

Country Notes for December 2019

Our part of Kent has surprisingly few large mammals. West Kent has quite a considerable deer population, including fair numbers of fallow deer. These are really quite large and drivers frequently have to stop because of groups of them blocking the road. I have certainly had to stop my car in the vicinity of Sevenoaks to allow them to move out of the way! However in our parishes the only large mammals to be seen are the very occasional roe deer and, infrequently, wild boar. There have been reliable reports of both, but they are very few and far between. However as the month approaches 25th December there have, interestingly, often been reports of sightings of reindeer, usually by much younger members of our community.

The only known wild reindeer herd in Britain is to be found in the Cairngorms, often on Cairngorm Mountain itself. They were re-introduced into the Cairngorms by Mikel Utsi and Ethel Lindgren in 1952 when five cows and two bulls came from Sweden. The herd has increased to the level of 150 over the years and they may frequently be seen by walkers as they climb the mountains in the area. They are quite friendly and a few chosen ones do make appearances at Christmas events in the area and beyond. They are currently managed by Tilly Smith, who very impressively has the ability to call them down off the hillside!.

However, reports in recent years from younger members of our community have often concerned reindeer waiting outside peoples houses in our villages on Christmas Eve, accompanied by a man in a red coat with white trimmings. He has sometimes been seen on people's rooftops, causing concern that he may be breaking and entering via the chimney. The gentleman in red apparently has a particular liking for sweet sherry and mince pies and there have been reports that these left out for him on the night of 24th December have been found consumed the following morning. What more evidence do we need!

Should anyone record any positive observations of reindeer over the next few weeks we would be thrilled to hear of them!

A very Merry Christmas to you all!

Andrew G Snowdon