With good management, it is thus possible to achieve that necessary balance between healthy deer and healthy habitats, enabling people to see them in their natural state – if they are lucky.

National Forest Deer Management Group

The National Forest Deer Management Group consists of landowners working together to gather information about and monitor the deer population in the Forest area and to manage them collectively, with specialist input and advice, thus ensuring a healthy, sustainable population.

Deer are an integral part of woodland life. The word "forest" comes from Norman times where it related to an area of mixed land uses, including woodland, in which deer were raised for the benefit of the King.

The creation of The National Forest is providing just this mix of habitats, and thus the right conditions for the existing deer populations from the two ancient Forests of Needwood and Charnwood to spread beyond their boundaries and into the rest of the area.

This leaflet looks at the deer which you may be lucky enough to see, and their management.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS:

www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk	Tel. 0870 774 3677
www.forestry.gov.uk	Tel. 01673 842644
www.deercollisions.co.uk	Tel. 01842 890798
www.nationalforest.org	Tel. 01283 551211
www.basc.org.uk	Tel. 01889 565050
www.bds.org.uk	Tel. 01425 655434

JAN 04 *Photographs: Deer Initiative; Lincs Deer Group; Deer-UK; Forestry Commission; NFC; Peter Allman & Harry McMahon*

THE NATIONAL FOREST

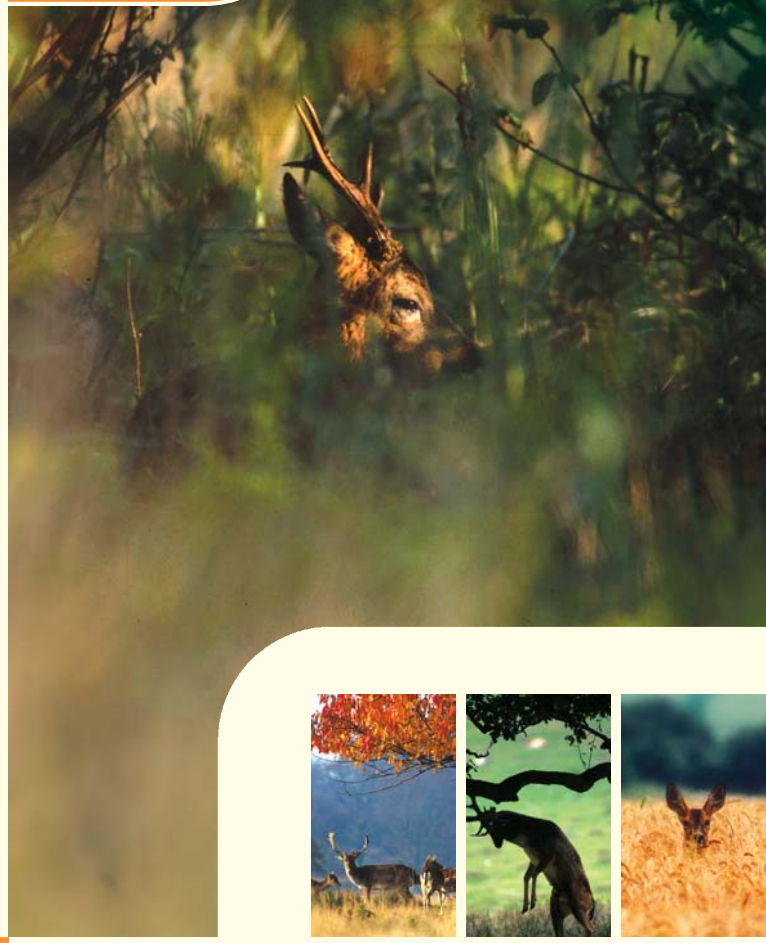
The National Forest Company
Enterprise Glade Bath Lane Moira Swadlincote
Derbyshire DE12 6BD
Tel: 01283 551211 Fax: 01283 552844
Email: enquiries@nationalforest.org
Website: www.nationalforest.org

Printed on environmentally friendly paper

a forest in the making!

deer *in* THE NATIONAL FOREST

THE NATIONAL FOREST



DEER MANAGEMENT

deer *in*
THE NATIONAL FOREST

Deer are beautiful wild creatures and one of the highlights of a visit to a woodland is to catch a glimpse of these elusive, shy creatures.

