

# History of deer in Richmond Park

- The word 'Deer' originally dates back to the Middle English word 'der' and the Old English word 'deor', meaning a wild animal.
- Hunting deer for sport dates back hundreds of years. In the 1630's, Charles I enclosed Richmond Park to preserve the deer stock and create a hunting ground.
- Over the centuries Richmond Park has been transformed from an exclusive hunting ground and game preserve into a Royal Park for the public to access and enjoy.
- Through careful management, the deer have survived and now thrive, serving as a continuing reminder that we stand in a medieval deer park.

**For more historical information please visit our exhibition in the entrance hall to Pembroke Lodge.**



All photos © Adrian Moysey



# Richmond Park is home to 300 red deer and 300 fallow deer

## Red deer

- They are the largest land mammal in the country and are indigenous to Britain.
- Males are known as 'Stags', females are 'Hinds' and their young are called 'Calves'.
- Red deer have a rusty red colour in summer and browner shade in winter, with a short tail and pale rump patch.
- Red deer antlers end in fine points, a stag may carry up to 16 points in his prime.



## Fallow deer

- Originally from the Mediterranean and the Middle East, it is commonly believed that the fallow deer were first introduced to Britain by the Romans.
- Male fallow deer are called 'Bucks', females 'Does' and their young are known as 'Fawns'.
- They come in four colours, some have a spotted coat which acts as a camouflage.
- Fallow deer often have a distinctive black horseshoe shape on their rumps, and a black stripe on their very long tails.
- When fully developed their antlers palmate, becoming flatter.



## Life cycle

- The gestation time for calves and fawns is 34 – 37 weeks, almost the same as humans. Born between May and July, their mother hides them amongst the long grass. As young deer do not have a scent, they remain undetected.
- A new-born takes its first step within half an hour of birth and remains with its mother for around a year.
- Male deer grow new antlers every spring, in preparation for the breeding season known as the 'rut'. Their antlers are made of bone and can grow at a rate of up to 2 inches each week.
- During the rut in September, males will roar and bark, clashing their antlers which have now fully matured. They compete for the hinds by engaging in elaborate displays of dominance that can sometimes result in injury, or death.
- The dominant stag ensures exclusive mating with the hinds, and sheds its antlers by the end of winter.





# Managing the Deer



- Deer are plant-eating herbivores and are well adapted to Richmond Park. They receive their nutrients by grazing on the natural plant life in the park including mushrooms, berries, acorns and conkers.
- The deer in Richmond Park are wild animals which need to be carefully managed for their own protection and survival. This prevents overgrazing, starvation and the risk of disease.
- From November to March, deer receive supplementary feeds of maize, hay and special pellets every night. As they gather to eat, wildlife officers monitor their condition and adjust the feeding regime accordingly, bringing them safely through the harshest of winters.
- Consequently the deer herds are in excellent condition.





# Richmond Park is unique for its exceptional landscape and wildlife within a metropolis

Over four centuries a unique ecosystem has evolved, with thousands of species supporting each other.



Deer keep the grasslands open and free of scrub, which maintains the high wildlife value of the Park. They shape the land by grazing on the lower branches and foliage of the trees, creating a distinctive browse-line.

The Park is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a European Special Area of Conservation. All this helps to protect the flora and fauna in the Park and allow the deer to thrive.





# Help protect the natural heritage of Richmond Park

With some 5.5 million visitors to the Park every year, we are working hard to protect this unique heritage for future generations and the wildlife that lives within it.

Please help the deer:

- **Keep at least 50 metres away**

Deer appear docile; however, they are unpredictable wild animals that deserve space and respect.

- **Observe the 20mph speed limit**

When the 20mph speed limit was introduced deer fatalities from traffic accidents dropped by 70%.

- **Be responsible with litter**

Deer will consume and cannot digest this, often leading to starvation and death.

- **Keep dogs away from deer**

Sadly, every year there are fatalities amongst deer and dogs. Deer perceive dogs as a threat and act accordingly, especially to protect their young.

- **Not removing chestnuts, acorns, and fungi**

They are an essential part of a deer's diet.

