

## 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](http://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](http://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 George Trebinski



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Wild Deer of the UK



## IDENTIFYING Sika Deer *Cervus nippon*



Photo courtesy of George Trebinski

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## What you will see



### Size

Sika deer are a medium to large sized deer that stand at around 0.70 to 0.95m tall at the shoulder for males (stags) and 0.50 to 0.70m for females (hinds). When fully grown stags weigh between 40 to 70kg and hinds 30 to 45kgs. By comparison an average adult man in Britain is 1.77m high and weighs 79kg.

### Coat

Sika deer are similar to Fallow deer in coat colour. They vary from pale yellow/brown through to red/brown with white spots in the summer months to dark grey and black in the winter. There is often a distinct dark coloured dorsal stripe running the length of the back.

### Rear

Sika have a shorter tail than the Fallow and its black stripe is less distinct. There are very noticeable white glands on the hind legs of the deer and they have a distinctive white rump.

### Head

The Sika's head is small in comparison to the rest of the body. Their antlers are widely spaced and the angle of the forward point from the main antler beam is about 45°. They have a maximum of 8 points on their antlers. Hinds do not have antlers.

## What you'll hear



### Vocalisation

Sika deer are renowned for their repertoire of calls. From groaning stags to clacking noises, whistles and screams, they have a huge variety of vocalisations used in many different situations. Both sexes bark when alarmed.

## Look out for



### Tracks and Signs

The tracks of a Sika deer are similar to those of a Red deer but they are slightly smaller in length (about 7cm) and narrower.



## Lifestyle



### Feeding

Sika deer are grazers rather than browsers like the Roe. They prefer grasses, and dwarf shrubs such as heather. They also occasionally eat tree shoots and bark. 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.



Photo courtesy of Chris Howard

### Social organisation

Sika deer live in single sex groups for most of the year, only coming together during the breeding season and in winter when times are harder.

### Breeding

Sika deer give birth from early May to July. They usually have a single calf (rarely twins). They mate from late September to November.

Like Fallow deer, Sika stags

defend a small rutting territory from competitors but may also defend a harem of hinds if gathered together, like the Red deer. They may adopt a strategy of wandering in search of receptive females. The courting and mating of the Sika is dependent on the terrain and habitat of the individuals.

Sika deer are breeding well in the UK and, as they are closely related to Red deer, there have been occurrences of hybridisation. Maintaining the genetic integrity of the Sika and Red deer populations is an increasing concern.

### Humans and Deer

In parts of Britain Sika deer have been increasing in number and expanding their range dramatically in recent years. Sika have been associated with significant economic damage to forestry, agricultural crops and also areas of high conservation value. Conversely, many landowners gain considerable revenue from selling stalking rights and venison production. Maintaining a balanced and sustainable population in high-density areas is important both for the environment and the longterm welfare of the species.

## Where you'll find them



### Origins

Sika deer are also known as the Japanese deer – named after their point of origin. They were introduced to Brownsea Island off the Dorset coast in 1860, as well as into parks and collections across the country from which many escaped. Other subspecies of Sika deer have been kept in deer parks but it is this Japanese subspecies that lives freely in the British countryside.

### Population & Distribution

Sika deer are rapidly increasing in the British countryside although their main strongholds are patchy. In Scotland, Sika deer ranges are expanding from west to east. They are also found in Northern Ireland.



*Distribution of Sika deer in the UK*

### Habitat

Sika deer prefer habitats on acidic soils such as coniferous woodlands and heathlands and moors.



Photo courtesy of George Trebinski