

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 Tracey Rich



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Wild Deer of the UK



IDENTIFYING Roe Deer

Capreolus capreolus



Photo courtesy of George Trebinski

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What you will see



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 weigh between 10 to 25kg. By comparison an average adult man in Britain is 1.77m high and weighs 79kg.

Coat

Roe deer vary in coat colour throughout the year, being most distinguishable in the summer when their coats are bright rusty red. In winter, their coats turn a dull, slate grey colour.

Rear

Both sexes have a prominent white rump and no tail. Females (does) have a small 'tush' or tuft of hair similar to a tail at the base of the rump patch 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 have three points when fully grown. Antlers are described as 'pearled' or 'bearded' when they are heavily textured with lots of nodules.

What you'll hear



Vocalisation

Both sexes of Roe deer make dog-like barking noises 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 whistle to attract their mothers when they become lost.

Look out for



Tracks and Signs

Roe deer are dainty creatures and leave small hoof prints (slots) about 4cm 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 and eat small quantities of 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. 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 although you will see them increasingly in groups when feeding in open areas such as fields and also during winter. Roe deer 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 digesting their food 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 will produce triplets. Young are born in May and June.

Roe deer are unique amongst deer species in that they delay the development of the growing offspring prior to birth for up to four months following mating. This is a mechanism adopted to avoid birthing during harsh northern winters when survival of young would be unlikely.

Bucks aggressively defend a territory from the start of spring in February/March until the end of August. The 'rut' is the term used for the breeding season that occurs between late July and early August. During this time bucks will pursue does and compete with neighbouring bucks to take over their territories and the does visiting that area. Fights between males can be serious and sometimes even lead to fatalities.

Humans and Deer

Roe deer are often seen as both a positive and negative influence in the countryside. They can cause damage to young woodlands and agricultural crops through browsing, however many landowners and rural industries utilise 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 you'll find them

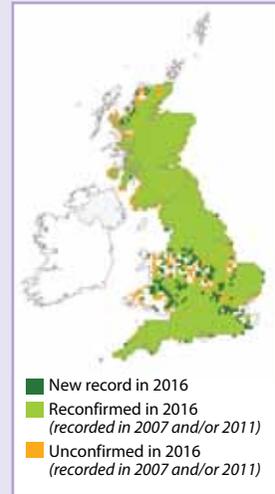


Origins

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 (6000 to 10000 years BC).

Population and Distribution

Today, Roe deer are abundant throughout 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 use agricultural fields in these areas too. They are increasingly entering areas closer to our towns and cities as they take advantage of more urban habitats.

