



# QDMA's ***Whitetail Report 2015***

***An annual report on the status of white-tailed deer,  
the foundation of the hunting industry in North America.***

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QDMA is dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage.

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Members of the media who have questions about the *Whitetail Report*, need additional information, or need sources for stories on whitetail biology or management, can contact QDMA's Education & Outreach staff at any time using the information below, or contact the National Office at (800) 209-3337.



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## INTRODUCTION

By Kip Adams

White-tailed deer are the most important game species in North America. More hunters pursue whitetails than any other species, and whitetail hunters contribute more financially than any other hunter segment. Collectively speaking, whitetails are the foundation of the entire hunting industry.

That's why I am so excited we can bring you this annual report on the status of whitetail hunting and management. We are in a unique position to be able to gather data from state wildlife agencies, the nation's leading deer researchers, and other sources to provide a true look at the "State of the Whitetail" for hunters, landowners, natural resource professionals and the media.

So, how are whitetails and deer hunters doing? I'm an optimist, so I'll start by saying there are some very positive trends occurring. Yearling buck harvest rates are at a record low, and the percentage of 3½-year-old and older bucks in the harvest is at a record high. Hunters are clearly reaping the benefits of more naturally balanced age structures in herds across the whitetail's range. Some states are shooting more bucks and antlerless deer today than they were a decade ago, and that always makes hunters happy. More deer and older bucks is a major win-win combination.

The National Deer Alliance (NDA) was recently formed, and this has the potential to be the largest deer hunter group ever assembled. Given that science means less today than at any point in my 20-year wildlife career, hunters and state wildlife agencies more than ever need a strong advocacy group, and the NDA can perfectly fill that role. Finally, QDM

Cooperatives are rapidly expanding across the U.S. and they are a shining star for deer hunting's future. We now have scientific data showing hunters involved in QDM Cooperatives have more fun hunting than their counterparts who aren't part of one. Since Cooperatives can enhance herd and habitat management, as well as hunting opportunities, it's no wonder hunters involved in them are more satisfied with their time afield. The bigger question is, "Why don't all hunters get involved with one?" QDMA Branches and staff members are trying to change that, and information in this report explains how.

Even though I'm an optimist, I'm not naïve to the current challenges and threats facing whitetails and our hunting brethren. Some challenges we've faced for years, such as hunter access and recruitment and retention issues. These are complex problems, and private land access programs, mentored youth programs, and adult apprentice hunting programs are steps toward solving them. Other challenges are newer, like proposals to legalize the sale of venison and create commercial hunting licenses. This concept has been discussed in professional circles for the past few years, and the first legislative bill allowing this was proposed in 2014. The bill failed last year, but it's already back on the table in 2015.

One of the biggest issues facing hunters in the Midwest right now is significantly reduced deer harvests. Some states' buck harvests have declined more than 40 percent during the past decade. Not to be outdone, even more states' antlerless harvests have declined by more than 40



percent during this time period. Harvest declines of this magnitude are extremely noticeable by hunters, and state wildlife agencies are bearing the brunt of their frustrations. Unfortunately, communication between the agencies and hunters is not at a productive level in many states. Hunters' views and agencies' views on the biggest issues impacting deer management are 180 degrees off. This is not good for the future of hunting, and it will take a much more concerted effort on the part of both camps to work together to solve today's most imminent challenges.

All of this information and much more is included in the following pages. I hope you enjoy the data, interpretations, and QDMA's recommendations as you read this report. Each *Whitetail Report* is different, as they cover the most pressing issues of that year, so if you enjoy this one be sure to check out the other reports going back to 2009 at [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com). Here's to a productive 2015 and a great deer season this fall.

Respectfully,  
Kip Adams



Cover photo by Tes Randle Jolly

## PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE WHITETAIL REPORT

In various sections of this report, you will find references to previous editions of the *Whitetail Report*, which has been published annually since 2009. Every edition of the *Whitetail Report* is available as a free PDF on [QDMA.com](http://QDMA.com) under the "Resources" menu.



## ABOUT THE DEER HARVEST DATA IN THIS REPORT

The 2014-15 deer season is closed or nearing so for states/provinces across the whitetail's range, and biologists will be crunching data in the coming months to assess the outcome of this past season. For the 2015 *Whitetail Report*, QDMA compared harvest data from the three most recent seasons available: 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. We requested and received harvest data from all 37 states in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast (see map) that comprise the majority of whitetail habitat in the U.S. Unfortunately, we only received data from two western

states (New Mexico and Wyoming) and two Canadian provinces (New Brunswick and Quebec). Our sincere appreciation goes out to these agencies, but without the majority of data from the West or Canada, we omitted them from these analyses.

