

Deer Tagging Project

Red deer calf and fallow fawn tagging took place in early June: Red Deer at Euston and Minsmere, Fallow deer at Holbrook, Epping and Hatfield.

Red deer tagged to date 37

Fallow deer 29

The red deer records are showing movements of around 20 miles from the tagging sites Fallow deer so far movement are much more restricted and are only about 5 miles. Historically radio collared fallow deer have also not shown significant movements.

The next steps are to maintain this project but to also continue to investigate the possibility of establishing GPS tagging of red deer in the East of England, project proposals are being developed and support from the EEBF will be requested when the project is developed more fully. I expect that this will be in the next 2 -3 months.

Woodland SSSI Recovery Project

Deer activity monitoring throughout this area has shown a reduction in fallow deer activity over much of the project area over the past 2 seasons.

Deer Impacts this spring seem to be reduced, although Spring flush started early and vegetation and regeneration seems to be doing well

Chalara is a massive issue in almost all the woods we visit, and NE CO's must start to speak to owners of SSSI's regarding future management objectives. Most of the SSSI's in mid Suffolk are ash dominated....

Trail Cams – are showing that deer are still present in all woodlands in the area, but that peak movements are now through the hours of darkness. Normally deer are crepuscular, they move and feed at dawn dusk, during the day and at night. Their behaviour has altered in response to stalking pressure. With local stalkers we are trying to adapt deer management behaviour to increase the effectiveness of future stalking. Where fallow numbers are reducing it seems as if roe deer numbers are increasing.

Wild Venison projects

With the close of the East of England Wild Venison Project in December we are actively looking with the FC into developing projects that will suit the new RDPE Program. Work with LEADER Groups in the east are developing and an expression of interest document is being developed with the Northants Leader Group for dissemination in the Rockingham Forest area in the next week. DI Partner organisations will be being asked to help with this in local areas.

Chinese Water Deer

Numbers seem to be on the increase still in Norfolk Suffolk and into Essex. Whether these cause a significant threat to native biodiversity is unclear, but it should be recognised that as deer densities increase the ability for them to adversely affect habitat structure must not be underestimated.

Muntjac across the channel

A meeting with Belgium scientists and stalkers was organised by the Norfolk Non Native Species Project. Muntjac are now free living in Belgium, released by all accounts by enthusiastic stalkers.... Discussions during the visit were surrounding impacts, and management options. It

appears that the current policy is that they should be eradicated, and from the UK experience they need to start now and don't let up!!

General thoughts on the future of Deer Management

During the past five years there has been a significant change in support and momentum for deer management, from the FC, landowners and their stalkers in developing deer management plans, highseat infrastructure, stalker time payments and the EEWVP. Public support for the control of deer populations have never been better, and where we can continue to demonstrate that Deer Management Best Practice is followed, and that deer are being managed for sound scientific based reasons this support is likely to continue.

The massive support through the grant schemes, from forest agents and the continued work of DI DLO's and DMA's in the region has stimulated increasing culls and enthusiasm on the ground. Resulting in increased culls and a visible change in deer activity levels and a reduction in impacts in many woodlands. This change though is slight, will quickly reverse if the momentum gained is reduced. I feel we are at yet another turning point, maintain the great work that the stalkers are doing in many areas through the next five years and woodlands will really start to improve, relax our efforts and quickly numbers will increase again causing impacts to worsen.

It should be the role of all organisations with an interest in the countryside and woodlands to ensure that deer management continues to be a major focus through into NELMS

The recent British Deer Society survey of deer populations in the UK show that deer populations are continuing to spread their ranges, where deer move into new areas their management and impact must be monitored. Science shows that where deer numbers reach low – moderate activity levels adverse impacts occur to woodland structure and knock on effects to other plant and animal communities are likely.

I am often asked what do we do next...

Really it is more of the same...

- Continue to maintain and raise the profile and importance of deer to all stakeholders (Why Deer are Important)
- Learning to live with deer
- Develop the science regarding deer populations, impacts, activity and numbers
- Develop more effective collaboration, particularly with the herding species
- Working with deer stalkers to increase effectiveness in their work on the ground
- Develop opportunities through the new RDPE programme to support the future management of deer

New challenges for the future

Enquiries regarding deer in the urban fringe, deer in gardens or on allotments continue to be the focus of calls from the public and the media, we continue to discuss with our partners the need (if any) for greater awareness of these issues, and the possible need for methods of control in these areas in the future.