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.

Photo: Marc Baldwin

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.

the british deer society

The British Deer Society
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Identifying
WATER DEER
Hydropotes inermis

Photo: Dean White

the british deer society *Together for Deer*

www.bds.org.uk

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

What to look for

Size
Water deer (also commonly referred to as Chinese water deer) are a small species of deer that stand up to around 0.50m tall at the shoulder. When fully grown they weigh between 11 and 19kg. Male and female deer are of similar size and weight.

Coat
Water deer are a sandy or light russet colour for most of the year, their coat turning a duller grey in winter.

Rear
Water deer lack any distinguishable markings at the rear. They have short tails.

Head
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.

Listen out for

Vocalisation
Both sexes make a short dog-like bark when alarmed. Bucks make whickering or rapid chattering noises when defending their territory against intruders. During the rut, bucks also make a variety of clicks and squeals. The young issue a high pitched scream when distressed.

Look out for

Tracks and signs
Water deer make small hoof prints (slots), about 4 – 5cm long.

Lifestyle

Feeding
Water deer feed on a wide variety of vegetation from herbs and grasses to woody plants and sedges. All deer lack a top set of front incisors, instead having a hard pad that acts to tear vegetation rather than cut it.

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

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 May 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 January the following year.

Humans and Deer
Water deer are restricted to limited regions of Britain and usually occur at modest densities. Where numbers remain low they have only a minimal impact on the environment, and being a small deer they represent a limited venison source.

Where to find them

Origins
The water deer is native to China and Korea. It became established in the British countryside following accidental and deliberate releases from the 1890s onwards. Though a lack or antlers suggests that this is a primitive form of deer, it may be that water deer simply developed on a slightly different evolutionary path to other species.
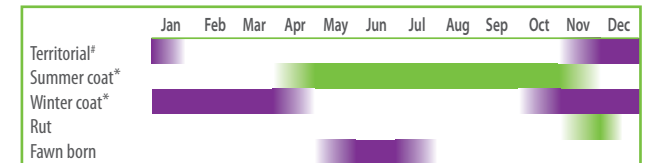
Population & distribution
In its native countries, the water deer is classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List as a Vulnerable species, and in fact the population now living in Britain may account for at least 10% of the worldwide population. They are predominantly found in the east of England although periodic sightings have been reported elsewhere.

Habitat
Water deer are, as their name suggests, principally found in wetter areas such as reedbeds, lakes and riverbanks. They can also be found on farm and parkland, and other places where there is well-developed low-level vegetation.

Seasonal activity

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Territorial#	█										█	█
Summer coat*				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
Winter coat*	█	█	█							▓	█	█
Rut												
Fawn born					▓	▓	▓					

#Territoriality is poorly documented in the UK, and may be adopted variably by both sexes at different times of year.

*Moulting dates can be highly variable.