The data in this report are from each state wildlife agency. Agencies use different techniques to collect this data, and some collect more data than others. Analyses among agencies may not always compare "apples to apples," but each state provided their best possible data. Also, analyses across years should provide valid compari-

sons for individual agencies. An important note about the "per square mile" figures presented in the following pages is that some states use total area for these statistics while others use total acres of deer habitat (and some differ on what is included in deer habitat). Therefore, we calculated per square mile estimates using each state's total area excluding water bodies. This will allow future estimates to be very comparable across years for a given state, but not always across states.

## ANTLERED BUCK HARVEST

With respect to antlered buck harvest (those 1½ years or older), the 2013-14 season was a good one for many hunters in the Northeast but a subpar one for hunting in many Southeastern and Midwestern states as the overall buck harvest declined 4 percent. Twenty of 37 states (54 percent) in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast shot fewer antlered bucks in 2013 than in 2012.

In total, the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast regions tagged over 2.7 million bucks. Texas continued its tradition of harvesting the most with 330,535 antlered bucks. This was more than half as many bucks as were killed in the entire Northeast! For the third year in a row, Michigan was next with 203,057, and Wisconsin was third with 143,738 antlered bucks. Texas shot more bucks than the previous year, while Michigan and Wisconsin both shot significantly fewer.

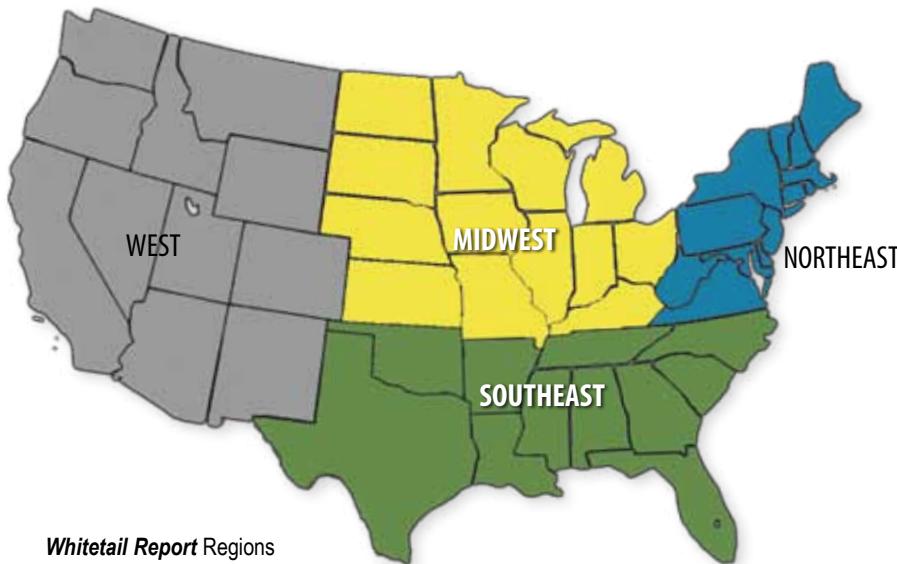
In the Midwest, hunters shot 930,272 antlered bucks, 10 percent below the number in 2012 and the first time since we began publishing the *Whitetail Report* in 2009 that the Midwest buck harvest dropped below one million. Eleven of 13 states' buck harvest (85 percent) declined in 2013 and eight of these (62 percent) declined by at least 10 percent. Kentucky hunters shot 6 percent more bucks in 2013, and Indiana hunters shot 1 percent more. On the flip side, Illinois hunters shot 17 percent fewer bucks than in 2012, Iowa shot 18 percent fewer, and North Dakota shot 25 percent fewer. Parts of the Midwest were hit hard with hemorrhagic disease

during the summer of 2012, and it appears that impact was still felt during the 2013 season. Numerically, Michigan shot the most bucks (203,057) and also reported the most bucks per square mile (3.6). Interestingly, Michigan attained this while simultaneously reducing the percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest. Kudos to Michigan! This is an incredible buck harvest rate and is exactly three times the Midwest average

of 1.2 bucks per square mile. The Midwest ranged from harvesting 0.3 bucks per square mile in Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota to 3.6 per square mile in Michigan.

*Of the 37 states we received data from for the past two seasons, 54 percent of them shot fewer antlered bucks in 2013 than in 2012.*

In the Northeast, hunters shot 530,199 antlered bucks. This was 3 percent higher than in 2012, and 10 of 13 states shot more bucks in 2013. This was the third year in a row the Northeast increased its buck harvest. Connecticut hunters shot 18 percent fewer bucks in



*In the Midwest, Michigan shot the most bucks (203,057) and also reported the most bucks per square mile (3.6). Interestingly, Michigan attained this while simultaneously reducing the percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest. Kudos to Michigan!*

2013, while Delaware hunters shot 12 percent more. Numerically, Pennsylvania shot the most bucks (134,280), followed by New York (114,716) and Virginia (106,349). The Northeast averaged shooting 2.2 bucks per square mile, and this is nearly double the Midwest average. Harvest rates ranged from 0.5 bucks per square mile in Maine to 3.0 in Pennsylvania, 3.1 in West Virginia and 3.3 per square mile in Maryland. These were all increases from a year ago.

