

Third Meeting of the Great Lakes Deer Group

At Columbus, Ohio, December 14 and 15, 1950.

December 14th

The meeting was opened at 7.30 P.M. by L.W. Krefting, Chairman

The following deer workers were attending:

Michigan:

I.H. Bartlett,	Game Division, Michigan Dept. of Conservation
R.A. MacHullan,	" " " " " " " "
S.H. Whitlock,	" " " " " " " "
D.F. Switzenber,	" " " " " " " "
A.P. Boyce,	" " " " " " " "
D.L. Douglass,	" " " " " " " "

Minnesota:

D. Burtalow, Minnesota Conservation Dept.

Wisconsin:

R.C. Guettiner, Wisconsin Conservation Dept.

Ontario:

C.D. Fowle,	Research Division, Ont. Dept. of Lands and Forests
R.C. Passmore,	" " " " " " " "
A. deVos,	Fish and Wildlife Division, Ont. Dept. of L. & F.

Federal Government

L.W. Krefting,	Regional Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
H.F. Olson,	Regional Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The following points were discussed:

1. Present Status

All present agreed that the group is now recognized by the different Departments as a working group which should get together at least once a year. Unfortunately authorization to attend the meetings still seems to be hard to obtain for some members. It was decided that the name of the working group should be changed to read "Great Lakes Deer Group" instead of "Council", (~~such~~) because of some objections to the latter word.

2. Place and date of next meeting

The following possible meeting places were suggested for a winter field trip: Central Wisconsin, Ontario, Minnesota and the Quetico-Superior Research Center. After some discussion it was decided to meet in the evening of January 29th, in Rainy Lake Hotel in Fort Frances, North-western Ontario. The Ontario Department will make further arrangements and will send out letters of invitations. Field trips will be organized into the Fort Frances and Kenora Forest Districts.

3. Election of Chairman and Secretary:

L.W. Krefting was reelected as chairman, and A de Vos as secretary.

4. Invitation of a Plant Ecologist:

A. deVos suggested that a plant ecologist, who is interested in the effect of deer browsing on plant succession, be invited to give his viewpoints to the group. He mentioned specifically Dr. John T. Curtis, Professor of Botany at the University of Wisconsin, who has a very detailed knowledge of forest succession in the Great Lakes Region. It was decided to send a letter of invitation to him for a meeting with some deer workers during the North American Wildlife Conference.

December 15th

This meeting, which was opened at 7.30 P.M. by L. J. Krefling, Chairman, was not restricted to the members of the group, but was open to all delegates to the Midwest Wildlife Conference.

Reports were given by representatives of the different Depts. regarding the deer situation in their States or Province.

Michigan:

Mr. Bartlett mentioned that efforts had been made to liberalize the hunting season in his State. It had been tried to get permission for a large take of deer. He said that in agricultural areas and the fruit belt more deer are allowed to be taken.

During 1949 330,000 gun licenses were sold, 24,000 permits were sold for an antlerless deer season in special areas (the agriculture and fruit belt.) The buck kill by 12,000 archers was 780 deer. The buck kill in the regular season was 110,000 deer. The kill in special areas (antlerless season) 4,000 deer. The 1949 kill was the largest the State ever had. Last year not enough deer were removed from fruit damage areas. In two such areas this year a special season (5 days for 1 deer) was opened. The kill during the archery season (October 1st - November 5th) was heavy, with a success of 22.9%. There was continued starvation in heavily over-browsed areas last winter. About 10,000 fawns were lost (a light-medium loss) Fawns died mostly after the middle of March. The peak of the die-off had passed around April 10th, but fawns kept on dying until May 1st. because of the late season.

The recent hunting season was apparently a good one. The regular season extended from November 15th - 30th. The number of deer brought across the Straits between the Upper and Lower Peninsula increased from about 10,000 to about 11,000. Probably not more than half of the number of antlerless deer taken during the season in 1949 were shot.

Mr. Boyce reported on the deer kill in damage areas. Damage complaints were generally less. He also commented on deer repellents. He stated that "I.I." reacts with bordeaux spray. The reaction takes place even if these substances are sprayed separately. There is considerable damage on apples in the winter. There is "Diamond-L beaver and elk" repellent on the market made in Seattle. Most damage on cherries is done during the summer.

