

Chinese Water Deer, *Hydropotes inermis*



Overview

Short description of *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

This is a small, thickset deer with brownish-grey pelage, redder in summer, which is seen often in marshland. There are no antlers; males have prominent downward-pointing tusks. This species lacks a white rump-patch, and has only a short tail.

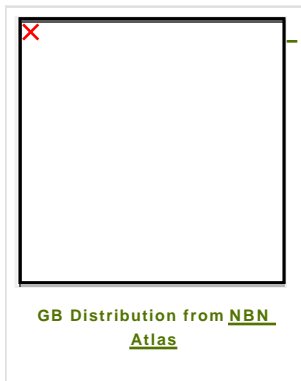
Description of *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer status in GB

Chinese water deer has a limited distribution in GB, being established only in parts of eastern England, with occasional sightings elsewhere. Around 1500 Chinese water deer were thought to be living in the wild in 2004. In 2009 there were estimated to be 4000 individuals in the wild.

Habitat summary: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

Chinese water deer are associated mainly with wet habitats but also occur in woodland and on arable farmland.

Distribution map



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Overview table

Environment:	Terrestrial
Species status:	Non-Native
Native range:	China, Eastern Asia, North Korea, South Korea
Functional type:	Herbivore
Status in England:	Non-Native
Status in Scotland:	Non-Native
Status in Wales:	Non-Native
Location of first record:	Leckford
Date of first record:	1944

Invasion history: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

Origin

The species has a fragmented and shrinking range in the Yangtse Basin of eastern China, perhaps now restricted to the Poyang Lake and Yancheng Nature Reserves, and separate populations in North and South Korea.

First Record

The first zoo imports to GB were in 1873. They were being released into parks from 1896 onwards and were first recorded in the wild in Buckinghamshire in 1944.

Pathway and Method

Chinese water deer were brought to GB as ornamental animals for parkland estates. They have been subject to translocations, some of which have led to escapes into the wild and the establishment of new populations.

Species Status

Apart from a small group in France, no other non-native populations of this species are known and the native population is under threat. The GB population may currently represent as much as 10% of the total worldwide for this IUCN Red-listed species. Chinese water deer were first noted in the wild in Bedfordshire in 1954, Norfolk in 1968, Cambridgeshire in 1971 and Suffolk in 1987, each probably the result of separate introductions. Natural spread from these centres has been very slow but seems to be accelerating recently.

Ecology & Habitat: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

Dispersal Mechanisms

The presence of Chinese water deer in GB is apparently due as much to unintentional escapes from collections as to deliberate release and translocation. Natural rates of spread are apparently very slow, and translocation has been an important factor in their dispersal.

Reproduction

Males rut mainly in December and litters mainly of 2–4 young are born mostly in May or June. Young females are fertile by the time of the next rut.

Known Predators/Herbivores

Chinese water deer have no important natural predators in GB. A few fawns may be taken by foxes and some adults by large dogs.

Resistant Stages

None known.

Habitat Occupied in GB

Chinese water deer occur in marshes with reeds, sedges or coarse grasses, and in woodland where there is a mixture of cover and open areas. They also feed on arable farmland.

Distribution: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

The species is well established in parts of the Fens, the Norfolk Broads, and western Bedfordshire. They also occur in Suffolk and are occasionally reported elsewhere.

Impacts: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

Environmental Impact

Chinese water deer tend to graze in robust habitats such as marshes and reedbeds and their ecosystem impact is thought to be low.

Health and Social Impact

None known although deer are implicated in road traffic accidents.

Economic Impact

This species may eat root crops or growing cereal when other food is scarce. It is thought they cause negligible economic damage to woodland or to crops. They are occasional road casualties and so contribute a small amount to the economic and human costs of traffic accidents caused by non-native deer.

References & Links: *Hydropotes inermis*, Chinese Water Deer

Identification

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