

Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group

www.quantockdeergroup.co.uk



To all deer count helpers, landholders and members of QDM&CG

The 31st annual end of winter deer count took place on **Sunday 14th March 2021**.

With great relief and huge thanks we managed to undertake the 2021 annual deer count! After a lot of background planning and preparation the Quantock Rangers got the go-ahead. Timing out of lockdown was on our side – luckily the 2020 count was just in time too! With safe systems in place we negotiated our way through the covid situation. Were the deer aware of the preceding global pandemic? Well they were probably wondering where all the people had gone through the spring and early summer of 2020, the hills were very quiet...but that didn't last and public numbers increased well beyond expectations through the summer, autumn and winter.

Not only did covid influence numbers of people using the hills for recreation it also had a big influence on deer management. Venison prices have been at a very low rate and many stalkers have not been culling and the Quantock Staghounds also had to stop. With these two factors I may have expected a 'spike' in deer numbers for this year's count. While there has been a small increase in 'count' numbers one could have expected this number to have been somewhere between 100 and 200 higher – with the 479no 2020 hind and calf numbers, there would roughly have been 200+ calves born in the summer of 2020.

So what may account for only a small increase – people pressure is quite likely to have pushed some deer to much quieter areas or made their movements much earlier in the morning so they may already have sought cover before daylight allowed counting to get underway. The increase in high quality agricultural cropping luring the deer to quiet farmland, culling still may have been happening and we know we don't always count all the deer. There was a cold northerly wind blowing in against the northern end of the hills so any deer in the north may have been tucked away.

Encouragingly there has been a small increase in stag numbers for the 3rd consecutive year. Again these are stags 'counted' on the morning of the count and it's quite likely that 'Quantock' stag numbers are higher, but they have such a wide range they may be out they counting area.

A big thank you to all who managed to volunteer for the count getting up particularly early. Driving, walking and cycling with the aim to spot as many deer as possible. Nothing quite beats an early spring morning on the hills! And a big thank you to the Rangers for getting the systems in place to get the count underway, it's only foot and mouth that's beaten us in 31 years! Thank you all!

Matthew Peaster ~ Chairman

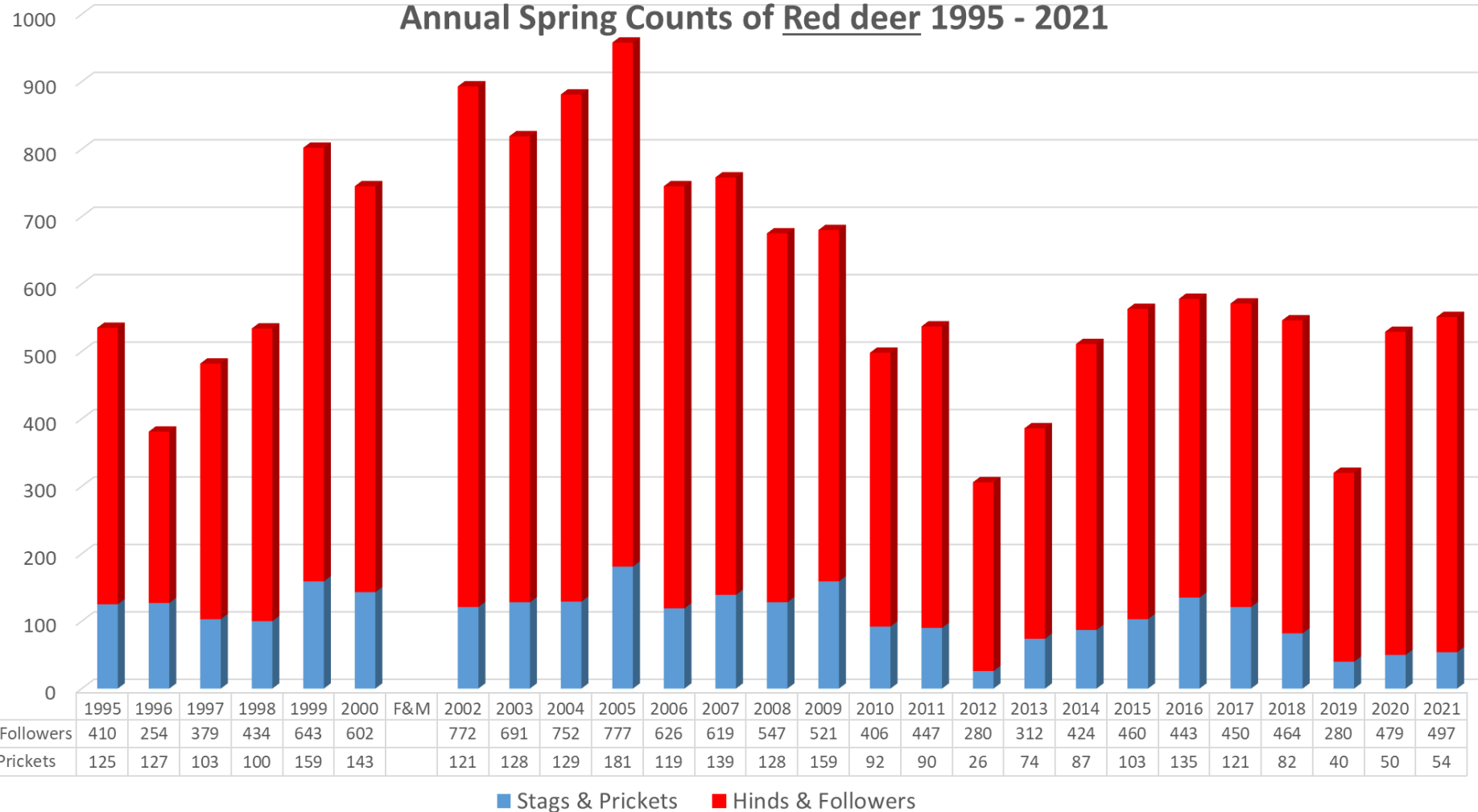
Quantock Deer Count - Summary of deer count 14th March 2021

Red Deer	Hinds & calves	Prickets	Young Stags	Older Stags >4yr old		Roe Deer	Fallow deer	Muntjac deer
551	497	20	19	15		155	0	1

Comparison of Red deer counted March 2021 with past 4-year average by region:

<u>Year 2021</u>			<u>4-yr Average 2017 - 2020</u>		
Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags	Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags
551	497	54	492	418	73
A: North (all count blocks lying north of the Crowcombe to Overstowey road)					
369	330	39	349	306	44
B: Central: (South of Crowcombe to Overstowey Road to Lydeard Hill, incl. Great Wood, Aisholt Common, West Bagborough &					
161	150	11	130	102	28
C: South-East (all areas south-east of Lydeard Hill – incl. Cothelstone, Broomfield to Kings Cliff.					
21	17	4	12	11	2

Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group Annual Spring Counts of Red deer 1995 - 2021



RED DEER : Totals by Year

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	676	535	381	482	534	802	745	FMD	893	819	881	958	745	758	675	680	498	537	306	386	511	563	578	571	546	320	529	551