



FIA RUA

RED DEER

*Cervus elaphus*

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The little stars on this map represent the distribution of Red Deer throughout Ireland. Each square on the map is equivalent to 100 kilometres by 100 kilometres.

The Red Deer is our biggest wild animal. The male deer is called a stag. He has large antlers which begin to grow in April of his second year and are fully grown by August or September. The female deer is called a hind. She does not have antlers. Stags and hinds usually keep apart in separate groups, but when the mating season begins in October/November, a stag leaves his group and joins the hinds. At this time, he will gather as many hinds as he can and will fight any other stag which tries to take over the herd. Stags roar and bellow and try to lord it over the females but it is the hinds which are the real leaders of the herds. Calves are born in June. They are brown with white spots. A calf will stay

with its mother for about a year. Red Deer herds are often large and may be seen on mountains and moorlands. They used to live close to forests but, with the destruction by people of most of our trees, Red Deer have retreated to open country. These deer are very cautious animals. They have exceptional sight and hearing with a wonderful sense of smell which warns them of danger. Herds search for food and water at dusk. They eat grass, heather and young tree shoots and if there are too many deer they do a lot of damage to woodlands by eating the seedling and bark of trees. Red Deer were hunted almost to extinction in the past but are a protected species in this country now.

PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE – PLEASE DO NOT LITTER