



WATATUNGA

— WILDLIFE RESERVE —



GUIDE BOOK

2025

Dear Visitors,

Welcome to Watatunga Wildlife Reserve!

This is a family business born out of a passion for conservation which we look forward to sharing with you today. The animals roam free in a 170-acre site and every visit will be different.

Keep your eyes out for our African antelope sunning themselves in the open, our native deer peeking from the woods and our majestic birds strutting their stuff around the reserve.

The weather and time of day will impact on the animals' behaviour – we cannot plan what you will see on each tour so this guide will help you to know what to look out for. We have not included our ducks nor the many native bird species you will encounter on your tour.

Please pay close attention to instructions given by your guide.

Thank you for visiting,
Ed & Anna



Thank you to the many friends and visitors who have allowed us to use their fantastic photographs, in particular: Phil Stone, Helen Black, Georgina Preston, Gareth Clifford, JBS Dog Photography, Alan Hale & George Gossip



AXIS (CHITAL)

(*Axis axis*)



Native to India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the axis deer is the most common deer found in Indian forests. They shed and regrow their antlers annually with antlers over 76cm taking roughly five months to fully develop. Fawns may be born at any time of year as there is no fixed season for their rut.

Gestation period: 225-230 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat due to urban development and logging, hunt and diseases from non-native species.



BARASINGHA (SWAMP DEER)

(Rucervus duvaucelii)



Barasingha are now extinct in Pakistan and Bangladesh but can be found in Northern and Central India in large herds of up to 250 animals. These deer have a stunning, vibrant orange coat in the summertime, but as the mating season approaches the male coat turns a darker shade of brown. Stags can have spectacular sets of antlers with up to 14 points, also known as tines.

Gestation period: 240 - 255 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat, particularly due to logging, hunting.



CHINESE WATER DEER

(*Hydropotes inermis*)



As the name suggests, these deer are native to China and Korea but some of these animals escaped from the Woburn Estate and Whipsnade zoo in the 1940s and the British population is now thought to account for 10% of the world's total. Chinese water-deer do not have antlers, but males (bucks) do have prominent 'tusks' and females have shorter, less visible ones. The females routinely give birth three to four young at a time.

Gestation period: 170–180 days

Threats to species: Vulnerable due to habitat loss from crops and large-scale farming.



ELD'S DEER

(*Rucervus eldii*)



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There are three subspecies of Eld's deer, distributed across south east Asia - the population has declined by 50% over the last 15 years. This medium-sized deer has a regal and graceful physique. Its legs are thin and long with a long body, large head and thin neck. The rough and course coat turns from reddish brown in summer to dark brown in winter. Their feet have become specially adapted to enable them to walk in swampy ground.

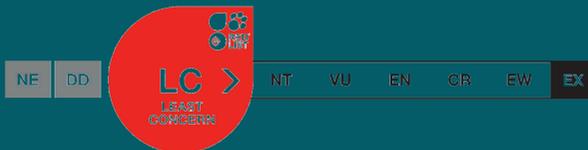
Gestation period: 170 - 210 days.

Threats to species: Hunting & habitat loss.



FALLOW DEER

(*Dama dama*)



Fallow deer were first brought to Britain during the Roman period. Genetic analysis has shown that these Roman fallow deer went extinct in Britain following the collapse of the Roman Empire. In the 11th century the fallow deer were reintroduced and initially they were kept in parks but as the fashion for deer parks declined in the 15th century, many parks fell into disrepair and these medieval escapee deer are the foundation of the free-living population in Britain today.

Gestation period: 225-230 days

Threats to species: There are no major threats to this species.



INDIAN SAMBAR DEER

(*Rusa unicolor niger*)



Sambar are one of the largest distributed deer found throughout Asia, with the Indian Sambar being one of the larger sub-species. They contain large facial glands and a large fluffy neck which resembles a beard. They love thick undergrowth and browse on a variety of plants.

Gestation period: 236-246 days

Threats to species: Populations are vulnerable because of over exploitation for subsistence and markets in meat and antlers.



INDIAN HOG DEER

(*Axis porcinus*)



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Indian Hog deer are found from Pakistan and northern India through Nepal and Bhutan to Burma, as well as in Sri Lanka. In recent years their conservation status has been registered as Endangered. Hog deer live in small herds or as solitary animals and they are called hog deer as they have a habit of running head down through the undergrowth like a wild boar.