In the Southeast, hunters shot 1,272,018 antlered bucks. This was 2 percent fewer than in 2012. Six of 11 states shot fewer bucks in 2013 than 2012, and their declines ranged from -2 percent in South Carolina to -27 percent in Florida. Conversely, five states shot more, and their increases ranged from 5 percent in Georgia to 9 percent in Texas. Numerically, Texas shot the most bucks (330,535) with Georgia (137,025), South Carolina (114,482), and

Mississippi (108,664) also surpassing the 100,000 mark. The Southeast averaged shooting 1.7 bucks per square mile and ranged from 0.8 bucks in Oklahoma to a nationwide high of 3.8 per square mile

in South Carolina. Unfortunately, South Carolina does not collect age structure data on the deer harvest, so it couldn't estimate the percentage of the harvest that was 1½ years old.

### ESTIMATED BUCK HARVEST

#### Antlered Bucks 1½ Years and Older

State	2011	2012	2013	% Change '12 to '13	Bucks PSM*
Illinois	70,513	69,681	57,769	-17	1.0
Indiana	50,717	45,936	46,240	1	1.3
Iowa	46,212	47,927	39,447	-18	0.7
Kansas	45,025	43,321	41,236	-5	0.5
Kentucky	65,932	64,183	67,760	6	1.7
Michigan	212,791	222,640	203,057	-9	3.6
Minnesota	85,500	97,136	87,865	-10	1.1
Missouri	114,031	120,549	104,815	-13	1.5
Nebraska	37,160	26,309	24,401	-7	0.3
North Dakota	22,688	24,727	18,645	-25	0.3
Ohio	81,721	81,149	70,100	-14	1.7
South Dakota	38,960	29,286	25,199	-14	0.3
Wisconsin	150,839	165,457	143,738	-13	2.7
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>1,022,089</b>	<b>1,038,301</b>	<b>930,272</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Connecticut	6,256	6,442	5,280	-18	1.1
Delaware	3,948	3,703	4,144	12	2.1
Maine	13,056	15,385	16,736	9	0.5
Maryland	33,104	30,493	32,114	5	3.3
Massachusetts	6,190	6,402	6,519	2	0.8
New Hampshire	6,548	6,659	7,171	8	0.8
New Jersey	18,575	17,752	18,511	4	2.5
New York	110,002	118,993	114,716	-4	2.4
Pennsylvania	127,540	133,860	134,280	0	3.0
Rhode Island	1,039	1,067	1,020	-4	1.0
Vermont	7,374	8,073	8,831	9	0.9
Virginia	98,874	96,853	106,349	10	2.7
West Virginia	78,081	71,628	74,528	4	3.1
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>510,587</b>	<b>517,310</b>	<b>530,199</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Alabama	130,500	122,400	98,400	-20	1.9
Arkansas	85,284	96,956	91,132	-6	1.8
Florida	88,912	89,025	65,357	-27	1.2
Georgia	133,520	130,115	137,025	5	2.4
Louisiana	73,425	87,210	93,072	7	2.2
Mississippi	127,416	123,000	108,664	-12	2.3
North Carolina	80,014	80,883	86,558	7	1.8
Oklahoma	66,320	62,394	52,197	-16	0.8
South Carolina	108,907	116,673	114,482	-2	3.8
Tennessee	85,676	88,549	94,596	7	2.3
Texas	309,207	304,035	330,535	9	1.3
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>1,289,181</b>	<b>1,301,240</b>	<b>1,272,018</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>2,821,857</b>	<b>2,856,851</b>	<b>2,732,489</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>1.5</b>

\*PSM: Per Square Mile in 2013

#### Top-5 States 2013 Antlered Buck Harvest

Texas	330,535
Michigan	203,057
Wisconsin	143,738
Georgia	137,025
Pennsylvania	134,280

#### Top-5 States 2013 Buck Harvest/Square Mile

South Carolina	3.8
Michigan	3.6
Maryland	3.3
West Virginia	3.1
Pennsylvania	3.0

## AGE STRUCTURE OF THE BUCK HARVEST

QDMA also acquired the age structure of the buck harvest data for most states. Twenty-eight states reported the percentage of their antlered buck harvest that was 1½ years old, and 23 states reported the percentage that was also 2½ and 3½ years or older. In 2013, the average percentage of the antlered buck harvest that was 1½ years old was 36 percent, which is the lowest national percentage ever reported! The line graph below shows how the yearling percentage of the antlered buck harvest in the U.S. has changed during the past 24 years.

