

Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group

www.quantockdeergroup.co.uk



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

The 33rd annual end of winter Quantock deer count took place on **Sunday 5th March 2023**.

The 2023 count took place as usual in early March, on a dry, clear and chilly Sunday morning.

Thank you to everyone who gave up their Sunday morning lie-in! 54 'counters' ventured out early morning with their maps and spreadsheets to count the deer in their allocated area/s. The weather can influence the numbers of deer seen, but it would seem that the conditions overall this year were good. A total of 52 areas were counted which cover 'Quantock Deer country' which is roughly the AONB boundary, less some farmland in the southern end, but taking in a somewhat greater area to the west. It's an area estimated to be roughly 150 km² or 15,000 hectares.

Quantock Deer Count - Summary total of deer counted 5th March 2023

Red Deer	Hinds & calves	Prickets	Young Stags	Older Stags >4yr old	Roe Deer	Fallow deer	Muntjac deer	Sika
643	533	40	49	21	192	0	0	0

The total number of Red Deer has fallen very slightly this year to 643 from 676 last year but remains well above the average count over the previous four years (see Table below). An additional 8 hinds and calves were seen outside the 'count area' which have not been included, but may suggest the count area needs reviewing, as new habitats become available to them or pressure within the area pushes deer further afield. Any additional areas would need to be considered separately so as not to alter the 'count area' results which has remained broadly the same since for many years. Looking at the graph, below, we may suggest that the Quantock red deer population is in a stable state, without great increases or falls for 8 or 9 years, with the one exception of 2019 when there was a 'dip' that may have been due to weather or other factors. The graph shows some historical peaks between 2002 to 2005 and some dips 2012 to 2013, but with results in the last few years in the same range as averaged counts in the 1990s. We recognise that 'not all' deer are counted but by working through maps and forms from adjacent counters we 'hope' to eliminate double counting, though can't always guarantee this as the deer move through the areas.

Breakdown of Red Deer seen by region and comparison with average over previous four years