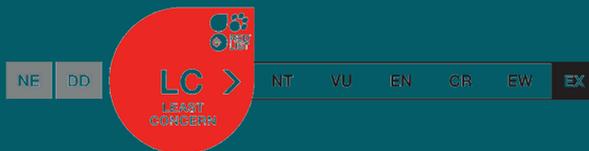
Gestation period: 225 – 230 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat due to rice farming, hunting, changes in water systems and flooding increased by climate change.



REEVES' MUNTJAC

(*Muntiacus reevesi*)



Originally found in China, these small deer were introduced into the UK during the 20th century and are now quite a common sight in gardens and along roads. They are also a browsing animal; however, they tend to eat new shoots, woodland flora (bluebells, herbs) and vegetables.

Gestation period: 214 days

Threats to species: Although the Reeves' Muntjac is of least concern, the Large-Antlered Muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*) found in Cambodia is critically endangered due to hunting, logging and habitat destruction.



PÈRE DAVIDS DEER (MILU)

(*Elaphurus davidianus*)



This unique species is named after Père David – a French missionary and zoologist who discovered the last of the breed in the Imperial Park in Beijing. In the 19th century, the Chinese Emperor agreed to send a number of animals to Europe where they flourished in captivity, specifically on the Woburn Estate. In the 1980's, having gone extinct in their native China, the Père David deer was reintroduced successfully.

Gestation period: 282 days

Threats to species: The species became extinct in the wild due to habitat loss and over hunting. Low genetic diversity remains a long-term threat.



VISAYAN SPOTTED DEER (PHILIPPINE SPOTTED DEER)

(*Rusa alfredi*)



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As its name suggests, this species is a medium-sized deer native to the Philippines. Typically found in dense forests and grasslands of the Philippine archipelago, these deer are known for their distinctive spotted coat patterns. The Philippine Spotted Deer is a territorial species, often marking its territory with scent glands. They exhibit a social structure, forming small groups consisting of a dominant male, females, and their offspring.

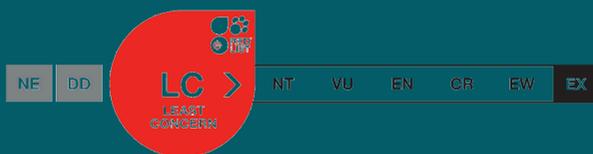
Gestation period: 243 days

Threats to species: Habitat loss and hunting.



WESTERN ROE DEER

(*Capreolus capreolus*)



The roe is one of the two truly native deer of the British Isles. Records date them as here before the Mesolithic period (6000 to 10000 years BC). Today, roe deer are abundant in the United Kingdom except for Northern Ireland. The increase in woodland of the 20th century saw a rise in both population and distribution of the roe deer. Roe deer are the only known deer species capable of embryonic diapause or delayed implantation. This is a reproductive strategy whereby they can delay the development of an embryo in order to time the birth of their offspring for favourable conditions.

Gestation period: 270–290 days

Threats to species: None.



WHITE LIPPED DEER (THOROLD'S DEER)

(*Cervus albirostris*)



The inside of the White-Lipped Deer's ears, the tip of its muzzle, its throat, the underside of its chin, and the inner side of its legs are white. The White-Lipped Deer's coat is coarse and stiff, with hollow hairs that provide them with an insulating layer of warm air. Stags have large, white, somewhat flattened antlers, with five to six tines.

Gestation period: 210-240 days

Threats to species: Hunting for meat, antlers and other body parts (such as velvet) used in traditional Chinese medicine are the main threats to White-Lipped deer.



BLACKBUCK

(*Antelope cervicapra*)



Found on the plains and open woodland of India, the name blackbuck comes from the adult male whose coat turns a dark black as he becomes dominant; subordinate males maintain a body colour similar to the females. The females remain a light tan colour all year round. Blackbuck can often be seen to ‘pronk’, a movement that combines running with a very high leap in the air, which is thought to be a way of avoiding predators.

Gestation period: 150-180 days. This 5 month window is rather unique as it allows the species to calve twice a year.

Threats to species: Habitat loss due to farming, hunting.



