

Turvey Deer

We last reviewed the status of deer around Turvey in November 2004. There have been some significant changes since then. In 2004 only the two smaller species of deer, the Muntjac and the Chinese Water Deer, were to be found within the parish of Turvey itself, while Fallow Deer occurred just over and along the Northants border and Red Deer were still confined to the grounds of the Picts Hill Estate. But in the past year or so both Fallow and Red Deer have become regular within the parish boundaries while Chinese Water Deer seem to be supplanting the Muntjac as the commoner of the two smaller species.

My first encounter with Fallow Deer within the parish was on 22nd February 2009 when on an early morning walk I came across a fine buck with four hinds just to the north of the Bedford road near New Gains Farm. They were lolling at ease on a narrow strip of grass by a hedge and allowed me to pass within 75 yards before resuming their grazing. The buck sported a fine summer coat with heavy white spotting while the hinds still remained in their dark winter dress or pelage. No more were seen by me locally until 5th May 2010 when two hinds were present south of the Bedford road near Grindstone Hill, with these or another two present a little further south on 9th June. A buck has also been reported from Abbey Park. So we may well have a resident herd with us now, an offshoot perhaps of the much larger number now occurring along the Northants border near The Three Shires Way.

But even more impressive have been the Red Deer which have either been released or have escaped from Picts Hill Estate. Two stags were present in the new plantations just to the north of the old railway line on 5th June 2010 and a 'royal' stag with five hinds was present by Great Oak Wood on 1st December 2010. A 'royal' stag has a set of antlers with 12 points, six on each side with the top three forming a crown, hence 'royal'. Most deer are wary of people and will move away but it's probably best to steer clear of Red Deer stags during the rutting season in September and October – they stand almost as tall as a man and have been known to attack the unwary human.

As for the smaller deer, the Muntjac seems curiously scarce at present, though the odd one does come through our grounds, while Chinese Water Deer are not infrequently to be seen out in the open fields on both sides of the Bedford road and as far afield as Lavendon, Harrold and Bozeat. The only deer missing to complete the set remains the Roe Deer.



Br. John