodged with the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission. The full accounts may be inspected at the Society's offices at The Walled Garden, Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, SP6 1EF, and copies are available to members on request.

Signed on behalf of the Board
Sarah Gubbins, Treasurer
26 March 2024

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:		
Donations and legacies	414,152	372,432
Charitable activities	206,230	330,489
Other trading activities	175,702	24,049
Investment income	17,543	17,636
Total income	813,627	744,606
Expenditure on:		
Raising funds	(105,297)	(32,714)
Charitable activities	(720,663)	(722,538)
Total expenditure	(825,960)	(755,252)
Net gains/(losses) on investment assets	(32,323)	(676)
Net income/(expenditure)	(44,656)	(11,322)
Net movement in funds	(44,656)	(11,322)
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	854,468	865,790
Total funds carried forward	809,812	854,468

Consolidated Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets		
Intangible assets	93	3,149
Tangible assets	28,072	21,420
Investments	613,830	511,259
	641,995	535,828
Current assets		
Stocks	6,904	4,327
Debtors	32,600	19,878
Cash at bank and in hand	258,107	390,482
	297,611	414,687
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(129,794)	(94,150)
Net current assets	167,817	320,537
Total assets less current liabilities	809,812	856,365
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	(1,897)
Net assets	809,812	854,468
Funds of the charity:		
Designated funds	20,077	21,627
Restricted income funds		
Restricted funds	114,216	89,588
Unrestricted income funds		
Unrestricted funds	675,519	743,253
TOTAL FUNDS	809,812	854,468

Independent Examiner's Statement to the Trustees and Members of The British Deer Society

I have examined the summarised accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Respective Responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised accounts in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law. My responsibility is to report to you my opinion on the consistency of the summarised accounts with the full annual consolidated accounts and the compliance with the relevant requirements of section 426 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations thereunder.

I also read the other information contained in the summarised financial report and consider the implications for my report if I become aware of an apparent misstatement or inconsistencies with the summary financial statement. The other information comprises only the review of financial performance.

Opinion

In my opinion the summarised accounts are consistent with the full annual consolidated accounts of the British Deer Society for the year ended 31 December 2023 and comply with the applicable requirements of section 426 of the Companies Act 2006, and the regulations made thereunder.

Geoffrey Thomas, FCA, Fletcher & Partners,
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Salisbury, 26 March 2024



Roe buck by Neil Saunders

ORGANISATION AND PEOPLE

Patron:

King Charles III

Trustee/Directors:

President Lord Andrew Hay

Chairman Hugh van Cutsem

Vice Chairman Dominic Griffith
(until May 2023)

Treasurer Sarah Gubbins

**English/Welsh
Area Chair** Dr Morris Charlton

**Scottish Area
Chair** John Bruce
(until July 2023)

Alistair Monkman CBE,DL,MA
(from July 2023)

Professor Simon Gibson CBE, DL

Dorothy Ireland (until December 2023)

Leigh Welch (until May 2023)

Honorary Advisors:

Veterinary Peter Green BVSc, Cert EO, MRCVS

Scientific Dr Alastair Ward

Staff:

Chief Executive Officer David McAuley

Operations & Support Manager Sarah Stride

Admin & Sales Support Helen Sims

Head of Education & Training Nick Rout

Training Coordinator Dawn Cope

Marketing & IT Manager Laura McMahan

Membership Coordinator Charlotte Allen

**Fundraising & Marketing
Executive** Andrea Barden
(from May 2023)

Technical Adviser (Consultant) Charles Smith-Jones

Scottish Policy Officer James Scott

Fellows:

John Bruce

Raymond Chaplin BSc, MIBiol, FZS

Norma Chapman

Dave Goffin

Dominic Griffith

Mark Hatt-Cook, OBE,RD

Dorothy Ireland

VJA Manton MRCVS, FIBiol

Mark Nicolson

Hugh Oliver-Bellasis, FRAGS

Professor Rory Putman

Sir Michael Strang Steel Bt, CBE

John Thomas MBA, TD

Tony Waterson

Branches:

England South East England | South West England | East Anglia | Wessex | West | East Mercia | Midlands, Wales and the Marches | Yorkshire | North East England | North West England

Scotland South East Scotland | Central | Highlands | North East Scotland | South West Scotland

Northern Ireland

Special Interest Group:

Defence Deer Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BDS is unbelievably grateful to all its generous members and supporters who donated in whatever way to the Society, so helping us to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for our deer population. We would particularly like to thank the following and all others not specifically mentioned here who supported us during 2023:

Auction Donors

8th Marquess of Aberdeen, Swarovski, Alan Marshall, Alan Shannahan, Alistair Monkman, Andrew Souter - BDS Central Scotland Branch, Arthur Scott, Ashley Boon, Atholl Estates, BDS East Anglia Branch, Bee Griffith, Casper Uniacke, Celtic Manor, Charles Smith-Jones, David Parry, David Wain, Derek Stimpson, Dominic Griffith, Dominic Strutt, Dr Nigel Cogger, Dr Philip Morris, Duke of Grafton, Duke of Westminster, Earl of Dalhousie, Earl of Leicester, Emma Paterson, Fairfax & Favor, H du Val de Beaulieu Esq, Hal Salvesen, Hilborough Estate, Hugh Oliver-Bellasis, Ian Burgess, Ian MacGillivray, Inverawe Smokehouse, J Boulton Designs, Jane Forshaw, Jason Pegden, John Campbell-Smith, John Thornley OBE, Jonathan Tunmore, Justin Hillgarth, Justin Prigmore, Katie Hargreaves, Kevin Rigler, Mark Nicolson, Mark Toft, Michael Sworder, Mike Bagnowicz, Mr Alastair Riddell, Mrs Kerrie Jackson in Memory of Mark Jackson, Nicholas Wills, Opticron, Paul Sim Napier of London, Philip Mackenzie, Quiller Publishing, R. Hollingbery Esq & Field Sports Services, Rex Parry, Richard Wills, Ron Smith, Rupert Adams and Nadja Swarovski, Rupert Shaw MBE, Sally Barrell, Simon Duncan, Simon Gibson, Sir Edward Dashwood Bt, Sir Michael Strang Steel, Sir Michael Wigan, Sky Park Farm, South West Scotland Branch, Thoresby Estate, Tweed Media, Watatunga Wildlife Reserve, William Mathews Taxidermy, Willy Browne-Swinburne