In 2013, Arkansas averaged the fewest yearlings (8 percent of antlered buck harvest) and Wisconsin reported the most (61 percent of antlered buck harvest). Importantly, Arkansas's number is the lowest yearling harvest percentage ever reported, and the state has achieved this two years in a row. Arkansas implemented a state-wide antler point restriction in 1998, and the state continues with an antler point or antler points/main beam restriction today (see page 21). Notably, Arkansas has led the U.S. in harvesting the lowest percentage of yearling bucks for five of the past six

years! Other notables include Louisiana (15 percent), Oklahoma (20 percent) and Kansas (21 percent). Michigan and New Jersey have made tremendous gains in this statistic during the past few years. The percentage of yearling bucks in Michigan's buck harvest declined from 59 percent in 2011 to 47 percent in 2013, and New Jersey's declined from 62 percent to 39 percent during that time period. Kudos to New Jersey and Michigan!

New Jersey (56 to 39 percent), Maine (62 to 53 percent) and West Virginia (43 to 34 percent) had the biggest declines in percentage of yearlings from 2012 to 2013. Kansas (14 to 21 percent), Wisconsin (54 to 61 percent), and Texas (14 to 23 percent) reported the largest increases in yearling buck harvest percentage from 2012 to 2013. Kansas and Texas increased this statistic, but both states still do a great job protecting yearling bucks. Another notable for this year included the fact that every state in the Northeast collected age structure data; this is the first time that every state in any region has collected age data since we began publishing the *Whitetail Report* in 2009. The Northeast

also reported its lowest percentage of yearling bucks to date (44 percent). Arkansas led the Southeast and the nation with less than one in 10 bucks being 1½ years old! Finally, for the third time in four years, over half of the bucks harvested in Pennsylvania were 2½ years or older. The Southeast also maintained its lowest region-wide average at 26 percent yearling bucks. Approximately three of four bucks shot in the Southeast are 2½ years or older.

Nationally, the average percentage of the antlered buck harvest that was 2½ years old was similar in 2012 (30 percent)

### Top-5 States

#### With Lowest

#### Yearling-Buck Harvest Rates

State	2013 Percentage
Arkansas	8
Louisiana	15
Oklahoma	20
Kansas	21
Texas	23

### Top-5 States

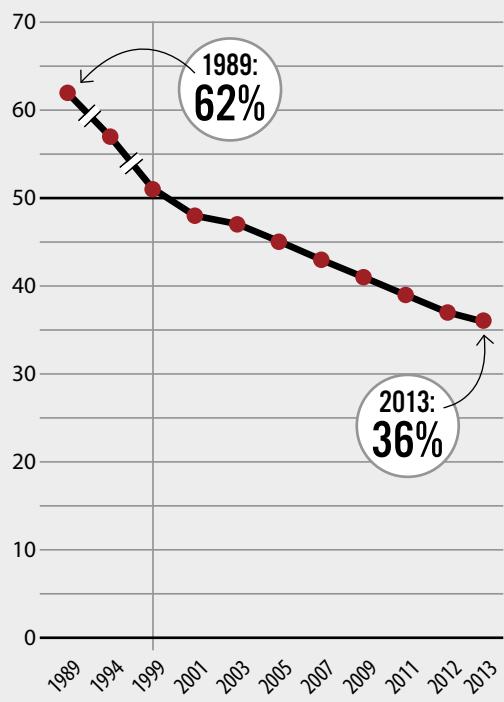
#### With Highest Harvest of 3½-year-old and Older Bucks

State	2013 Percentage
Louisiana	68
Arkansas	67
Oklahoma	62
Texas	58
Kansas	46

and 2013 (31 percent). In 2013, this statistic ranged from 17 percent in Louisiana to 51 percent in Vermont.

Twenty-three of 28 states (82 percent) that we received age structure data from were able to also provide the percentage of bucks 3½ years and older in the harvest; kudos to these states for their data collection efforts. The average percentage of the antlered buck harvest that was 3½ years and older was 34 percent in 2013, making it the highest percentage of 3½-year-old or older bucks ever reported! This is higher than the percentage of 2½-year-olds and nearly equal to the percentage of yearlings. This is a testament to how far we've come as hunters and managers in the past decade. This statistic ranged from 15 percent in Maine and Wisconsin to 67 percent in Arkansas and 68 percent in Louisiana. Other notables included Oklahoma (62 percent) and Texas (58 percent). Sixteen of 23 states (70 percent) with comparable data for 2012 and 2013 harvested a higher percentage of bucks 3½ years of age and older in 2013. Amazingly, New Jersey increased the percentage of bucks 3½ years and older in the harvest from 7 to 20 percent! Regionally, the Southeast averaged the highest percentage of bucks 3½ years and older (50 percent), followed by the Midwest (27 percent) and Northeast (23 percent).

