

Fallow Deer

Dama dama (Linnaeus, 1758)

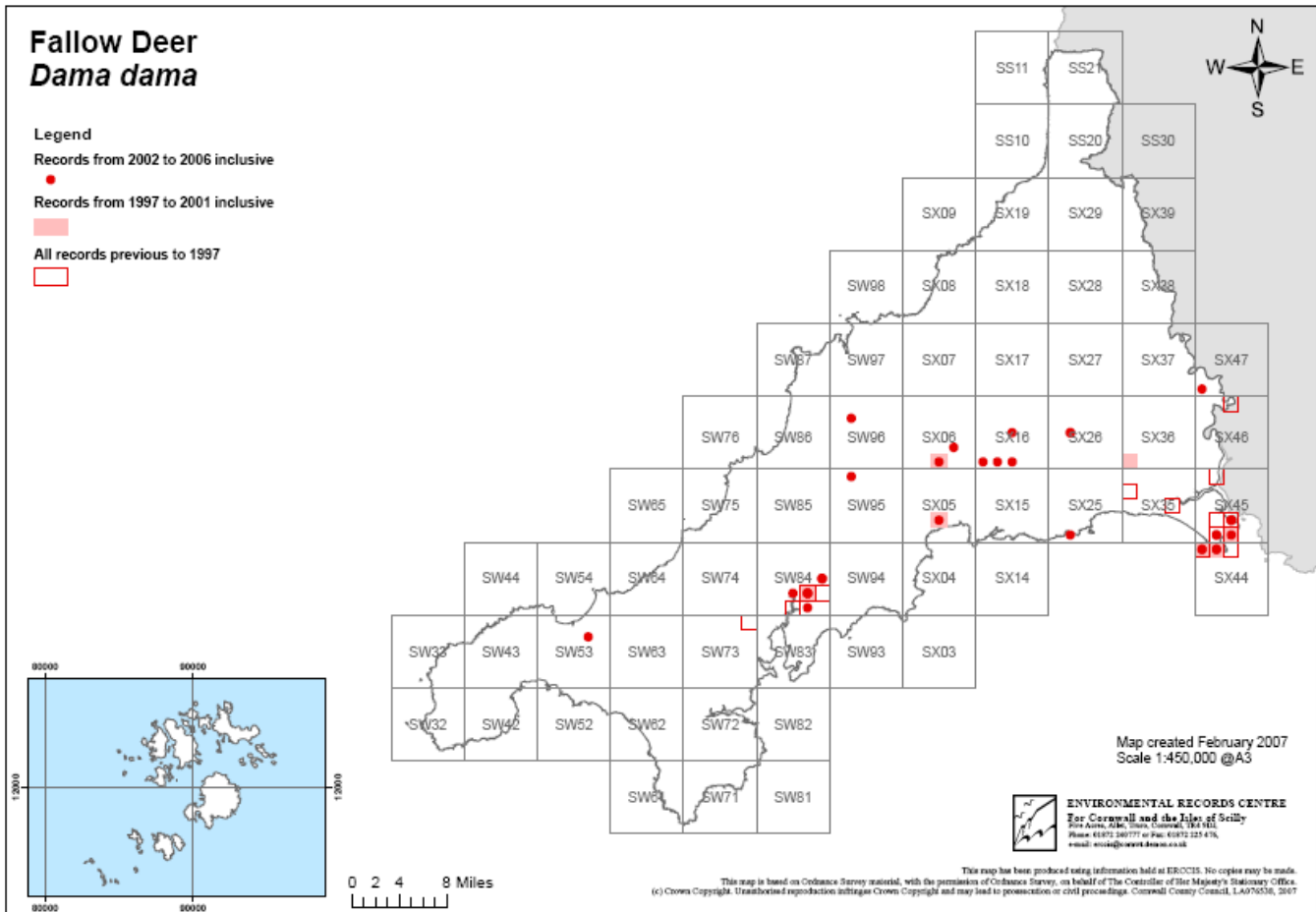
Order: Artiodactyla

The fallow deer is a large animal, a mature male (buck) being up to 1 m at the shoulder and weighing upwards of 70 Kg. Distinguished from red deer by the shorter muzzle and smaller ears, and by the distinctive white rump with a black inverted horseshoe bisected by a relatively long tail with a black central stripe. The coat colour is very variable – the summer coat can vary from white, through fawn, to black. Most are chestnut brown with white spots. The winter coat is usually grey-brown with fewer white spots. The buck carries distinctive 'palmate' antlers. These are flattened and expanded in the upper part and increase in size with the age of the buck to a maximum in the sixth year. Tracks, or slots, are 60 mm long and 40 mm wide and appear long and narrow but without the sharp point of the roe deer, droppings are similar to the red deer but somewhat smaller.



Field signs

During the breeding season, or rut, in October and November, the males compete for attention of the females (does) using a characteristic belching groan and sparring with their antlers, often in mating 'leks' similar to roe deer. Single fawns are born in May or June and are mature at 2 years. The social structure of the fallow deer is very flexible – outside the rut at high densities they form separate herds consisting of males, and females with young. At lower densities mixed sex groups may occur through the winter. Commonly found in parkland and estates, fallow deer prefer open gladed woodland but are also found in coniferous woodland, they tend to avoid young plantations. Predominantly a grazing animal, fallow deer eat a wide variety of plants and fruits as well as grasses. Adult deer have no natural predators in the UK and most deaths are the result of poor weather, old age and road accidents. Fallow deer are hunted for venison and for control of numbers.



The Fallow Deer is the least recorded mammal species in Cornwall, excluding the Isles of Scilly. The map shows isolated populations in the East of the county; these are possibly remnants of the location of deer parks.

Number of records per date class
 2002 to 2006 inclusive 33
 1997 to 2001 inclusive 8
 All records previous to 1997 27
Total 68

Western Europe and Asia, the distribution has been strongly influenced by human intervention.

Fallow deer are protected under the Deer Act, 1991. There are estimated to be about 100,000 fallow deer in the UK, mainly in the south of the Scottish Borders.

Survey Methods

Field surveys for tracks and signs
 Traffic casualty monitoring
 Deer management returns
 Hunt returns

DRAFT

Did you know?

Fallow deer were native to the UK before the last ice age. Current stocks were probably reintroduced for hunting and decorative reasons from the Norman invasion onwards. Each buck has a distinctive voice and pattern of groans that allows other deer to identify individuals during the rut. Analysis of the stomach contents of New Forest fallow deer found the remains of over 110 different plant species.

Key references

Web sites – The British Deer Society www.bds.org.uk
 The deer initiative www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk