

Ann Arbor Still Has Too Many Deer - October 2016

1. Scientific vegetative studies in the City of Ann Arbor parks and the University of Michigan's Nichols Arboretum confirm the anecdotal field reports: Deer threaten the next generation of native trees and their associated ecosystems in our parks and across the City's important woodlands. Deer are eating many (and in some places most) of the seedlings that should be future trees. They are doing this in multiple parks well beyond the rate that allows the tree canopy to regenerate sustainably. [Dr. Jacqueline Courteau's Preliminary Monitoring Report](#)

Deer browsing harms a wide number of genera of plants and animals that live in the forest understory and are associates of our native ecosystems. Greatly reducing the number of deer in Ann Arbor and in our parks and natural areas is vitally needed to protect our treasured natural features and natural areas.

2. Deer are a rising menace on our roads. Michigan Traffic Crash Facts reports that deer-vehicle collisions reported to be within the city's boundaries rose from 51 in 2014 to 90 in 2015. [Michigan Traffic Crash Facts](#)

3. We knew that Lyme disease was approaching us from the western part of the state. At least one case of Lyme disease has now been reported as originating in Washtenaw County. . [MLive – Lyme in Washtenaw County](#)

This is a very serious public health issue. Ann Arbor should act now to insure that Lyme and its related bacterial diseases do not come into Ann Arbor. According to the State of Michigan's Lyme disease web pages, thinning the deer herd may be our best method to prevent Lyme from becoming endemic in Ann Arbor. [Michigan Emerging Diseases](#)

Once it is here, Lyme is difficult to eradicate. Adult female deer ticks get a needed blood meal from deer before the ticks lay their eggs and so the deer often play a key role in the ticks' life cycle. It is the black-legged tick or deer tick that carries the bacterial Lyme infection from small mammals such as mice to people, usually in the ticks' nymph stage. [Deer, Ticks, & Lyme Disease fact sheet](#)

4. Communications to Council members have documented citizen unhappiness over deer impact and the City's online surveys have recorded majority public support from city residents for lethal deer management.

Deer impact is not uniformly spread throughout the city. Even so deer presence across the City is visibly growing from year to year. Deer eat annuals, perennials, and the vegetables in gardens. They browse and destroy all evergreens except (so far)

boxwood in winter, when there is little else for them to eat. Bucks kill trees with their “rubbing” that can destroy the bark.

Ann Arbor residents, especially in the deer-impacted areas of Ward 1 and 2, are angry about deer damage to their gardens and landscape plantings, damage that is increasing every year. They are tired of deer waste in their yards, and deer or deer carcasses on their streets. [Deer Survey by Ward 2016 highlights \(7\).pdf](#)

5. Based on deer biology, in the absence of predators such as wolves or cougars and especially people (where hunting is prohibited), a deer population doubles in size every two years. A doe normally has one offspring in her first year of life, and then two or three offspring every year thereafter. Deer can live ten to fifteen years.

6. Ann Arbor’s aerial helicopter surveys found an increase from 168 deer sighted in 2015 to 202 deer counted in 2016, despite the large increase in deer-vehicle crashes and the fact that many of the 63 deer that were harvested in the 2016 culls were taken before the helicopter count. The deer count from the air was not an accurate census, because deer hide under the evergreen trees, but the trend in the counts confirms growth of the numbers of deer in the City. [Press Release: City of Ann Arbor Deer Count Increases Over Previous Year](#) - Feb. 22, 2016 [Aerial Deer Survey Results Map](#)

7. Deer overabundance is a relatively new problem in Ann Arbor, with frequent deer sightings having become common in the impacted neighborhoods only in the last ten or fifteen years. Suburban “edge habitat” is excellent for the local deer herd, actually better than deep forests or farmers’ fields.

White-tailed deer are rebounding across the northern and eastern US after being almost hunted to extinction by European settlers in the 19th century after thousands of years of sustainable harvesting by Native Americans. No-hunting laws in most well-populated areas mean that Ann Arbor’s growing deer problem is widely shared with other North American cities and suburbs. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources recognizes this and is developing an urban deer management plan for Michigan at the request of the state Legislature.

NOTE: Please see wc4eb.org for documentation, information about deer management options, experiences of other cities, and much more.

Respectfully submitted by: **Washtenaw Citizens for Ecological Balance**