BLESBOK

— (*Damaliscus pygargus phillipsi*) —



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The blesbok's distribution is restricted to South Africa. It was once one of the most abundant antelope species on the Southern African plains, but the species was almost hunted to extinction in the 19th century. Males have S-shaped horns whilst the female's horns are shorter and thinner. Their coat is a dull reddish brown with off-white legs and rump and white facial blaze which gave them their name as 'bles' is the Dutch word for blaze.

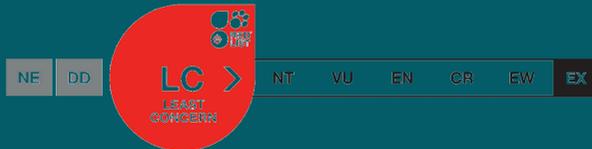
Gestation period: 240-246 days

Threats to species: Hunting.



BRINDLED WILDEBEEST (BLUE WILDEBEEST)

(*Connochaetes taurinus*)



Found in the grasslands and savannahs of Eastern and Southern Africa. Native to various countries in the region, Brindled Wildebeest exhibit a distinctive coat pattern that gives them their name. These wildebeests are known for their migratory behavior, often covering long distances in search of fresh grazing grounds, formed of large herds that can include hundreds or even thousands of individuals.

Gestation period: 243 - 259 days

Threats to species: Habitat loss, change in water systems (dams), hunting.



KAFUE FLATS LECHWE (RED LECHWE)

(*Kobus leche kafuensis*)



Kafue Flats Lechwe can be found in seasonal wetlands bordering swamps and rivers in Zambia, they eat grasses and water plants. Their hind legs are longer and more powerful than the front legs, helping them to make huge leaps through the watery or marshy terrain, making them the 2nd most aquatic antelope in the world. They have widely splayed hooves so as not to sink into the mud.

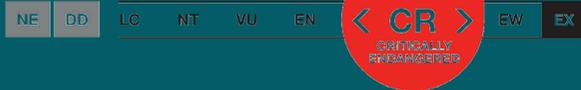
Gestation period: 210-240 days

Threats to species: Lechwe are threatened by farming, hunting, change in water systems (dams), invasive species and diseases, and climate change (drought).



EASTERN MOUNTAIN BONGO

— (*Tragelaphus eurycerus isaaci*) —



The Eastern mountain bongo is a critically endangered subspecies of the bongo, one of the largest forest antelopes, with a reddish-brown coat, with black, white and yellow-white markings. Both males and females have long, slightly spiralled horns. Bongos are rarely seen in large herds. Bulls are mostly solitary, while females with young form small herds of up to 10. They are mostly nocturnal.

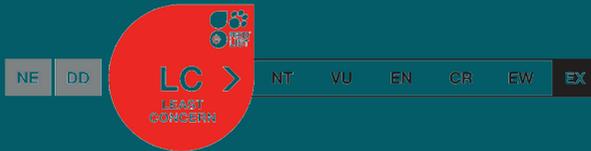
Gestation period: 270 days

Threats to species: Hunting & trapping, commercial forestry, livestock farming and ranching and excessive hunting by lions.



CAPE ELAND (COMMON ELAND)

(*Tragelaphus oryx*)



As the largest antelope species in the world, eland can be found on the open plains and savannahs of Eastern and Southern Africa. Native to 17 countries, Eland are non-territorial antelope that often form large herds of up to 500 individuals, but will often split into smaller herds of males, females and juveniles. The eland has the endurance to maintain a trot indefinitely and can jump 1.5 metres high!

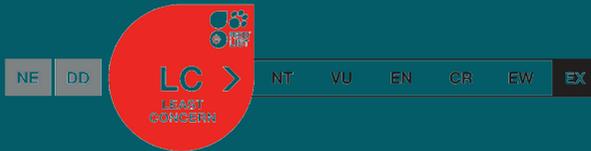
Gestation period: 274 days

Threats to species: Numbers are gradually declining due to habitat loss due to human settlement.



NILGAI

(*Boselaphus tragocamelus*)



Found throughout India, the Nilgai is the largest of the antelope species in Asia. Their name, literally translated means blue cow and the males are easily recognisable with a blue/grey colour and small horns. Females and males remain segregated for most of the year except when the bulls join the cows for breeding. When chased, a nilgai can run up to 29 mph.

