

SHORT NOTES

ROE DEER AND FALLOW

Everyone interested in British deer must be grateful to Mr. P. H. Carne for his valuable description of the antipathy between roe and fallow deer. Strong confirmation of this can be provided from north-west England, where a comparable situation exists.

Taking the Lakeland area in its widest sense (Cumberland, Westmorland, and the Furness district of Lancs.), it can be said that, except among the central hills, every suitable area has its complement of roe deer.

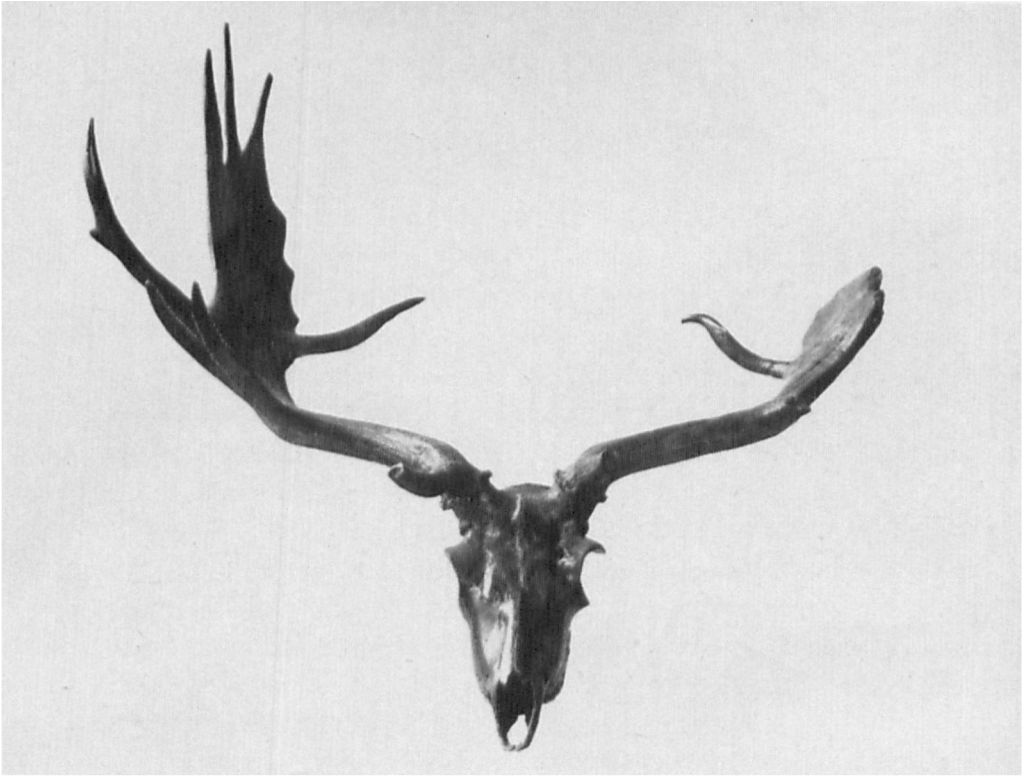
During the past ten years considerable escapes of fallow deer have taken place from four widely separated parks in this area (doubtless many others also in earlier days); yet nowhere in the area have fallow established themselves, even though feed and cover are sufficient in places to shelter wild red deer (apart altogether from the Martindale herd).

As Mr. Carne says, wild fallow can maintain themselves as far north as Ross-shire, so it is not a matter of climate; nor is it simply the more vigorous species ousting the weaker. Perhaps the explanation is that deer have only one basic reaction to an unpleasant situation—to withdraw. If an unestablished deer finds itself in an area where another competing species is already at home, it will move on again, and if no vacant safe harbour exists its end is obvious.

Everyone knows that roe and red deer, or red deer and fallow, can overlap and indeed associate quite happily. I think this is because they come originally from essentially different environments. There are indeed very strong reasons for regarding red deer as creatures of the forest margins, and not the woodlanders we usually assume them to have been originally; but this is not the place to assemble the argument.

