

writing about 1630,

Sir Robert Gordon informs us that Sutherland ~~land~~
from time immemorial contained Red deer and
in his ^{own} ~~own~~ day they were in the country in great
numbers. Having seen very fine heads that have
been found in several places in Sutherland
~~land~~ ^{I have} no doubt ^{much} but at one time they must have
been very superior to what they are at the present
day. There is a pair of very fine horns in
Dunrobin museum that were found in a peat
bank near Halladale that have 24 points, with
breadth and thickness of horn - that must have
been borne by an animal. I should think
not lighter than 40 stones. ^{It is plain} ~~Seeing~~ that such
noble animals must have roamed at one time
in Sutherland over hill & dale - and lived on the best
of every thing they could find - not as they are at the
present day, fenced off all the good & rich pastures
& kept out on the high and barren hills - which is
one of the chief causes of their falling off in size and
having now such inferior heads. Another cause is
that sportsmen kill all the best deer they can, that
have good heads. Going on at this rate, ~~it is~~
according to the law of nature, they must ~~deteriorate~~
-ade. What would our breed of horses, cattle & sheep
be like if the same system ^{were} ~~was~~ ^{carried} ~~on~~ ^{over}?
The consequence would be that only inferior and
weakly animals would be left to breed from

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may

that the case

Some ~~people would~~ say ~~this~~ is very different ^{with animals} ~~from~~ ^{however} wild ~~animals~~ that man with all his skills often fails to kill. ~~This is not the case~~ since Deerstalking has become so fashionable, ~~that~~ nearly every one who can afford to take a shooting must have a Deer forest. and when ^{they} turn out after ^{the deer} ~~them~~ with breechloading Rifles of the most improved description the chance of deer escaping from them is now very much reduced. The Duke of Sutherland has done much to improve the Deer in his own forest by keeping all the Deer with good & promising heads and killing only inferior ones. Stags have also been brought from Windsor Park ~~for~~ to introduce fresh blood; this, combined with killing only the inferior ones, has improved them a good deal.

The rutting season commences about the first of October and lasts a little over 4 weeks when Stags leave the hinds and take shelter in woods or ~~to~~ the most sheltered & quiet places they can find where they feed well & make up to stand the winter. I have heard it disputed ^{as to} about Stags ~~not~~ having blood in their horns at rutting time. but ~~this is a mistake~~ I have seen more than once or twice a Stag's horn broken

3

when

off by a bullet in October ~~and~~ the blood
 came running out of it. I don't believe
 that blood ~~is~~ ^{is} strictly hard Stags horns until
 they are shed. If they happen to get knocked
 off before they are ripe for shedding, you
 will find blood on the ~~side~~ ^{base} of the horn,
 if they are shed without being knocked off
 by accident or otherwise. There is no blood
 when seen. Shedding takes place about
 the end of March or beginning of April. New
 horns shoot up directly afterwards covered
 with velvet, and are full grown in less than
 three months. When the horn hardens the velvet
 peels off or is rubbed off against trees or peat
 banks. Deer on about their prime ^{when} from
 8 to 10 years old; ~~and~~ they gradually fall off
 in size afterwards. Their horns also get smaller.
 I think they ~~eldom~~ ^{seldom} live over 20 years ^{generally} & ~~often~~
 not to that age.

Deer keep more out on the high ground than
 Stags - they seldom leave it unless in ^{severe} ~~some~~
 weather. They go with young about 8 months
 & commence calving about the first week in June.
 They hide their ^{calves} ~~calves~~ in broken ^{ground} ~~ground~~ or dry
 heather until they are about 8 days old,
 by that time they are strong enough to follow
 their mother & seldom leave them after that time.

4 They are excellent & kind mothers, and have often been known to chase dogs off when they happened to come near where their calves were hidden when young."

~~Dawson's~~
~~March 5th 1887~~

The paper of which the above is an abstract contains interesting details as to the weight of Sutherland Deer, their power as swimmers, & references to ^{early} ~~various~~ methods of capture. The effect of feeding was well illustrated by two sets of horns shed by the same deer under different conditions as to food.