Gestation period: 243-247 days

Threats to species: Poaching and habitat loss.



ROAN ANTELOPE

(*Hippotragus equinus*)



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Found in wooded areas and savannah across Central and Southern Africa, the antelope has a horse like build with long elf-like ears tipped with tassels of black hair. Their name comes from their colouring, as their backs are a lovely reddish brown – otherwise known as roan. They are mostly grazing animals, but when grass becomes scarce, they revert readily to browsing.

Gestation period: 268-280 days

Threats to species: Roan antelope have declined dramatically as a result of habitat deterioration, poaching, agricultural encroachment, and culled out in tsetse fly control efforts.



WEST AFRICAN SITATUNGA

— (*Tragelaphus spekii gratus*) —



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Native to west and central Africa, sitatunga are swamp-dwelling antelope and excellent swimmers. Their elongated, wide-splayed hooves help them walk on soft terrain such as swamps and marshes. If alarmed, sitatunga can sink below water to swim to deeper areas with only their nostrils above the surface. These antelope are easily caught by setting snares in their well-travelled paths in swamps. Because of this, overhunting outside protected areas is causing a rapid decline in their numbers.

Gestation period: 225-240 days

Threats to species: Loss of wetlands causing isolated groups.



DOMESTIC WATER BUFFALO

(*Bubalus bubalis*)



Heavily domesticated, this species is thought to originate between central India and southern Nepal but can now be found across Europe and is often used in the production of mozzarella.

A water buffalo can be up to 3m long and up to 1.9 m tall. Although domestic water buffalo are thriving and are distributed well beyond their native range, the true wild water buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) are in jeopardy - they are currently listed as endangered on the IUCN red list, and it is thought that there are fewer than 1,000 remaining.

Gestation period: 300-340 days

Threats to species: There are no threats to the domestic water buffalo. However, hybridisation of domestic water buffalo with the wild water buffalo is causing the latter form to gradually disappear.



EUROPEAN MOUFLON

(*Ovis aries musimon*)



The European mouflon is an ancient form of domestic sheep that originates from the Mediterranean islands of Corsica and Sardinia; it is thought to be descended from semi-domesticated wild sheep from the Near East brought to Sardinia around 8,000 years ago. The horns of males can be up to 60cm long and are curved into a circle, sometimes converging at the neck in the oldest males. The coat colour is a reddish-brown, darker in winter when males have a black man, with whitish tones on the snout.

Gestation period: 150-210 days

Threats to species: Habitat loss, poaching and wildfires.



GREAT BUSTARD

(*Otis tarda*)



The Bustard was once a native species found over much of the UK, but due to over hunting the last Bustard was hunted to extinction in 1832 here in Norfolk. Reintroduced in the 1970s to the Salisbury Plain, there are now over a hundred birds on the heathland there. The male can weigh as much as 21kg, the females 5.5kg, making them one of the heaviest flying birds. They're a ground nesting bird, with females laying 1-3 eggs.

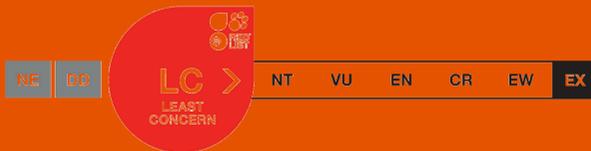
Incubation: 28 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat, hunting, pesticide poisoning, egg collectors, and disturbance.



EURASIAN CRANE

(*Grus grus*)



This crane almost became extinct in the UK, and some of the last populations were found in Norfolk, through conservation they are now making a comeback. Unlike their European cousins they don't readily migrate spending the winters here. They have a very long lifespan living to 44 years, and they pair for life. They have an elaborate courtship display which reaffirms their bond.

Incubation: 31 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat, pesticide poisoning, egg collectors, and hunting.



RED CROWNED CRANE

(*Grus japonensis*)



The red crowned crane, also called the Manchurian crane, is the second largest, and among the rarest cranes in the world. It inhabits wetlands, marshes and riverine meadows across its range, which spans parts of China, Japan, Korea, and Russia. In some regions, it is revered as a symbol of luck, longevity, and fidelity.

