



## Taking the initiative in deer management

by Robert Underhill of the Deer Initiative

**T**he six species of deer present in England are our largest wild land mammals. They are beautiful, graceful and sensate, bringing joy to those who watch and study them. They have aesthetic, economic and recreational value but they can also cause economic, environmental and human interest damage, some of it considerable at the local level. It is government policy to manage them.

The Deer Initiative is a broad partnership of statutory, voluntary and private interests dedicated to "Ensuring the delivery of sustainable, well managed wild deer populations in England". The partners abide by the principles of the Deer Accord and encourage others to share their commitment and priorities as an integral part of the management of Deer. The Deer Initiative is sponsored by the Forestry Commission and English Nature.

Through the five principles shown below the Deer Initiative seeks to promote the following outcomes:

### 1. A sustainable and balanced population of wild deer in England.

We work to ensure that populations are in sustainable balance with the natural resources available to feed and shelter them throughout the year.

### 2. A humane, responsible approach to the management of wild deer.

We will work to prevent deer populations growing to exceed a sustainable balance with the environment by carrying out management legally and in a humane and sensitive manner.

### 3. An experienced and knowledgeable capability in deer management.

To achieve best practice of deer management.

### 4. An informed public understanding of wild deer management.

To provide information that will extend understanding of the nature, role, contribution and impact of wild deer, and the benefits of planned and humanely carried out management of deer populations.

### 5. A partnership approach to reducing the adverse environmental and economic impacts of deer.

This requires the involvement of public, private and voluntary organisations associated with deer populations.

The Deer Initiative challenge in managing deer can be summarised as follows

- Achieve a sustainable healthy wild deer population.
- Improve opportunities for recreational interest in deer.
- Enhance public understanding and awareness of deer and their role.



- Improved deer management skills and knowledge.
- Significantly reduced cost of wild deer.

To achieve these aims the Deer Initiative is establishing local deer management groups across land owning boundaries. It aims to employ deer liaison officers across the country to coordinate this activity with technical support. These officers help form then support local deer management groups to effect sound deer management.

In the Chilterns Muntjac, a small barking deer from China which escaped from parks around 1900, are numerous and can now be found in most woods across the area. Fallow herds roam mainly to the west of the M40 and to the east of the A41. Roe, our native deer, are also increasing across the area. There are probably more deer in the Chilterns now than there have been for thousands of years. These deer have an impact by browsing young trees, preventing natural regeneration or coppice regrowth, and also the ground flora, with woodland species such as bluebells and some rare orchids (and some garden plants) eaten by Muntjac.

For more information, including details about wild deer species, see the website [www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk](http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk)

## Deer Accident Records Needed

Every day deer are injured and killed on the roads. It has been estimated that there are 30,000 - 50,000 vehicle collisions with deer every year in the UK, resulting in 10 - 20 human fatalities, but the data for this is poor. The Deer Initiative has set up a research project to investigate these road traffic accidents and try to find deterrents to prevent these incidents. You can help by reporting the following information on deer killed on the road to [www.deercollisions.co.uk](http://www.deercollisions.co.uk) or by post to PO Box 465 Bury St Edmunds IP28 6XD. Information should include Date, Location (grid reference) Deer Species, Car Damage and Human injuries.