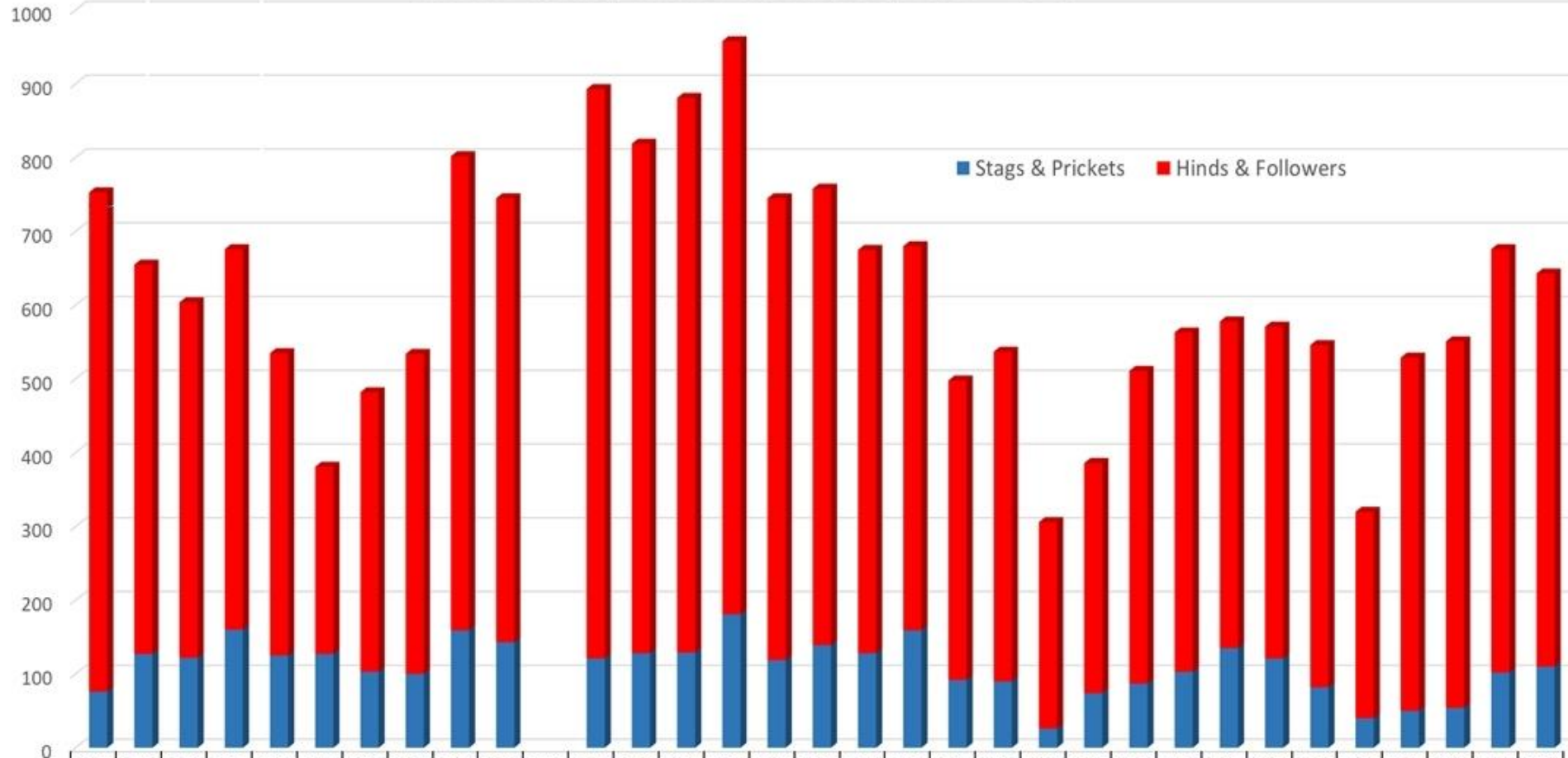
Year 2023			4-yr Average 2019 - 2022		
Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags	Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags
643	533	110	519	458	62
A: North (all count blocks lying north of the Crowcombe to Overstowey road)					
484	403	81	365	326	39
B: Central: (South of Crowcombe to Overstowey Road to Lydeard Hill, incl. Great Wood, Aisholt)					
123	102	21	130	112	19
C: South-East (all areas south-east of Lydeard Hill – incl. Cothelstone, Broomfield to Kings Cliff.)					
36	28	8	24	20	4

The Quantock deer count is one of the longest running deer counts in the country. We aim to keep the methodology the same each year. Some areas have been added but we assume that by keeping the method the same we can compare results fairly year on year over long time periods. We hear that deer numbers and distribution of most deer species are increasing nationally, with some very high numbers of fallow especially in East of England and increasing urban deer. However, using the Quantock count for over 30+ years we have a record of what's happening locally. We have "less" red deer now than in 1991, when we had our first count. Deer numbers may be high in some regions but in case of red deer seem fairly stable here, although it can be argued that there's not an even distribution of them across the QAONB.

The Quantock Deer count continues annually through the ongoing interest and deep-seated culture of 'Quantock Deer'. Throughout this time there have been notable 'other' deer counted. Roe deer are native and live in small family groups and can often be seen in the same places daily. Numbers of roe counted have gradually increased over the past ten years with this year's total of 192 the highest to date; a lot of these being counted in the adjoining farmland surrounding the hills. Muntjac never seem to have taken hold, although they are occasionally seen, however none were counted on the count morning. Sika too have been recorded very occasionally, but none seen on the morning of the count.

Thank you again to all the counters and helpers who plan and undertake the count !

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Annual Spring Counts of Red deer 1991 - 2023



	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	F&M	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
■ Hinds & Followers	677	528	482	516	410	254	379	434	643	602		772	691	752	777	626	619	547	521	406	447	280	312	424	460	443	450	464	280	479	497	574	533
■ Stags & Prickets	76	127	122	160	125	127	103	100	159	143		121	128	129	181	119	139	128	159	92	90	26	74	87	103	135	121	82	40	50	54	102	110
Total	753	655	604	676	535	381	482	534	802	745		893	819	881	958	745	758	675	680	498	537	306	386	511	563	578	571	546	320	529	551	676	643

(J Langbein March 2023 v.2)