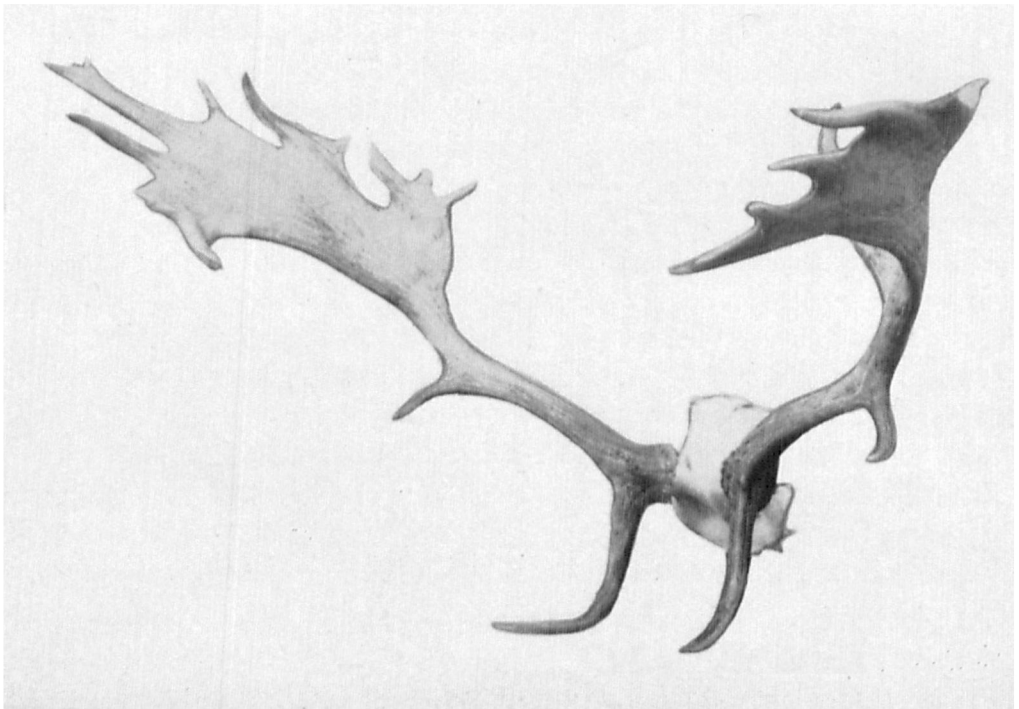
The roe is, of course, a typical deer of the climax forest, and although we can never now know for certain, it is probable that the fallow replaced it in the woods of southern Europe. Perhaps in the absence of man's interference a biological iron curtain developed between these closely competing species, the effect of which we are still able to observe to-day.

Footnote.—Mr. Carne notes the mutual antipathy of roe, fallow and sika in the Highlands. There are always exceptions in nature, and there certainly was a fine pine-wood in central Ross (razed during the war), where these three species and red deer would usually be seen during a winter's afternoon walk.



***DAMA CLACTONIANA*. CLACTON FALLOW BUCK HEAD IN BRITISH MUSEUM.**

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A GOOD MODERN FALLOW BUCK HEAD (*DAMA DAMA*) FROM KLAMPENBORG, DENMARK.

(Photo : Kenneth Whitehead)

This state of affairs was probably entirely due to lack of shelter elsewhere ; it is hard to remember how unnatural for deer are conditions over most of the Highlands, the effects of the deer-fence and the stalker being as unobtrusive as they are powerful. —P. DELAP.

GIANT FALLOW DEER

Major Anthony Buxton, in *Oryx*, 1954, suggests that the fallow of Schleswig Holstein, and of some parts of Denmark, are “ of the same type and size as the fossil horn from Clacton ” which is to be seen in the Natural History Museum, South Kensington.

Whilst *Dama clactoniana*, which inhabited Essex during the Pleiocene period, would appear to have been very similar in size to *Dama dama*, the fallow of modern times, its antlers, if the pair to be seen in the British Museum can be taken as a type specimen, would seem to be of slightly different pattern. Whereas those on *Dama dama* have all the jags on the posterior edge of the palmated top, *Dama clactoniana* had a number of strong tines on the anterior edge as well. I have seen mounted heads from Schleswig Holstein, Germany, and also the live animal in various parts of Denmark. From neither country have I seen antlers that were in any way similar to the *Dama clactoniana* head in the British Museum. Whilst there is no doubt that there is a resemblance in many respects between *Dama clactoniana* and *Dama dama*, the forward tines on the upper part of the beam might also be compared to those of *Megaceros hibernicus*—the Giant Irish deer—but there the similarity ends.

I am grateful to the Keeper of Geology, British Museum of Natural History, for having sent me a photograph of the *Dama clactoniana* head which can be compared to the head of a good, modern Danish fallow buck and also to the antlers carried by two good bucks in Klampenborg Park, Denmark.

The illustration in *Oryx*, Vol. II, No. 6, p. 392, also confirms that the fallow deer of Denmark are identical with *Dama dama*, with no anterior tines or jags other than the normal brow and trays. The quality of the antlers, however, is much superior to anything that can be seen in the parks of this country, although some very fine heads are grown by some of the bucks in Woburn Park.

G. KENNETH WHITEHEAD.