



Isle of Wight Deer Conservation Newsletter 2020

Five years of the IW deer survey

When Isle of Wight Deer Conservation was founded in 2015 one of our aims was to extend our knowledge of wild deer on the island in the modern era so that we could record this for the benefit of present day and future generations of islanders.

Hitherto little appears to have been done to achieve this. Enquiries at the Local Records Centre and elsewhere had met with responses along the lines of none were recorded¹. What we were already aware of was that deer have been re-emerging in the wild on the island since the 1970s with evidence of both of the native species, red and roe, being reported and also the introduced species, fallow and muntjac².

To get some idea of the recent origins of our wild deer it helps to consider the island not in isolation but as an outlying area to the New Forest. The British Deer Society has confirmed that deer cross and re-cross the Solent in both directions, with the possible exception of muntjac and chinese water deer³.

Unlike the island the New Forest has abundant deer populations so it comes as no surprise to learn that some of these deer will take the few minutes necessary to swim across under favourable conditions with the possibility of their numbers being augmented by those already breeding here and escapes from captivity although it must be noted that of the five species currently extant on the island only two, red and fallow are held captive here.



¹ FOI and other information requests, IW Local Records Centre

² IW County Press and elsewhere

³ British Deer Society Isle of Wight Deer Position Statement

Species has the survey revealed as present on the island:-

Red:-

Our largest land mammal. Native to the Isle of Wight, present until the mid-nineteenth century and again from the late 20th century. Small family groups and individual animals are occasionally seen in and around suitable wooded areas. There has been some evidence of recently born calves.



Fallow:-

A medium large size deer, the Romans first reintroduced fallow deer to Britain following their Ice Age extinction, these deer are believed to have eventually died out. The Normans reintroduced fallow deer to the island in the 11th century. They were abundant here until the end of the eighteenth century. Now observed as the occasional singleton or pair of deer.



Roe:-

A medium sized deer of ancient lineage that re-established in Britain soon after the end of the last Ice Age. They are not kept in captivity on the island and seldom so elsewhere, they are never farmed. It is not yet clear whether they are breeding on the island.



Sika:-

A medium size deer sometimes confused with fallow, they originate from Japan and are closely related to red deer with which they may rarely hybridise with. They are strong swimmers and are frequently seen on Lepe beach opposite the island. Odd animals have recently been seen with increasing frequency across the island. Breeding status unknown.

**Muntjac:-**

This very secretive small deer originates from China, the Reeves muntjac has a well deserved reputation for being an invasive alien species. Dispersed across the Isle of Wight in unknown numbers they have not been known to cause any environmental issues here. It is unclear whether or not these deer are descended from the escape from Robin Hill Country Park in the mid-1970s.

**Chinese Water Deer:-**

A small size deer they have a very distinctive appearance with their long tusks and absence of antlers. They have yet to be seen on the Isle of Wight.



IW Deer Conservation would like to express their gratitude to all those that have chosen to participate in the survey so far. To help us to build up as comprehensive a picture as possible about the island's deer further participation in the Isle of Wight Deer Survey from individuals, businesses and other organisations is most welcome.

Other Isle of Wight Nature News

Rewilding

In April the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust announced that they had purchased Little Duxmore Farm on the island, their web site states:-

"Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust last week secured 100 acres of farmland in the East Wight, with plans to transform the area into a rich wildlife haven. Until now, Little Duxmore has been principally an arable farm, producing crops like maize, however the Wildlife Trust hopes that the area will be transformed over the coming months and years, with the natural restoration of vital habitat for struggling farmland birds such as yellowhammer, skylark and even nightingale and circl bunting. The farm could also become home to a huge variety of other wildlife."



Beavers

Beaver reintroduction from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust:-

"The habitat present on the Isle of Wight demonstrates great potential for the reintroduction of beavers, with very few obvious areas of conflict where beavers would be problematic. There is also significant scope for habitat enhancement using beavers, which would deliver a range of benefits or ecosystem services including flood reduction, water quality improvements, water storage and drought alleviation alongside the more obvious positive to all wildlife that thrives when water is brought back to our ecosystems."



White Tailed Eagles

The reintroduction of white tailed eagles appears to be going from strength to strength. Despite the early losses of a couple of the birds the others are apparently thriving with further releases under way. This is the latest from the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation:-

"We have been delighted that we have been able to release this next group of birds this year as planned. We have seen from other reintroduction programmes that returning lost species offers real benefits for the ealth of our environment, and to people and local economies. This particularly important at these difficult times as people rediscover nature and its benefits."

For periodic updates about the island's deer and other wildlife please email deerwight@gmail.com, thank you for your interest and support