The creation of The National Forest is increasing the area of suitable habitat at a time of increasing deer numbers and territorial expansion.

The National Forest Company wants to see a sustainable deer population in the Forest area but recognises that they can be very destructive to trees and other habitats if their numbers are too high.

Which species are present?

Only 2 of the main species in the UK are found in any significant numbers in the wild in The National Forest area – fallow and muntjac – but there are signs of red deer near the western boundary.

FALLOW

Height - Up to 1m at shoulder.

Breeding - One fawn produced during May-June each year.

Origin - Introduced by the Normans to parks and estates from France in 11th C and then escaped into the wild.

Diet - Grass, crops, herbs, shrubs and acorns.

Habits - Found in groups or herds, often sheltering in woods and feeding out on fields. Can cause significant localised damage to farm crops, woodland shrubs and ground flora.

MUNTJAC

Height - Up to 50cm at shoulder.

Breeding – Can breed all year round, producing 1-2 fawns each year.

Origin - Introduced to Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire in early 1900s from China and then escaped or were deliberately released.

Diet - Bramble, herbs, nuts & fruits, coppice shoots and flowers.

Habits – Solitary animals, preferring dense woodland cover. Often feeds in gardens. Damages trees, farm crops, woodland shrubs and ground flora.

RED

Height - Up to 1.2m at shoulder.

Breeding - 1 calf each year.

Origin - Native.

Diet - Grass, crops, heather, trees and shrubs.

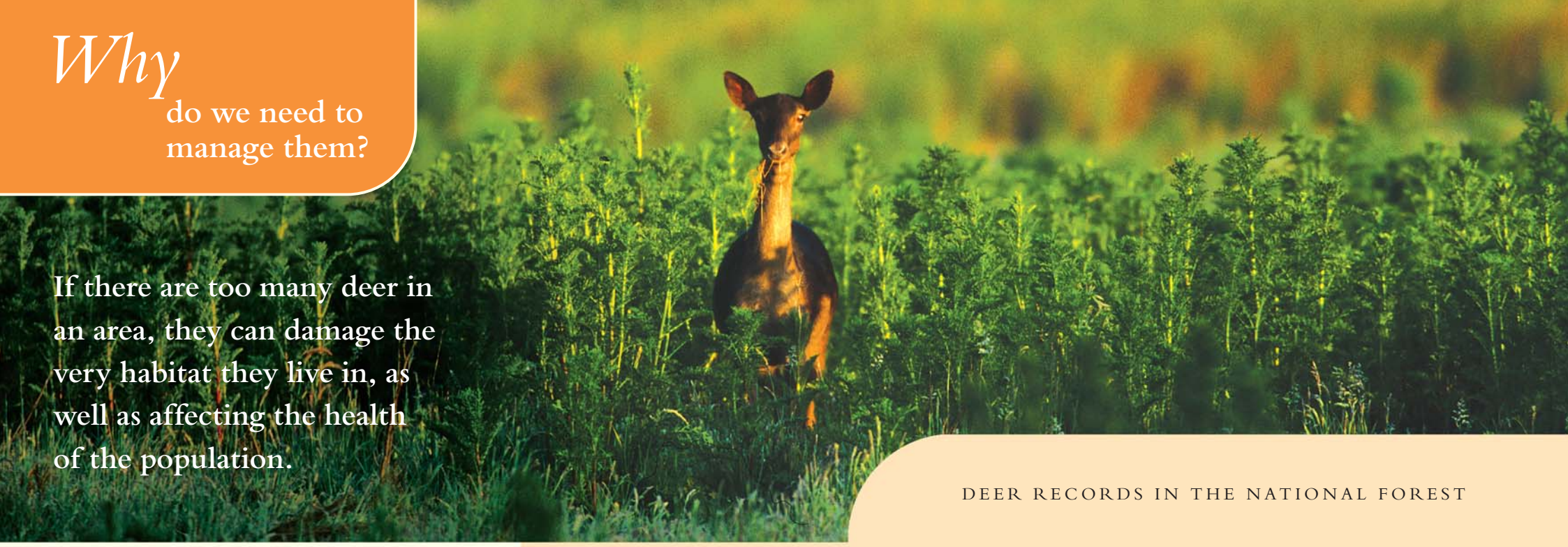
Habits - Lives in groups. Ranges widely and can cause serious damage to trees, woodlands and farm crops.