Incubation: 29-34 days

Threats to species: Wetland drainage, agricultural expansion and industrial development have led to significant habitat loss. Many of its breeding and wintering grounds are subject to ongoing degradation, placing further pressure on the species' survival.



WHITE STORK

(*Ciconia ciconia*)



Once extinct in the UK now making a coming back, rewilding projects such as Knepp and Wadhurst. They migrate to Africa for the winter, using thermals to negotiate the long migration, crossing over Gibraltar and into Africa. The Storks have a very loud courtship display tapping their beaks. Characteristically messy nesters, choosing to nest on the tops of tree, pylons, rooftops and chimneys, constructing huge piles of sticks. They feed on a variety prey using their long bill to catch insects, fish and chicks.

Incubation: 33 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat through drainage and hunting



JAVAN PEACOCK

(*Pavo muticus*)



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The bird could be mistaken as the Indian Peacock , but they differ in colour, with beautiful emerald plumage, and have staggering 2m long tail. The male and female are both similar in size and it can be hard to distinguish between them when the males in moult. Despite their clumsy appearance they can be agile fliers. Unlike their Indian cousins the Javans aren't very vocal only calling at dawn and dusk.

Incubation: 30 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat, hunting, illegal trade.



LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT

— (*Chrysolophus amherstiae*) —



Native to SE China this pheasant species has been introduced all over the world and is often kept in captivity. They tend to be fairly shy but move around in numbers with a male moving with up ten females and can show incredible burst of speed choosing to run to escape predators disappearing into the undergrowth.

Incubation: 23 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat and hunting.



SILVER PHEASANT

(*Lophura nycthemera*)



Found commonly over much of SE Asia, this species has fifteen subspecies. The males display by puffing up their chest up and flapping wings vigorously, whilst making “burrrrrrr” call. These are one of the more dominant pheasant species in the reserve and have carved out a number of territories particularly along the streams and woodland tracks. Like many Pheasant species they’re becoming rare in their native habitat due to deforestation.

Incubation: 26 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat, and hunting.



HELMETED GUINEAFOWL

(*Numida meleagris*)



Guineafowl can be often seen moving in large flocks up to 25 or more, spending most of their time on the ground they can consume huge numbers of insects and other invertebrates including ticks, so are very beneficial in the reserve. Found in central and south Africa, its often called the alarm clock savannah due to its of calling at dawn. In the UK they're very usual as a security measure as they soon alarm call if disturbed.

Incubation: 28 days

Threats to species: Loss of habitat and hunting.



VULTURINE GUINEAFOWL

(*Acryllium vulturinum*)



The vulturine guineafowl inhabits the dry savannahs and woodlands of East Africa. It is the largest extant species of guineafowl and is only distantly related to other guineafowl genera. Its closest living relative, the white-breasted guineafowl *Agelastes meleagrides*, inhabits primary forests in Central Africa.

Incubation: 28 days

Threats to species: Habitat destruction due to agricultural expansion poses a significant threat.



VIETNAMESE PHEASANT (EDWARDS'S PHEASANT)

(*Lophura edwardsi*)



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This pheasant species inhabits what is left of the exceedingly damp mountain forests of Vietnam. It's historical range is now almost completely denuded of primary forest through a combination of herbicide spraying during the Vietnam war, logging and clearance for agriculture. The last forested areas known to support the species are subject to continuing degradation by wood-cutters

Incubation: 21 - 25 days

Threats to species: Hunting and trapping for consumption, logging activities and war.



WATATUNGA

— W I L D L I F E R E S E R V E —

Come and chat to us after your tour and let us know what you enjoyed and what we could improve for the future.

We would love to see your photographs so please tag us in your social media posts or email us your highlights!

We would also really appreciate a review online - simply follow the QR code below to find our social media channels, keep up with the latest news or leave us a review.

Thank you for visiting!



2024/25 ACCOLADES



We gained the VisitEngland Quality Rose Marque for becoming a Quality Assessed Tourist Attraction

And also gained 4 and 5 stars across our accommodation.

We obtained the King's Lynn Mayor's Business Award in the Leisure & Tourism category.



We were runners up for the Experience of the Year at the VEE Suffolk & Norfolk Tourism Awards



BIAZA

BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