### Percent Yearling Bucks in the U.S. Buck Harvest



## BUCK HARVEST BY AGE CLASS

State	1½ Years Old			2½ Years Old			3½ Years Old		
	2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
Illinois	41	40	44	*	*	*	*	*	*
Indiana	39	41	39	38	38	38	23	21	23
Iowa	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kansas	*	14	21	*	41	33	*	45	46
Kentucky	*	32	28	*	39	43	*	29	29
Michigan	59	53	47	24	28	32	17	19	21
Minnesota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Missouri	25(48)**	25(55)**	*	37(25)**	44(24)**	*	38(27)**	31(22)**	*
Nebraska	23	28	25	43	38	40	34	34	35
North Dakota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ohio	47	46	48	31	31	32	22	23	20
South Dakota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wisconsin	54	54	61	30	27	24	16	19	15
<b>Midwest Average</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>
Connecticut	44	40	44	*	*	*	*	*	*
Delaware	*	*	53	*	*	*	*	*	*
Maine	54	62	53	25	23	32	21	15	15
Maryland	57	55	53	*	*	*	*	*	*
Massachusetts	44	45	45	29	28	27	27	27	28
New Hampshire	49	43	45	22	28	32	29	29	23
New Jersey	62	56	39	30	37	41	8	7	20
New York	54	56	52	28	29	32	18	15	16
Pennsylvania	50	48	47	*	*	*	*	*	*
Rhode Island	31	37	33	37	28	36	32	25	31
Vermont	40	37	27	35	45	51	25	18	22
Virginia	48***	47	48	31***	31	22	21***	21	30
West Virginia	38	43	34	33	34	40	29	23	26
<b>Northeast Average</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>
Alabama	23***	28***	30***	30***	29***	35***	47***	43***	34***
Arkansas	10	8	8	23	27	25	67	65	67
Florida	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Georgia	44	44	45	30	28	25	26	28	31
Louisiana	18***	17***	15	18***	16***	17	64***	59***	68
Mississippi	13	12	*	17	16	*	70	72	*
North Carolina	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Oklahoma	25	15	20	24	19	18	51	66	62
South Carolina	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tennessee	43	44	43	36	38	40	21	18	17
Texas	21	14	23	19	19	19	60	67	58
<b>Southeast Average</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3-Region Average</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>

\*Data not provided/available

\*\*Data from antler-point-restriction counties (non-antler-point-restriction counties)

\*\*\*Data from check stations and/or DMAP areas

## ANTLERLESS HARVEST



Antlerless harvests vary widely among states and years due to differences in deer density, productivity, a state's goals (reducing, stabilizing, or increasing the deer population – see page 20), weather, disease and other factors. However, we can learn much about an agency's management program by comparing the antlerless and antlered buck harvests. Continuing with the analysis of states in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast, hunters from these regions harvested 3.3 million antlerless deer in 2013. This was 2 percent above 2012 and 2 percent below the 2011 antlerless harvests. Overall, Georgia topped the list with 316,927 antlerless deer; Texas followed with 295,042, Pennsylvania was third with 218,640, Wisconsin was fourth with 198,893, and Michigan was fifth with 175,737 antlerless deer. This top five was unchanged from 2012, and these five states alone shot over 1.2 million antlerless deer, and that equaled 36 percent of the entire U.S. antlerless harvest!

The top two antlerless harvests were in the Southeast, the region that has recently expressed the most concern regarding additive impacts by coyote predation, and

both states increased their antlerless harvest from 2012 to 2013. Maryland harvested the most antlerless deer per square mile (6.6), followed by Georgia (5.5), Delaware (5.2) and Pennsylvania (4.9). These are astounding harvest rates, and these states are shooting more antlerless deer per square mile than some areas have for a standing crop of bucks, does and fawns combined! Regionally, the Northeast (2.9) averaged shooting the most antlerless deer per square mile, followed by the Southeast (2.0) and the Midwest (1.4). This is at least the fifth year in a row where the productive Midwest shot fewer antlerless deer per square mile than the Northeast or Southeast.

Also regionally, the Midwest shot 10 percent fewer antlerless deer in 2013 (1,136,333) than in 2012 (1,268,240). Numerically, North Dakota (15,148) shot the fewest antlerless deer and Wisconsin (198,893) shot the most. Other notables included Kentucky which increased its antlerless harvest 14 percent from 2012, but 11 of 13 Midwest states shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013. In fact, eight of 13 states reduced their antlerless harvest by

more than 10 percent. North Dakota (-21 percent), Missouri (-22 percent), South Dakota (-26 percent), and Nebraska (-39 percent) all reduced their antlerless harvest by more than 20 percent. Nebraska is still feeling the impacts of the record hemorrhagic disease outbreak in 2012, and its antlerless harvest has dropped 61 percent since 2011. Wisconsin shot the most per square mile (3.7) followed by Indiana (3.5). Nebraska and North Dakota harvested the fewest per square mile (0.2), followed by South Dakota (0.3).

Eight of 13 Midwest states (62 percent) shot more antlerless deer than antlered bucks. Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota shot more antlered bucks than antlerless deer. The Midwest averaged shooting 1.2 antlerless deer per antlered buck, and this ranged from 0.6 in Nebraska to 1.7 in Indiana and Ohio.

