

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 Stan Kemish



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Wild Deer of the UK



IDENTIFYING

Fallow Deer

Dama dama



Photo courtesy of Stan Kemish

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What you will see



Size

Fallow deer are a medium to large sized deer. Fully grown males (bucks) stand at around 0.84 to 0.94m tall at the shoulder and weigh between 46 to 93kg. Fully grown females (does) are 0.73 to 0.91m at the shoulder and weigh between 35 to 56kg. By comparison, an average adult man in Britain is 1.77m high and weighs 79kg.

Coat

Fallow deer have four main variations of coat:

- **Common** – tan/fawn, with white spotting on flanks and white rump patch outlined with black horseshoe shaped border. Coat fades to a general grey colour during the winter
- **Menil** – paler colouration with white spots year-round and a caramel horseshoe shape on rump
- **Melanistic** – black, almost entirely black or chocolate coloured
- **White** – white to pale sandy-coloured turning increasingly white with age (this is a true colour and not albino).

Rear

Fallow deer often have a distinctive black inverted horseshoe shape on their rumps, and a black stripe on their tails which are the longest of all British deer.

Head

The Fallow deer is the only species in Britain with palmate antlers. These become full sized after the deer are three/four years old and can reach up to 0.7m in length. Facially, their head is more elongated than some species with large angular ears.

What you'll hear



Vocalisation

Does and their young give short barks when alarmed. Bucks groan loudly during the breeding season.

Look out for



Tracks and Signs

Fallow deer leave large hoof prints (slots), about 6cm long in soft ground. Their feet are more elongated than Roe deer and are heavier, creating deeper prints.



Lifestyle



Feeding

Fallow deer are grazers rather than browsers and not especially selective in their choice of food. Grasses are the main component of their diet although they do take woody plants in autumn and winter when nutrition in the grass is low.

Social organisation

Fallow deer are social animals choosing to live in single sex or mixed groups. Groups often come together to form large temporary herds in agricultural areas.

Breeding

Fallow deer usually produce a single offspring (a fawn) in June or July. They have a gestation period of around eight months. The breeding season is dependent on both the

environment and population density. Bucks may form stands or leks, which are areas where small territories are defended together with those of competitors. Does then choose a mate based on its ability to defend the site from rivals. Bucks perform ritualized displays as a form of competing with others, which sometimes can lead to fights if evenly matched. The Fallow mating season occurs in October/November.

Humans and Deer

Fallow deer can cause significant damage to young trees and agricultural crops, especially when planted at high density and can cause considerable economic loss. Conversely, a substantial income can be made from selling Fallow deer stalking especially as a form of population and welfare management. Fallow deer are also regularly farmed for venison and are one of the most important species for maintaining Britain's historic parklands.

Due to their successful breeding Fallow deer now require careful management to both maintain environmental balance and their ongoing welfare.



Photo courtesy of Stan Kemish

Where you'll find them



Origins

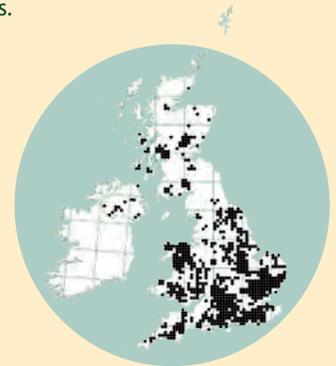
The Fallow deer is common in Britain but is not truly native. It is generally accepted that the Normans were responsible for the main introductions of Fallow deer in the 10th century, although it is considered possible that they were introduced much earlier by the Romans. Fallow deer became the favoured deer for hunting and deer parks and Royal hunting forests were created purely to keep them for food and sport. The populations in the wild today stem from these original locations.

Population & Distribution

Fallow deer are currently on the increase in Britain. Large herds can be found throughout the country but especially in England.

Habitat

Fallow deer are mainly found in broadleaved woodland with thick low-level vegetation. However they also increasingly favour open coniferous woodlands and agricultural land.



Distribution of Fallow deer in the UK



Photo courtesy of George Trebinski