Mr. Whitlock, Pathologist, made a trip to Washington D.C. regarding deer mortality in several States last spring in a large section of the southeastern portion of the U.S.A. Pathologists and bacteriologists generally found no evidence of disease. Some toxic substance was found in the stomach of one deer. The Army claimed that evidence was found of a definite disease. Some dead deer were reported to be found in Michigan during the summer. Mr. Fowle stated that in Alabama a die-off was thought to be the result of screw worm. Mr. Bartlett said that heavy frost wilted some cherry leaves and made them poisonous, which may have resulted in the die-off of some deer.

Minnesota:

Mr. Burcalow stated that, as he had not been working on deer investigations recently, he was not in a position to make definite statements. He thought that, generally speaking, deer workers had favoured an open season. The level of the deer population was apparently high in some and rather low in other areas. As the deer population was generally not considered to be very high, the Commissioner decided to close the season, rather than take chances. Minnesota has not had a deer season for many years. It appeared to Burcalow that conditions were fairly good for winter food. He stated that apparently the deer population was down over a fairly large area as compared with preceding years. Definite browse lines have been visible in northeastern Minnesota since the early 1930's. There is generally no close yarding in Northeastern Minnesota, as this area is situated north of the heavy snow belt.

Ontario

Mr. Passmore made a statement about the deer abundance and hunting pressure in Ontario. He said that the northern boundary of deer range had been tentatively worked out. Deer are very scattered along the northern limit of the range. There is mainly black spruce forest there, very little aspen and birch. Deer are found there mainly along the watersheds. He showed a slide of the distribution and abundance of deer. The areas with a heavy enough population to attract hunters were indicated. Shaded areas indicated

the most dense population. He said that regions of good habitat generally had the heaviest deer populations, except for the Kenora and Fort Frances District. He compared the deer distribution with the mean annual snowfall. Another slide showed the open seasons for deer. These are zoned in Ontario in zones north of the C.N.R. track, north of Lake Huron and the French and Mattawa Rivers, etc. Fassmore could not as yet make a definite statement about the recent hunting season. Hunters success in previous years was about 30%; this year it might be up to 40% or perhaps 50%. He ascribed the high success as due to the light winter last year.

The season in Ontario is a modified buck law: hunters who are in a party can take as many does and fawns as bucks. The kill of does plus fawns is slightly heavier than that of bucks. He considers that 50 deer per square mile is a heavy population in Ontario. Proceeding in a northerly direction this should be lowered, because of a less suitable habitat.

Wisconsin

Mr. Guettinger remarked that the one buck law is changed now into an antlerless season. He said that this law was very satisfactory. Last year 159,000 deer were killed. The season of 1949 was complicated by bad weather conditions. He stated that in central Wisconsin a very heavy kill took place in the jackpine-scrub oak forest type. After the season was over there was not much complaint by the public.

During 1950 the season was a period of seven days for any deer. The size of closed areas was doubled as a protection against over-shooting. An effort was made to get the bulk of the hunters to the northern part of the State. The opening day had favourable weather conditions, and there was a 50% success in that day in the northern area. Checks since the finish of the season in areas hunted heaviest indicated that a good population survived. The overbrowsing is alleviated to some extent in some areas. In some spots the kill was as heavy as one deer per 15 acres. He passed a few remarks on what happened on Chambers Island in Green Bay since 1945. Department personnel estimated the deer population of the island to be 250 before the hunt in 1945, but harvested that number in a controlled hunt. After the season was over, more deer were trapped. The remaining population was estimated at 52. This fall not less than 120 were removed from the island.

There were 7 fatal accidents in Wisconsin during the recent season. He estimated a total of 300,000 hunters and a kill of possibly 200,000. He thinks that it may be desirable to have a similar season in the northern area next year.

Northeastern U.S.A.

Mr. Studholme, Regional Supervisor of the Federal Aid Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, made a few remarks about the work of Severinghaus in the State of New York. He said that the north east has a very high deer population. There is an ant-deer season in the different states. Deer problems are in his opinion different in the north east than in the Great Lakes area, although in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and the Adirondacks conditions are more alike. Deer management in the Northeast is different than in more southerly areas because of yarding. He stated that more work has been done on deer during the past 10 years than ever before and that Severinghaus has made the main contributions. His system of work and techniques can be worked out by anybody anywhere. He has worked out an age criteria system and is now working on deer productivity. Studholme said that deer workers in the northeast get together at least once a year. He advised our group to take advantage of Severinghaus findings. Pennsylvania had a two day doe season before the buck season started. The doe season kill was low, but the buck season kill was good.