The Northeast shot 700,217 antlerless deer in 2013, 9 percent more than in 2012, and 12 of 13 Northeast states shot more antlerless deer in 2013 than the prior year.

### Top-5 States 2013 Antlerless Harvest

Georgia	316,927
Texas	295,042
Pennsylvania	218,640
Wisconsin	198,893
Michigan	175,737

### Top-5 States 2013 Antlerless Harvest Per Square Mile

Maryland	6.5
Georgia	5.5
Delaware	5.2
Pennsylvania	4.9
New Jersey	4.5

### Top-5 States 2013 Antlerless Deer Per Antlered Buck Harvested

Delaware	2.4
Georgia	2.3
Maryland	2.0
New Jersey	1.8
Alabama/Indiana/Ohio	1.7

*In 2013, only 22 of 37 states (59 percent) shot more antlerless deer than antlered bucks; down from 61 percent in 2012 and 73 percent in 2011.*

Numerically, Rhode Island took the fewest (1,482) while Pennsylvania took the most antlerless deer (218,640). Rhode Island (28 percent) and Maine (31 percent) had the largest increases, while Vermont (-7 percent) was the only state to shoot fewer in 2013. Maryland shot the most antlerless deer per square mile (6.6), followed by Delaware (5.2) and Pennsylvania (4.9). New England averaged the fewest at 0.3 in Maine and 0.6 antlerless deer per square mile in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, a testament to the differences in deer management programs in states with severe winters.

Nine of 13 Northeastern states (69 percent) shot more antlerless deer than antlered bucks. However, all four states that shot more bucks are in New England. For the first time in five years, West Virginia harvested more antlerless deer than antlered bucks. The Northeast averaged shooting 1.3 antlerless deer per antlered buck, and this ranged from 0.5 in Maine to 2.4 antlerless deer per antlered buck in Delaware.

The Southeast shot 1,490,660 antlerless deer in 2013. Numerically, Oklahoma took the fewest (35,812) while Georgia took the most antlerless deer (316,927). Georgia had the largest percentage (24 percent) increase from 2012 while Florida had the largest decline (-30 percent). Eight of 11 southeastern states shot more antlerless deer in 2013 than 2012. Only Tennessee (-16 percent), Oklahoma (-21) and Florida (-30 percent) shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013. Georgia shot the most antlerless deer per square mile (5.5), followed by South Carolina (3.7) and Alabama (3.4). Oklahoma (0.5) and Florida (0.7) averaged the fewest antlerless deer harvested per square mile.

Only five of 10 (50 percent) Southeastern states shot more antlerless deer than antlered bucks in 2013. The Southeast averaged shooting 1.2 antlerless

deer per antlered buck, and this ranged from 0.6 in Florida to 2.3 antlerless deer per antlered buck in Georgia.

Reduced antlerless harvests are necessary in areas where deer herds have been balanced with the habitat and/or when other mortality factors, such as preda-

tion or disease, are increasing. However, very few states should be harvesting more antlered bucks than antlerless deer on a regular basis. In 2013, only 22 of 37 states (59 percent) shot more antlerless deer than antlered bucks; down from 61 percent in 2012 and 73 percent in 2011.

#### ESTIMATED ANTLERLESS DEER HARVEST

State	2011	2012	2013	% Change '12 to '13	Antlerless PSM*	Antlerless Per Antlered
Illinois	110,938	111,130	90,845	-18	2.7	1.6
Indiana	78,301	90,312	79,395	-12	3.5	1.7
Iowa	75,195	67,681	59,953	-11	1.8	1.5
Kansas	49,788	48,036	48,424	1	0.6	1.2
Kentucky	53,731	67,212	76,649	14	1.9	1.1
Michigan	203,930	191,364	175,737	-8	3.1	0.9
Minnesota	107,000	89,498	84,916	-5	1.1	1.0
Missouri	174,563	189,380	147,109	-22	2.1	1.4
Nebraska	39,283	24,974	15,213	-39	0.2	0.6
North Dakota	29,823	19,280	15,148	-21	0.2	0.8
Ohio	138,027	137,761	120,503	-13	2.9	1.7
South Dakota	46,200	31,782	23,548	-26	0.3	0.9
Wisconsin	193,954	199,830	198,893	0	3.7	1.4
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>1,300,733</b>	<b>1,268,240</b>	<b>1,136,333</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Connecticut	6,641	6,979	7,269	4	1.5	1.4
Delaware	9,611	9,599	10,119	5	5.2	2.4
Maine	6,100	6,118	8,035	31	0.3	0.5
Maryland	62,268	57,048	63,749	12	6.6	2.0
Massachusetts	4,943	4,606	4,925	7	0.6	0.8
New Hampshire	4,561	4,953	5,369	8	0.6	0.7
New Jersey	31,533	32,190	33,083	3	4.5	1.8
New York	118,357	123,964	128,851	4	2.7	1.1
Pennsylvania	208,660	209,250	218,640	4	4.9	1.6
Rhode Island	1,379	1,154	1,482	28	1.4	1.5
Vermont	4,758	5,684	5,276	-7	0.6	0.6
Virginia	134,114	118,345	137,973	17	3.5	1.3
West Virginia	65,615	59,788	75,446	26	3.1	1.0
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>658,540</b>	<b>639,678</b>	<b>700,217</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Alabama	206,500	144,300	171,560	19	3.4	1.7
Arkansas	107,464	116,531	122,067	5	2.3	1.3
Florida	47,276	53,300	37,269	-30	0.7	0.6
Georgia	277,961	255,294	316,927	24	5.5	2.3
Louisiana	60,075	65,790	73,128	11	1.7	0.8
Mississippi	144,859	147,000	152,061	3	3.2	1.4
North Carolina	93,539	86,366	101,572	18	2.1	1.2
Oklahoma	46,543	45,454	35,812	-21	0.5	0.7
South Carolina	117,551	101,181	111,324	10	3.7	1.0
Tennessee	82,026	88,410	73,898	-16	1.8	0.8
Texas	265,601	242,325	295,042	22	1.1	0.9
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>1,449,395</b>	<b>1,345,951</b>	<b>1,490,660</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>3,408,668</b>	<b>3,253,869</b>	<b>3,327,210</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.2</b>

