

# Britain's biggest animal 'killed for antlers'

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A deer is pictured in Knole Park, Sevenoaks, Kent, in 2009. A giant red stag thought to be Britain's biggest wild animal was killed for its antlers, according to reports on Tuesday.

A giant red stag thought to be Britain's biggest wild animal was killed for its antlers, according to reports on Tuesday.

The body of the "Exmoor Emperor," named after the southwestern area where the stag was frequently sighted, was found close to a road in the county of Devon.

It is believed that a licensed hunter is responsible for legally killing the stag, which stood nine feet (2.75 metres) to the tips of its antlers.

An industry source claimed hunters would have paid up to 10,000 pounds (15,800 dollars, 11,300 euros) to the landowner for the opportunity to shoot the creature.

But the action still drew condemnation from deer-lovers who believe hunting should be banned during the mating season.

"It could be that he didn't get a chance to rut properly this year, therefore his genes have not been passed on this time round," Peter Donnelly, an Exmoor-based deer management expert, said.

"The poor things should be left alone during the rut, not harried from pillar to post."

The identity of the marksman remains a mystery, but it is believed to be one of the increasing number of wealthy sportsmen who are flooding to the area in search of a trophy.

"There are people who are prepared to spend quite ridiculous sums of money to have a trophy on their wall," Donnelly added.

"People talk about 1,000 pounds for a good head, but I've heard there are those who will pay a lot more."

One source from the hunting industry told AFP: "I think they would have paid around 10,000 pounds for the privilege."

Although not illegal, hunting during the [mating season](#) is frowned upon as the mating stags are often underfed and tired due to their exertions, presenting an easy target.

Older stags are regularly culled due to the historic eradication of any [natural predators](#) but at around 12 years old, the Emperor is thought to have had more productive mating seasons left in him.

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