

Support British deer with BDS

The British Deer Society (BDS) invites you to join our mission, guided by our commitment to ethics/welfare, science/research, and education/training. Together, we strive to ensure the well-being and fair treatment of British deer.

Who we are:

As a community of deer enthusiasts, the BDS is united in our mission to safeguard the welfare of deer, influencing policies and practices with decades of expertise and modern advancements in science and technology.

What we do:

Through research, education, and advocacy, we address critical issues like deer welfare, environmental impact, and sustainable deer management.

Why support us:

Support the BDS to ensure a UK where deer thrive in harmony with their environment. Your contribution will fund research that improves our understanding of deer in a changing world, provide education so more people can appreciate these amazing creatures, and support welfare initiatives to keep them thriving.

How to support us:

- **Membership:** Join our community and add your voice, speaking up for deer and staying informed with our quarterly magazine as well as regular news and updates from the Society, and connecting with fellow deer enthusiasts in your area.
- **Donations:** Every donation gift makes a significant impact on our efforts to speak up for deer.
- **Spread the word:** Follow us on social media @BritishDeerSociety and be an advocate for deer welfare and responsible deer management.

Join the BDS in preserving British deer and their habitats. Embrace our commitment – where passion meets purpose, and wildlife flourishes.



Discover Britain's diverse deer

Six deer species freely roam the British countryside, thriving in diverse habitats. Native and introduced, these adaptable creatures contribute significantly to Britain's biodiversity, embodying the essence of our captivating natural heritage.



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Visit www.bds.org.uk or scan the code to learn more about roe deer.

WILD DEER OF THE UK

Identifying ROE DEER *Capreolus capreolus*



the british deer society Together for Deer

www.bds.org.uk

What to look for

Size

Roe deer are attractive medium sized deer that stand at around 0.60 to 0.75m tall at the shoulder. When fully grown they may weigh between 10 to 27kg depending on habitat.

Coat

Roe deer vary in coat colour throughout the year, being most noticeable in the summer when their coats are a sleek, bright rusty red. The thicker winter coat is a dull, grey-brown colour.

Rear

Both sexes have a prominent white rump with no visible tail. Females (does) have a small 'tush' or tuft of hair at the base of the rump patch which is more conspicuous during the winter.

Head

Roe deer have large black eyes, noses, and mouths surrounded by white/pale areas. They have large ears. Males (bucks) have small antlers, which typically have three points when fully grown. Antlers are described as 'pearled' or 'bearded' when they are heavily textured with lots of nodules.

Listen out for

Vocalisation

Both sexes of roe deer make dog-like barks as challenges or when startled or alarmed. During the breeding season does attract bucks with a high-pitched piping call. Bucks respond with a rasping noise during courtship. Young roe deer make a high pitched piping whistle to attract their mothers if they become lost.

Look out for

Tracks and signs

Roe deer are dainty creatures and leave small hoof prints (slots) about 4–5cm long in soft ground. They use well-worn paths across their range and along these you may find small piles of faeces. Other characteristic signs of roe deer are frayed areas of small trees where they rub on over-hanging branches and disturbed areas of soft ground and vegetation which deer have scraped and dug with their hooves. Frequently they also urinate to mark their territory.



Lifestyle

Feeding

Roe deer are highly selective feeders which eat a wide variety of plant types. They select highly nutritious plants and therefore browse rather than graze. They enjoy herbs, cereals, hedgerow plants, heather, and young trees as well as some garden plants. All 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

Roe deer are generally solitary animals usually seen alone or in small family groups but can form larger informal groups when feeding in open areas such as fields during the winter. They are active throughout the day and night but are most likely to be active at dawn and dusk. They can often be seen 'lying up' or resting whilst ruminating much like farm animals such as cows and sheep.

Breeding

Roe deer have a very interesting breeding system, which is designed to ensure the best possible start in life for their offspring. Females can give birth at two years old and will normally produce one or two offspring (kids). Exceptionally they may produce triplets. Young are born between late April and June. Roe deer are unique amongst deer species in that they delay the development of the fertilised egg prior to birth for several months following mating. This is a mechanism adopted to avoid birthing during harsh northern winters when survival of young would be unlikely.

Bucks defend a territory, becoming increasingly aggressive towards rivals, from April through to September. The 'rut' is the term used for the breeding season that occurs between mid-July and early August. During this time bucks will pursue does and compete with neighbouring bucks to enlarge their territories and increase their access to the does visiting the area. Fights between males can be serious and may sometimes even lead to fatalities.

Humans and deer

Roe deer can be seen as both a positive and negative influence on the countryside. They may sometimes cause damage to young woodlands and agricultural crops through browsing; however, many landowners and rural industries regard the stalking of roe deer and the sale of venison as a substantial supplementary financial income. It is now essential to balance the needs of a sustainable healthy population of roe deer with those of the environment.

Where to find them

Origins

The roe is one of the truly native deer of the British Isles, the other being the red deer. Records of them date to before the Mesolithic period (6,000 to 10,000 years BC).

Population & distribution

Today, roe deer are abundant throughout much of the British Isles. They are strongly associated with woodlands and have increased in both population and distribution with the increase in woodland planting in the 20th century and strategic reintroductions in Victorian times. Previously, roe deer suffered almost catastrophic decline due to over-hunting and deforestation. Roe deer are not found in Northern Ireland.

Habitat

Roe deer are particularly associated with the edges of woodlands and forests. They are also found in areas with copses, scrub and hedgerows and regularly use agricultural fields. They are increasingly encountered in and around our towns and cities as they adapt to take advantage of more urban habitats.

Seasonal activity

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bucks territorial												
Antlers cast												
Antlers re-growing												
Winter coat												
Summer coat												
Rut												
Kid born												



Photo: Neil Saunders