

WILD AND FERAL MAMMALS

Sika nippon. **Japanese Deer.**

The most recorded was eighty-seven on May 23rd, a fawn probably only a day or so old was also seen on this day. Three bucks were shot during the autumn. The first challenge call of the bucks was heard on September 18th.

Cervus elaphus. **Red Deer.**

The total population now appears to be six or seven and no young have been reared this year so the species is perilously near extinction on the island. The six seen frequently in the autumn consisted of one stag, three hinds, and two immature males.

Capra hircus. **Feral Goat.**

The largest number counted in a herd was forty-six, seen on June 11th and August 2nd. The total population is probably slightly in excess of this number. Three billies were shot during the autumn.

Halichoerus grypus. **Grey Seal.**

Visits have been made to Seals' Hole on the following dates:

March 14th, April 27th, May 24th, June 9th and 24th, July 9th and 26th, August 7th and 21st, September 5th, 7th, 20th and 24th, October 2nd, 7th, and 21st, November 3rd and 19th.

The presence or absence of seals in the cave (other than calves) seems to depend on the weather, quite large numbers (up to fourteen) being present during inclement weather and none being present on fair days. The following calves were found:

July 9th.—One dead female calf about two to three days old.

September 5th.—One dead female calf about ten to fourteen days old with much of the puppy coat moulting. It weighed only 21½ lbs, and appeared to be unusually thin. (The normal weight at birth of this species is about 30 lbs, and increase in weight during the first fortnight should be very rapid.) The animal was dissected, but no cause of death, other than possible starvation, could be ascertained.

September 24th.—One calf about twenty-four hours old. This calf was ringed on October 2nd, and was still present in the cave on October 7th.

The dead calf of June 9th is at an exceptional time of year as the species in this part of Great Britain normally calves from August to October.

The following seal counts have been made covering the whole island. They are believed to be comparable with each other and fairly complete.

March 26th	34	August 22nd	59
May 12th	44	September 7th	32
May 23rd	55	October 3rd	53
June 23rd	61	October 23rd	46
July 27th	79	November 5th	46
August 6th	89	November 24th	77

It is possible that there is a fairly 'permanent' population of between forty to fifty animals around the island and that the increase in July and early August is due to breeding adults on a leisurely migration to the large breeding areas of Pembrokeshire and its islands, while the increase at the end of November is a return migration. That most of the 'permanent' population is a maturing one and not a breeding one seems likely from the lack of any other breeding site but Seals' Hole, although further stretches of the coast have been explored for suitable caves and beaches. Although frequently the counts have to be made from too great a range for age to be assessed there is definitely an increase in the proportion of young animals in the late autumn, for instance of the fifty-three seals counted on October 3rd, the following assessment was made of their age: Adults, 26; Immatures, 17; Yearlings or calves of year, 11. This is certainly the largest number of yearlings or calves of the year seen throughout the season.