\*PSM: Per Square Mile in 2013

## AGE STRUCTURE OF THE ANTLERLESS HARVEST



QDMA also acquired the age structure of the antlerless harvest data for most states. Twenty-seven states reported the percentage of their antlerless harvest that was 6 months (fawn) or 1½ years old, and 23 states reported the percentage that was also 2½ and 3½ years or older. In 2013, the average antlerless harvest that was 6 months old was 25 percent; thus, one in four antlerless deer harvested was a fawn which includes doe fawns and button bucks. The Southeast averaged the lowest percentage of fawns (18 percent), and the Northeast averaged the most (30 percent of the antlerless harvest). Individually, Kansas (7 percent), Texas (7 percent) and Kentucky (8 percent) shot the fewest fawns, and Ohio (41 percent), Wisconsin (43 percent) and Massachusetts (46 percent) shot the most.

We also compared the percentage of fawns in the antlerless harvest in 2013 to that of a decade ago. The U.S. average was 5 percent lower in 2013 than in 2003, and nearly every state reduced this percentage. New Jersey reduced it a lot (-23 percent) while many states reduced it up to 10 percent. Reasons for the reduction are varied

and include an increased ability to distinguish between fawns and adults in the field by hunters, active passing of fawns by hunters, and a reduced number of fawns in some areas due to predation and other factors. Monitoring the percentage of fawns in the antlerless harvest is one method for estimating the fawn recruitment rate, and this rate is one of the most important pieces of data a deer manager needs when assessing a herd's growth potential and

applying a prescribed antlerless harvest (see page 34).

The accompanying table also includes a state-by-state look at the percentage of the antlerless harvest in 2003 and

2013 that was 1½, 2½ and 3½ years or older. Monitoring how these percentages change over time is valuable, and that's especially true for the 3½-plus age class. This age class includes mature animals, and they typically are also the most productive individuals and most successful mothers. Nationally, approximately a third of the antlerless deer shot in 2013 reached the 3½-plus age class, and that is up from 26 percent in 2003. The Southeast leads the

regions with 40 percent of antlerless deer in this age class, and Oklahoma and Texas lead all states with 52 percent being 3½ years and older.

Age structure data is the backbone of a deer management program. Monitoring the age structure of the harvest is key for deer managers to make wise management decisions, including the appropriate number of antlerless deer to harvest annually in each deer management unit. Good age data helps managers

avoid underharvesting or overharvesting our deer herds. Many hunters learn how to estimate the age of deer they harvest, and all hunters should provide every piece of data requested by their state wildlife agency.

