

muntjac deer



The eleventh Duke of Bedford introduced the Muntjac, a small Asian deer, to his Woburn estate at the turn of the century. Escapees from Woburn successfully bred and have now spread over much of the country. They have become widespread throughout the Epping Forest district.

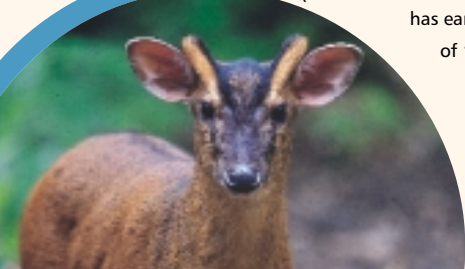
The Muntjac is about the size of a Labrador dog, with a characteristic rounded back. They have a rich brown coat. The white under surface of the tail is only seen when the Muntjac is alarmed and running away. The bucks have small pointed antlers and, like the Fallow, a new set is grown each year. The bucks have distinctive protruding canine teeth projecting from the upper jaw as short tusks.

Unlike Fallow deer Muntjac lead solitary lives, holding individual territories. They breed all year round and the fawns, with their spotted coats, are born relatively large and capable of running around quite confidently after two or three days.

Muntjac are secretive animals although not so shy of humans as Fallow. They have spread to the southern most tip of the Forest and are regularly seen in urban areas where they frequent gardens. Amongst their favourite foods are bluebells and roses.

Their droppings, often used as territory markers, are small, shiny black and cylindrical shaped with a point at one end and a depression at the other end. Their slot is markedly smaller than that of the Fallow. They have a distinctive barking cry, which has earned them the name of 'barking deer'.

Muntjac Buck



EPPING FOREST DEER

Deer walks are occasionally organised. Should you require any further information on these walks or any other information concerning the Forest or its deer, please contact:

The Epping Forest Information Centre
High Beach, Loughton, Essex IG10 4AF

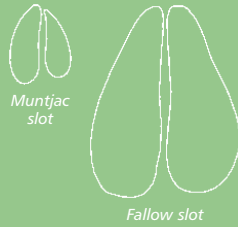
Tel 020 8508 0028/2266

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Photos courtesy of: G.T. Andrewartha (courtesy of J. Andrewartha)
The British Deer Society
Essex Wildlife Trust
Vikki Lince, Epping Guardian
Alan Woodgate



There are two species of deer found in Epping Forest, the Fallow (*Dama dama*) and the Muntjac (*Muntiacus reevesi*).



Muntjac slot

Fallow slot

fallow deer

Native to the Mediterranean region, Fallow were introduced to Britain by the Normans in the eleventh century when they were released into forests as highly prized quarry. James I is thought to have introduced some dark coloured Fallow into the area from Scandinavia and their descendants are the distinctive, almost black Fallow deer often seen in Epping Forest today.

Fallow deer are grazers and browsers, feeding on grasses, herbs, trees, shrubs, berries, nuts and bark. They commonly gather in small herds of four to five animals but sometimes form much larger groups.

Males, which are known as bucks, grow new antlers every year. At fifteen months the young bucks grow their first set of spike-like antlers and thereafter the new antlers become larger and flatter (palmate) year on year. The antlers are cast between April and June, re-grown and clean of velvet by September.

The females (does) can breed at sixteen months. The breeding season or rut is in late September/October (although this can vary) and the gestation period is approximately two hundred and thirty days. A single fawn is born in June and twins are rare.

For the first few weeks of life fawns hide in the shelter of tall vegetation whilst the mother goes to feed.

Fallow Buck



Group of Fallow Deer

Fallow antler

They are particularly vulnerable as they run the risk of discovery by predators such as foxes. In the past, the Forest was closed during the month when the fawns were born. This was known as the 'fence month'.

During the rutting season bucks claim their territories forming a bare patch of ground known as a rutting stand from where they advertise their presence with loud guttural bellows. The rutting stands are quite unmistakable with the presence of trampling, shed hairs and the pungent smell of urine. Does are attracted to a master buck's territory and he will fight off any rivals, often with tremendous battles of clashing antlers.

Fallow deer leave noticeable signs of their presence in a wood. Often, there is a distinct 'browse line' about two metres above the ground where the deer have nibbled the branches. Deer follow regular tracks through an area.



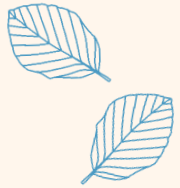
Deer are cloven-hoofed and leave a hoof print known as a slot. Their droppings are glossy black pellets that are pointed at one end and known as crotties.

HELP US TO HELP DEER

- Keep your dog within sight and under effective control whilst out in the Forest
- Drive slowly on Forest roads
- If you find a fawn - leave it alone unless its life is in serious threat. Do not touch it.
- If you see an injured deer on the Forest or encounter a road casualty on one of the Forest's roads - do not touch the animal. Remain as quiet as possible. Do not attempt to put the deer in your vehicle as it may only have concussion and could come round whilst you are driving!

Call The Warren Tel: **020 8532 1010**
(24hr answering machine)

deer management



Deer numbers are monitored on an annual basis and a number of 'deer glades' have been created to provide safe feeding areas.

The mortality rate for deer is rising on the very busy Forest roads. Recently, deer reflectors have been installed along a number of main roads as part of an ongoing project to reduce the number of road casualties. During the construction of the M25 provision was made for the movement of deer across it with the installation of accessible bridges and a deer tunnel.



Black Fallow Fawn



Common Fallow Fawn

the deer sanctuary

Concern over the number of deer being killed on the roads led the Conservators to establish the Deer Sanctuary in 1959 to retain specimens of the dark coloured deer. Located to the south west of Theydon Bois, it provides safe grazing for a herd of just over 100 of these special animals. The only other known captive herd of the dark form of Fallow deer is at Whipsnade.



Fallow deer droppings

Buck

Doe