Roe

Muntjac

Red

Why do we need to manage them?



If there are too many deer in an area, they can damage the very habitat they live in, as well as affecting the health of the population.

What damage can they do?

Bark stripping occurs when deer shave off tree bark with their lower teeth for food. The broad parallel teeth-marks are often clearly visible, running more or less vertically. Excessive stripping can eventually kill the tree.

Browsing - nibbling of the buds and shoots of newly formed growth for food. Tree seedlings, coppice regrowth and herbaceous plants and flowers like primulas, violets and rosette plants are eaten. The lack of ground and lower vegetation has a knock-on effect in that the loss of cover prevents ground nesting birds breeding, insects decline and tree seedlings cannot develop into the next crop of new trees.

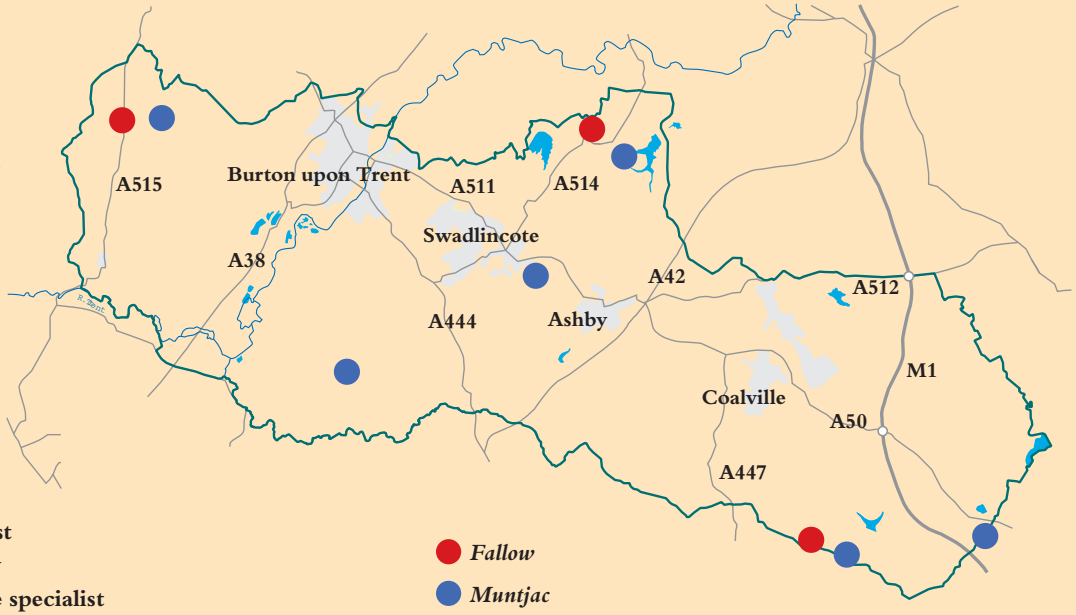
Fraying- is caused by male deer rubbing their antlers (and facial scent glands) against tree stems and foliage as a form of sexual aggression or territory marking. Fraying can cause significant damage on valuable specimen trees and small areas of young woodland. Fallow and muntjac bucks are also known to thrash plastic tree shelters to pieces.

