



Natural Resource Protection News

*From the Town of Canandaigua
Environmental Conservation Board*

#1 Environmental Conservation Strategy for November: Hunting

Deer have their points (pun intended). They can be graceful and picturesque. Seen from a distance, they provide a nice reminder of our town's rural character. Some of us find them tasty. With the right balance of humans and deer, we have peaceful coexistence.

Sad to say, the human-deer balance is out of whack in semi-rural and forested areas like Canandaigua. Deer love our kind of landscape, where lawns and fields are interspersed with patches of forest. The natural diet of deer is forest-based, and deer gravitate toward forest edges where they can enjoy shelter while supplementing their natural foods with nearby crops and ornamental plants.

Less noticed is that overabundant deer are threatening our forests. Over time, heavy browsing by deer can produce profound and long-lasting ecological damage:

- Disappearance of the understory shrubs that provide habitat for other wildlife species



Overbrowsed forest floor. Photo courtesy NY DEC, by Tom Rawinski

- Low survival rate of tree seedlings, so they are unable to replace the mature trees that die
- Lower biodiversity of both plants and animals
- Encouragement of invasive species crowding out native plants and animals
- Eventually, the forest loses its mature trees and its ability to provide shade, filtering and cooling to our streams

Just as livestock can overgraze a range and reduce it to a wasteland, deer can overgraze a forest. A forest suffering from too many deer has few or no trees between 1 and 5 feet high, no green leaves below 5 feet, few spring

wildflowers and birds, and an open forest floor covered with grass, ferns or invasives.

What to do?

New York State tries to manage the size of its deer population through regulated recreational hunting, but deer harvests continue to fall as hunting loses popularity. While hunting may not be for everyone, there is much to be said for allowing others to hunt on your property:

- In order to maintain a stable deer population, an average of 30-40% of the herd has to die every year.
- In urban and suburban areas, most deer deaths are from vehicle

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Fawn browsing. Photo Courtesy of NY DEC, by Dick Thomas.

How do I find a responsible hunter?

Many hunters are actively looking for owners willing to grant permission to hunt. Contact your friends and neighbors for recommendations about experienced and responsible hunters, and meet them beforehand to discuss the terms for use of your land.

What about liability and safety?

Landowners are protected from liability for non-paying recreational hunters. Walk the property with the prospective hunter to make sure you agree on the terms, locations, hours, etc.

Deer evolved as prey animals, so they have a high reproductive rate.

Controlling their numbers through hunting is more humane, not to mention safer and less costly to humans, than through vehicle accidents. For more on deer overabundance in NY, visit the [DEC website](#) and see attached flyer.

Information in this article is based on DEC publications.

collisions, often producing more pain and suffering than a well-aimed shot.

- Natural causes of death, such as predation, disease and starvation can be painful and drawn-out.

- Deer health suffers as parasites, disease and food competition affect high density populations.
- Hunting provides a source of food for the hunters' families, and often for others in need.

CABIN FEVER RELIEVER – A NEW PROGRAM FOR SENIORS!

Come join us at Outhouse Park Lodge every Thursday morning (excluding Thanksgiving) from 9:30 am – 11:30 am for cards, coffee and snacks. The Town and City are working together to offer Seniors in the Canandaigua area a spot to gather and socialize. See flyer at the end of the newsletter for more details.