More information is available on the following websites [www.royalparks.org.uk](http://www.royalparks.org.uk) and [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)



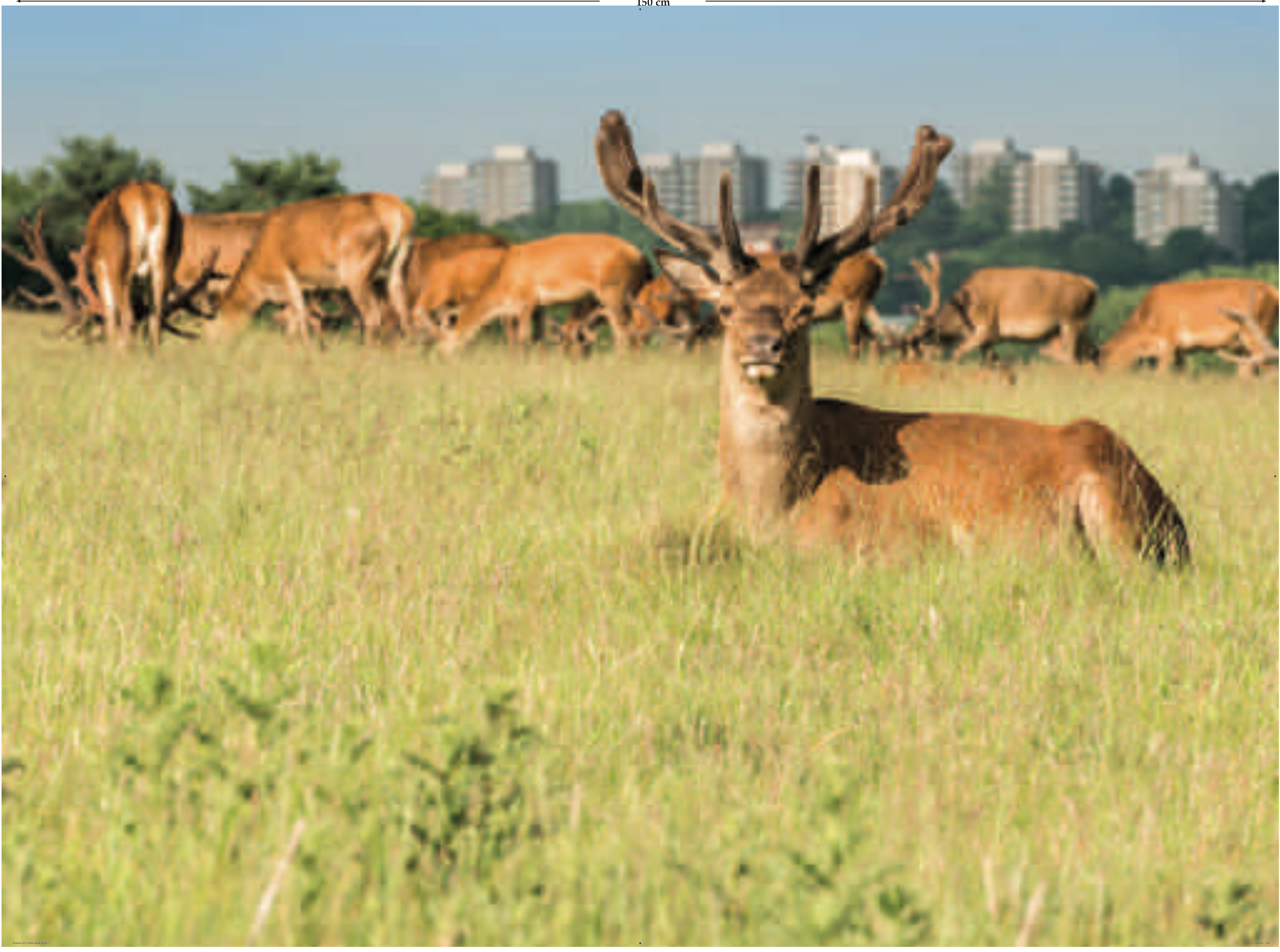


# Did You Know

- Deer are part of the Cervidae family which includes moose, reindeer and elk.
- Deer can live up to 18 years depending on food availability, wear on teeth and prevailing weather conditions.
- Deer are good swimmers and have hollow strands of hair that insulate from extremes of temperature and prevent them from drowning.
- Deer grow new coats twice a year in time for summer and winter.
- Deer raise their tails as a sign of warning to others.
- Deer mark their territory with a strong scent. This comes from a pheromone in the facial gland, which is in the front of each eye.
- Deer have a keen sense of hearing and can move their ears in any direction, without moving the head.
- Deer’s eyes are on the sides of their head, giving them a 310 degree view.
- Deer have an excellent sense of smell and can detect predators across long distances.
- They have a zig-zag running style to help evade predators, and can spring into the air, lifting all feet off the ground simultaneously. This is called ‘pronking’ or ‘stotting’.
- A red deer with 12 points on its antlers is called a Royal stag. A Monarch has 13 points and an Imperial stag has 14 points or more.
- A Stag is also known as a Hart, a medieval word which specifically describes a male red deer that is more than five years old.











150 cm

110 cm

9