Management

Management of deer should be an integral part of a woodland management plan, and not an afterthought. It should be done over a period of time and not just in response to specific problems.

It is down to landowners themselves whether or not they wish to carry out management. It is not the decision of the National Forest Company. The NFC can only encourage landowners to take specialist advice and co-operate with each other through the Deer Management Group. ***(see over)***

DEER RECORDS IN THE NATIONAL FOREST



"10km squares from which deer records reported".

Effects on the deer themselves

Where populations have become too great for the habitat to sustain and food supply becomes limited, the deer themselves can suffer. Mortality increases and breeding success decreases. While this may be seen as a natural way of balancing the population, deer populations are increasing at such a rapid rate that it is estimated that the number in the UK will double in the next 10 years.

Man has removed natural predators and provided lots of new woodlands for the deer to thrive in. No-one likes to think of animals suffering because of lack of food. It may therefore be necessary to control the population if it becomes too high.

Another effect is the increase in number of road accidents involving deer. The National Forest is crossed by a number of major roads including the A38, M1, A42 and A50/511 and as populations, particularly herding species like fallow, look for new sources of food, the risk of a collision is very real.

Such deer-related traffic accidents have a considerable impact:

- they present one of the main causes of mortality among wild populations of deer.
- they pose a major animal welfare issue, because a high proportion of deer which are hit by cars are not killed outright. Instead many have to be put down at the roadside, while others escape to die later of their injuries.
- they pose a safety hazard to road users, and lead to substantial damage to cars and numerous human injuries as well as a number of fatalities in most years. Across the UK, there are an estimated 30-50,000 vehicle collisions involving deer and up to 20 human fatalities every year.

It is thus important that a balance is maintained between a healthy and sustainable population of deer and the habitat they live in.

Prevention is better than cure

Where public money has been invested in the creation of new woodlands, as in The National Forest, it is important, therefore, that damage to woodlands is minimised, either through good woodland design or appropriate protection of the trees. This is achieved through the use of higher tree shelters than usual (1.8 m instead of the standard 1.2m) and deer fencing.

Why are the fences so high?

Deer can jump! Normal rabbit or stock fencing is not high enough. Depending on species present, fences may need to be as high as 1.8m to prevent deer jumping over. Furthermore, some species especially muntjac, will push through and also try to burrow under, so small mesh has to be used and the bottom of the fence buried.

Unfortunately, the use of fences to protect woodland against deer damage can be expensive and it may be necessary at times to reduce the population by culling.

How do you know how many to cull?

The best way to determine this is for landowners and managers to work together through the National Forest Deer Management Group. The population level is estimated through sightings, dung counts, etc. The desired/acceptable number that the various habitats can sustain is estimated and, knowing breeding rates, the numbers of males and females that need to be culled can thus be worked out.

Browsing

Fraying

Bark stripping

Isn't it cruel to kill them?

Deer are culled in accordance with legal requirements and accepted codes of practice such as that produced by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the British Deer Society (BDS). Legal close seasons govern when particular sexes and species can be culled.

Who does the culling?

It is up to individual landowners to decide who should cull deer on their land. The National Forest Company encourages all landowners to ensure that those carrying out culling are fully trained and competent in stalking by seeking advice from the Deer Initiative (DI), BASC, BDS, etc.

What happens to the deer then?

This very much depends on the arrangements which the landowner has with the stalker but almost all enter the food chain. Carcases must be handled well and hygienically. Venison whether in whole carcases or parts can only be sold by a licensed game dealer. Dealers are licensed by Local Authorities and most carcases are inspected by Veterinary Inspectors. Venison is a healthy, low cholesterol, high protein meat.