

Feral Wild Boar and Deer in the Forest of Dean

Population surveys in the
public Forest Estate 2024

Robin Gill

Introduction and Methods

The population of feral boar in the Forest of Dean has been monitored annually since 2013 to help inform the public as well as to support the management programme.

This report provides results up to and including the latest survey carried out during March 2024. Covid restrictions prevented completion of a survey in 2020.

The current survey adopted the same methods as previous surveys and covered almost exactly the same area (80.9km²) as the previous survey in 2023¹. The survey was based on observations made using thermal imaging, with population estimates obtained using distance sampling². This approach has proved effective in previous studies for estimating the abundance of wild ungulates in forested landscapes which offer limited visibility³⁻⁶. Observations were made at night between the 4th and 26th of March 2024.

Results

Wild Boar

In total, 85 sounders were detected during the survey with an average of 2.99 boar per sounder (range 1-11). The estimated number of feral boar was 513 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 361 to 730, indicating that the population has not changed significantly since 2022 (see figure 1).

The number of recorded casualties (RTA's) was 25, a little lower than previous years (33 and 35 in 2022 and 2023 respectively). This figure includes both the number of recorded road casualties as well as animals found dead in the forest and remains broadly correlated with estimated population size (see figures 2 and 3).

Deer

The estimated total number of deer was 1466 (95% conf. interval 1180 -1821), a small, but not significant decrease on the estimate obtained in 2023 (1661). The proportion of Fallow deer was 71%; 15% were muntjac and 14% were roe deer (see figure 4).

Figure 1. Trends in numbers of wild boar culled, killed on roads (RTA's) and population density 2008-2024. Figures are numbers per km².

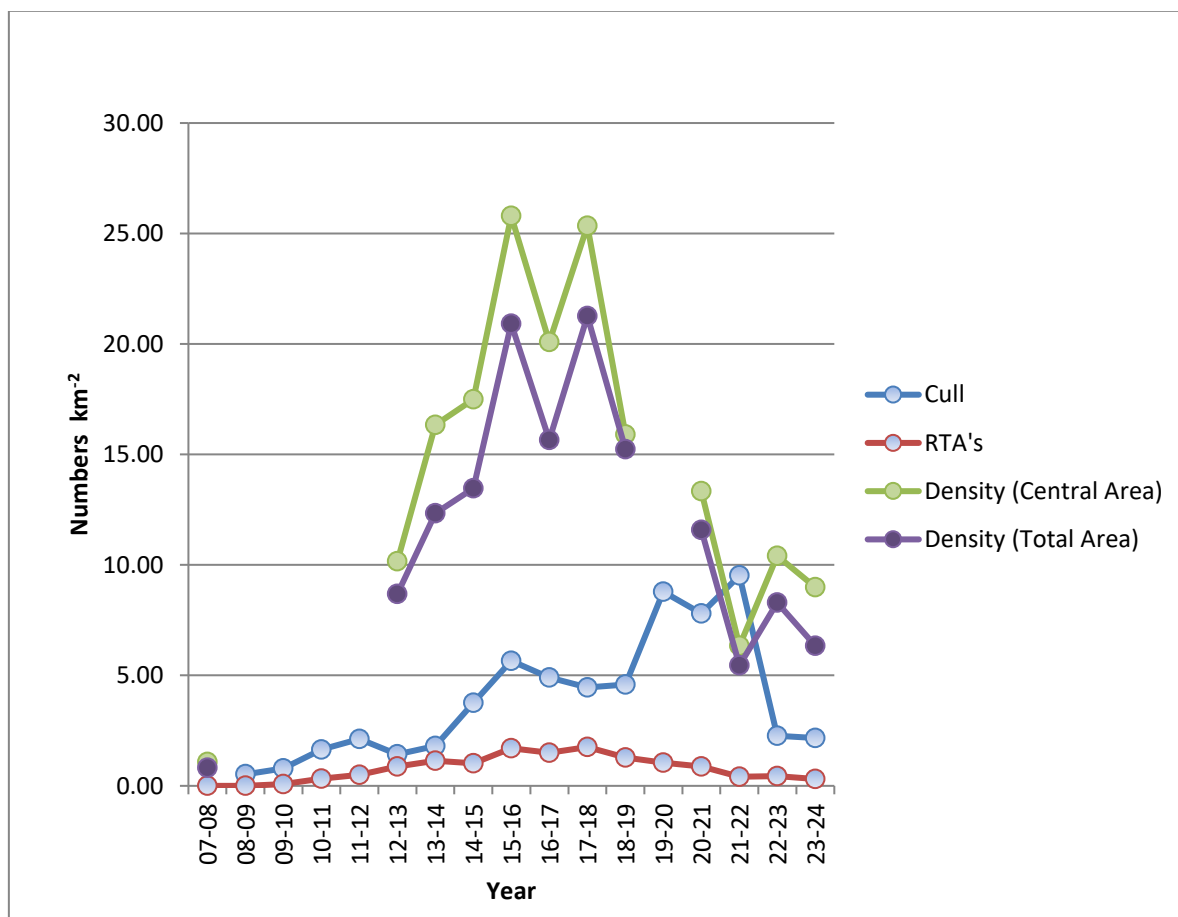


Figure 2. Trends in the number of feral boar culled and the number of recorded traffic casualties and found carcasses (RTA's).

