

The White-tailed Deer

Native to Michigan, the White-tailed deer is a remarkable creature. It plays an essential role in the health of our natural communities. For many Michiganders, the white-tailed deer represents our fascinating relationship to wildlife and the increasing importance of conservation.





- In the early 1900's less than 45,000 white-tailed deer remained in Michigan due to over-hunting and poor management practices. Over-harvesting of the white-tailed deer's natural predators took place at a much more destructive pace.
- As the result of improved wildlife management, and the increase in preferred habitat and food availability, white-tailed deer population estimates for Lower Michigan near 1 million with the largest herds living in Southern Lower Michigan. The natural predators of the white-tailed deer are slow to return to Southern Lower Michigan leaving a surplus deer population unchecked.



Lake Lansing North Park

Home to a Hungry Bunch



Evidence of white-tailed deer overbrowsing:

An **absence** of preferred species such as a number of wildflowers including orchids and lilies, and certain tree saplings in the undergrowth layer such as:

Nothorn Red Oak



Sugar Maple



Black Cherry



Eastern White Pine



Note these species are present in the canopy and understory of Lake Lansing North Park perhaps this reflects a time when they were not as heavily browsed.

Or a **dominance** of non-preferred species such as Pennsylvania sedge, non-native species, and certain tree saplings in the undergrowth layer such as:

Scotch Pine



Norway Spruce



Witch Hazel



What's Missing?

Diversity of Forest Structure and Species?

Black Cherry

Red Maple

Can you find a tree seedling?

Pennsylvania Sedge

What will Lake Lansing North Park look like in 100 years?



Positive effects of sustaining a healthy population of Michigan's White-tailed Deer:

- Deer are a highly visible animal favorable for recreational and educational wildlife observation for all ages
- White-tailed deer provide a valuable service to ecosystems as nature's landscapers by mowing, pruning, fertilizing, and distributing seeds in their droppings
- Having a healthy deer population brings hundreds of thousands residents out of the house to participate in different types of outdoor recreation; playing a valuable role in Michigan's economy



Fun Facts

- Deer can run at speeds up to **35 miles per hour** over a short distance and can jump over **8ft** off the ground
- Contrary to popular belief; a buck's antlers give no indication of age or size but rather indicate overall health and nourishment
- A healthy doe can birth 2-3 fawns every spring/early summer
- Deer consume a large variety of plants, fruits, and nuts; changing its preferences with the changing seasons



Negative effects of an overpopulation of Michigan's White-tailed Deer:

- Overbrowsing of preferred plant species, limiting biodiversity and threatening the future of our forest communities
- Habitat loss for a number of animal species such as ground and shrub nesting birds and predators who rely on cover
- Disruption of the natural processes of a natural area by spreading invasive species such as garlic mustard
- Increased car/deer accidents resulting in property damage and increasing the risk of personal injury
- Increased risk of communicable disease transmission such as bovine tuberculosis posing a threat to other wildlife, livestock, and human health



Sources of information presented in this project:

- MDNR: <http://www.michigan.gov/dnr>
- U.S. Forest Service: <http://www.fs.fed.us/>
- USDA APHIS: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/>

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