GWCT National Gamebag Census & Tracking Mammals Partnership

Fallow deer Dama dama

Taxonomy: Class: Mammalia; Order: Artiodactyla; Family: Cervidae

Description

The fallow deer went extinct in Britain during the last Ice Age, and was re-established by the Normans for hunting in the 11th century. Typically its coat is fawn with white spotting, but white varieties also occur, as do black ones. The male has palmate antlers cast in April–June. The fallow deer prefers mature broad-leaved or mixed woodlands. Bucks may be shot from 1 August to 30 April, does from 1 November to 31 March.

Further information:
Forestry Commission website.
Conservation status and legislation

Status:
UK: Native
World: Least Concern (IUCN Red List)

Legislation:
Agriculture Act 1947
Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Schedule 7
Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, Schedule 6, 10
Deer Act 1991
Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996
Deer (Scotland) Act 1996
Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002

Distribution and abundance

The fallow deer is widespread across England and Wales, including Anglesey. In Scotland it occurs in isolated pockets, mainly in Perthshire and Stirlingshire, as well as on the islands of Islay, Mull, Lambay and Scarba. It also occurs across much of Ireland, although a scarcity of records means that this is not apparent from the map.

Estimates of fallow deer abundance (numbers of individuals in the spring) across the UK, from Harris et al. (1995):

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Recent trends from the National Gamebag Census

Index of bag density from 1976 to 2009 (see statistical methods and interpretational considerations). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Too few sites provided records to evaluate trends before 1976. After a brief initial increase after 1976, the UK bag index has remained approximately stable between 1982 and 2009. The period of increase corresponded to a period of range expansion that slowed after the 1990s (see maps).

Change in fallow deer bags over time, with 95% confidence limits (see statistical methods):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>N Ireland</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
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Source National Biodiversity Network and its data providers who bear no responsibility for interpretation of the 10x10-km grid map.
### Environmental zones

Change in fallow deer bags over time, with 95% confidence limits (see statistical methods):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easterly lowlands (England/Wales)</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>105 -45 to 623</td>
<td>48 -10 to 275</td>
<td>23 -32 to 141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westerly lowlands (England/Wales)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>20 -64 to 156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uplands (England/Wales)</td>
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<td>Lowlands (Scotland)</td>
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<td>Intermediate uplands/islands (Scotland)</td>
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<td>True uplands (Scotland)</td>
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* significant at $P < 0.05$

### Comparison with BBS mammal data

Since 1995, data on fallow deer abundance have been collected under the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology. Below, the UK trend from the NGC is compared to the one from the BBS (from 1995 onwards).

NGC index of bag density (blue) and BBS index of abundance (red), from 1995 to 2009. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.
The BBS records are limited to England and show no significant change. For all years, the BBS confidence intervals are completely or almost completely within the NGC confidence intervals, indicating good agreement between the two index series.

Long-term trend from the National Gamebag Census

There are too few bag records of fallow deer to produce a trend starting before 1976.

References and further reading