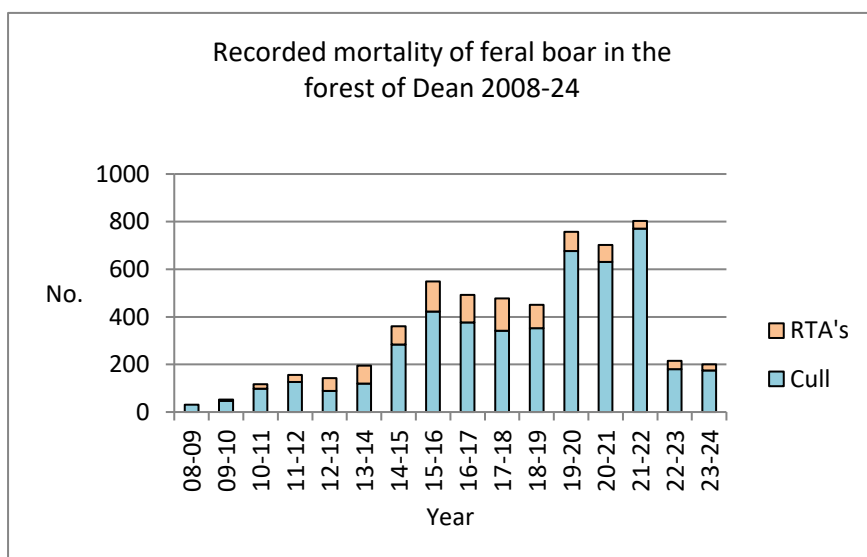


Figure 3. Numbers of feral boar RTAs recorded each year (vertical axis) in relation to estimated population density (Both variables expressed as numbers per km² of forest area; $r = 0.974$; $p < 0.01$).

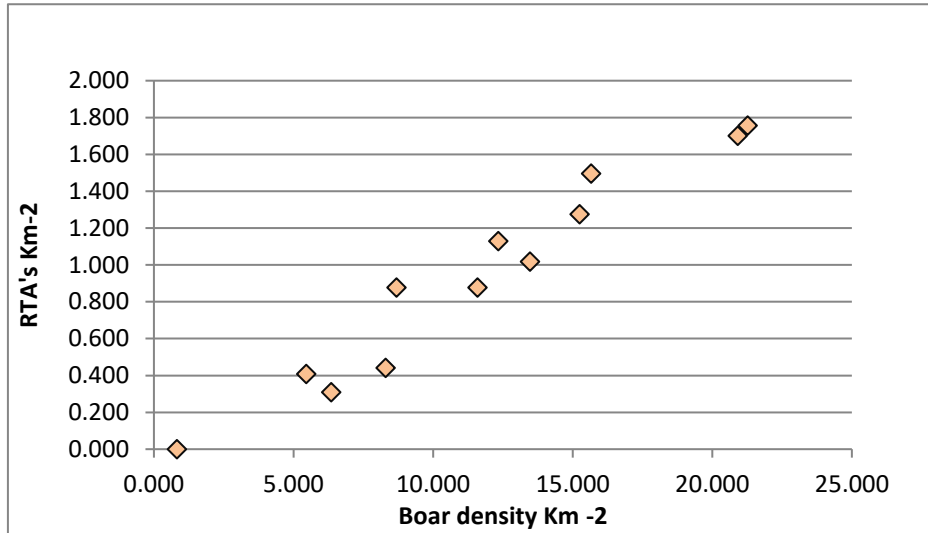
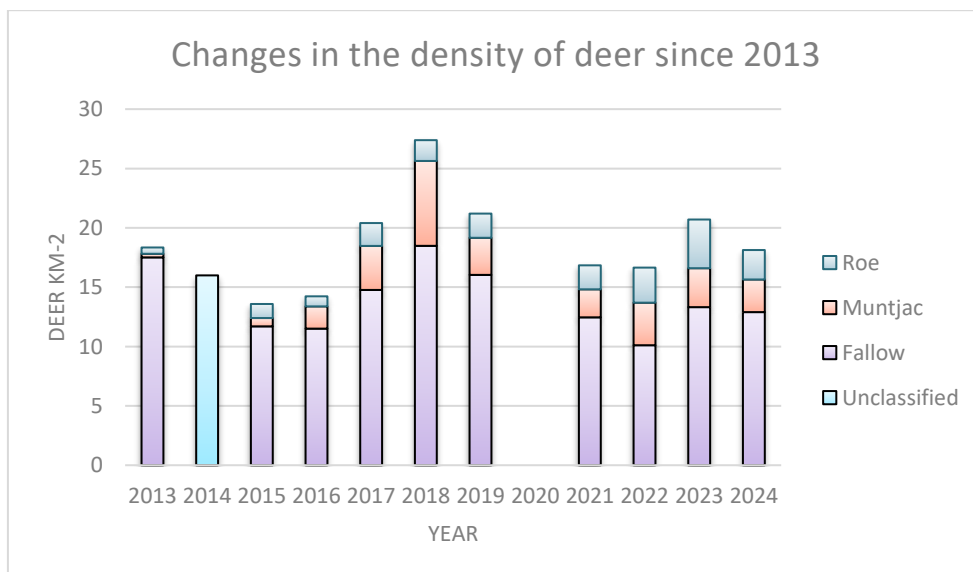


Figure 4. Changes in the density and composition of the deer population in the forest of Dean between 2013 and 2024.



References

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