Sika Deer
Sika Deer

Biology and Management of
Native and Introduced Populations
Front cover:
Top: Male sika deer and (bottom) a group of grazing sika deer. Photos by D. R. McCullough.

Back cover:
Top left: A male during the rut. Top right: A female grooming her fawn in late winter. Bottom: A female and her fawn in early summer. Photos by S. Takatsuki.

All photographs are from Kinkazan Island, northern Japan.
This book reviews in detail the sika deer of eastern Asia to bring together under one cover a compilation of the growing literature on this fascinating animal of such great ecological and economic importance. The sika deer is important not only in its native range of east Asia, but also in the many parts of the world where it has been introduced, and become a naturalized member of the fauna, for better or worse. The literature on sika deer is widely scattered and in many different languages, including Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese. This literature is difficult for most readers to access and, for practical purposes, the information does not exist, despite the fact that some of the best research on deer in the world is now being done by Japanese scientists and scattered researchers in other parts of the sika deer’s Asiatic range are accumulating information on local populations.

Consequently, sika deer remain rather poorly known, even among experienced deer biologists, despite their importance in the affairs of humans in many countries and cultures and this growing knowledge.

Our purpose in producing this book is to compile and integrate the immense amount of knowledge of sika deer in one source. It is directed primarily towards biologists, conservationists, and hunters. However, most interested lay readers may profitably gain from a reading. Although the subject matter is science, the presentation is made at a level that any reasonably well-read person can access the essential information.

This book emphasizes sika deer as a wild species and/or conservation issue, and lesser attention has been given to the sika as a domestic species despite large numbers being raised in captivity in many countries. It is organized into six parts. Part I introduces the basic biology of the species, its origins and evolution, genetic structure, physiology, nutrition, and reproduction. The next three parts discuss food and habitat relations (Part II), behavior, migration, and breeding systems (Part III), and population dynamics and management (Part IV). Most work on sika deer has been done in Japan, and it is appropriate that this area predominates in the coverage—a simple numerical decision. Part V covers sika deer in the remainder of their native range on the Asian continent in China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Far East Russia, and on the island of Taiwan. The last part (Part VI) covers the many introduced and naturalized populations of sika deer around the world.
In seeking authors for the various chapters we have attempted to gather together the most recognized experts on each topic. We have asked independent workers to collaborate in new ways to optimize the expertise and coverage to achieve an integration of all that is known about the sika deer in one book.

The organization of the book by biology and distribution themes inevitably results in some overlap of subject matter between parts. For example, the topic of reproduction reoccurs in nearly every part of the book. This should remind us that placing subjects into categories violates the reality that sika deer are whole entities, with completely integrated physical and biological systems connected with real climates, topography, vegetation, competitors, and predators. So, in many ways this book reads more like a symposium volume than an easy overview of the species. To assist the reader through the material we have begun each chapter with an abstract, a brief synopsis to help put the chapter in perspective.

At the same time we have tried to take advantage of the multiple overlapping studies to use a comparative approach to advantage. For example, there are many studies now available of sika deer populations on islands or isolated populations in various parts of the range, and we have included many of these to extract the lessons to be learned from comparative work. We have erred on the side of completeness, so that this will be the reference work that serves to give thorough insight into the species, rather than a summary work predigested for the casual reader. Nonetheless, the more general reader can pick and choose to achieve the latter goal. We ask the reader’s indulgence and trust by the end of the book the desired integration, still retaining important nuance, will have been achieved.

Dale R. McCullough
Acknowledgements

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