### Top-5 States

#### Lowest Percentage of Fawns in 2013 Antlerless Harvest

Kansas / Texas	7
Kentucky	8
New Jersey	11
Louisiana	12

### Top-5 States

#### Highest Percentage of Fawns in 2013 Antlerless Harvest

Massachusetts	46
Wisconsin	43
Pennsylvania	39
Virginia	38
Georgia	37

### Top-5 States

#### Highest Percentage of 3½-Plus Antlerless Deer

Oklahoma / Texas	52
Arkansas / Vermont	48
Louisiana	46

## PERCENTAGE ANTLELESS HARVEST BY AGE CLASS

State	Fawn		1½ Years Old		2½ Years Old		3½ and Older	
	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013	2003	2013
Illinois	40	35	26	*	23	*	11	*
Indiana	28	29	29	25	26	26	17	20
Iowa	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kansas	18	7	22	15	37	46	23	32
Kentucky	*	8	*	26	*	40	*	26
Michigan	32	28	22	24	17	17	30	30
Minnesota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Missouri	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Nebraska	28	23	26	25	23	26	23	26
North Dakota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ohio	48	41	19	18	19	20	14	21
South Dakota	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wisconsin	42	43	18	18	18	18	21	21
<b>Midwest Average</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>
Connecticut	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Delaware	*	34	*	24	*	20	*	22
Maine	38	33	19	17	34	21	9	29
Maryland	43	33	24	23	33	*	*	*
Massachusetts	44	46	18	17	17	16	21	21
New Hampshire	37	33	15	13	16	18	32	37
New Jersey	34	11	26	35	24	30	16	24
New York	35	31	19	22	20	19	26	27
Pennsylvania	39	39	20	19	*	*	*	*
Rhode Island	*	22	*	*	*	*	*	*
Vermont	23	17	*	18	*	13	*	48
Virginia	38	38	21	18	22	18	20	26
West Virginia	22	26	19	23	25	21	34	30
<b>Northeast Average</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>
Alabama	16	21	21	18	22	22	42	39
Arkansas	24	13	20	18	25	21	32	48
Florida	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Georgia	37	37	19	20	20	20	23	23
Louisiana	*	12	*	21	*	21	*	46
Mississippi	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
North Carolina	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Oklahoma	24	17	18	17	23	14	35	52
South Carolina	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tennessee	*	18	*	30	*	28	*	23
Texas	6	7	20	18	21	22	53	52
<b>Southeast Average</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3-Region Average</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>

\*Data not provided/available

## DEER HARVEST BY WEAPON TYPE

The average hunter today has much longer seasons and more weapon opportunities than he or she had in the past. To assess how hunters take advantage of these opportunities, we surveyed state wildlife agencies to determine the percentage of the total deer harvest taken with a bow, rifle/shotgun, muzzleloader, or other weapon (pistol, etc.) during the 2012 and 2013 seasons.

Nationally, muzzleloader hunters took 12 percent of the total deer harvest, bow hunters took 21 percent, and firearm (rifle/shotgun) hunters took 65 percent.

Regionally, bow hunters averaged the highest percentage of the harvest in the Northeast (27 percent). Muzzleloader hunters also averaged their highest percentage in the Northeast (18 percent). Surprisingly, firearm hunters in the Northeast took just

over half of the deer (55 percent).

In the Southeast, firearms reign supreme as nearly three of four deer taken in 2013 (74 percent) were with a rifle or shotgun. Muzzleloading (11 percent) and bow hunting (13 percent) paled in comparison to the firearm harvest. In the Midwest, muzzleloading was least popular at only 7 percent of the harvest, and a firearm harvest of 68 percent was far above the Northeast's and close to the Southeast's.

Big harvest shifts occurred from 2012 to 2013 in Pennsylvania's bow season where the percentage of deer taken by archers dropped from 26 to 15 percent. Muzzleloader hunters picked up the slack and increased from 8 to 22 percent of the harvest. Other shifts from 2012 to 2013

*In 2013, muzzleloader hunters took 12 percent of the total deer harvest, bow hunters took 21 percent and firearm (rifle/shotgun) hunters took 65 percent.*



The number of hunters taking advantage of bow and muzzleloader seasons has increased. In fact, in the Northeast bow and muzzleloader hunters combined to take nearly half of the harvest (45 percent) with 27 percent attributed to bow hunters and 18 percent to muzzleloader hunters.

### Top-5 States

#### Percentage of 2013 Harvest by Bow

State	% by Bow
New Jersey	56
Ohio	45
Massachusetts	43
Illinois	39
Rhode Island	37

### Top-5 States

#### Percentage of 2013 Harvest by Rifle/Shotgun

State	% by Rifle/Shotgun
South Carolina	89
Maine	87
Alabama	86
Minnesota	85
South Dakota	85

### Top-5 States

#### Percentage of 2013 Harvest by Muzzleloader

State	% by Muzzleloader
Rhode Island	39
Tennessee	24
Massachusetts	22
Mississippi	22
Pennsylvania	22

included the firearms harvest declined 10 percent in Massachusetts and increased 11 percent in Vermont.

Individually, New Jersey leads the U.S. in the percentage of total harvest taken by archers (56 percent), South Carolina has the highest percentage taken by firearms hunters (89 percent), and Rhode Island tops the list with percentage taken by muzzleloader hunters (39 percent).

More hunters take advantage of bows and muzzleloaders today, and that's great for the future of hunting. More seasons to go afield helps even "occasional" hunters stay engaged, and it greatly enhances the opportunities to mentor youth and new hunters. Finally, expanded opportunities help retain aging hunters, and every hunter is critically important to our wildlife management system.

## PERCENTAGE OF DEER HARVEST BY WEAPON TYPE, 2012 vs. 2013

State	Bow		Rifle/Shotgun		Muzzleloader		Other	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Illinois	33	39	55	51	12	10	1	1
Indiana	26	19	51	52	22	20	1	9
Iowa	20	20	67	69	13	11	0	0
Kansas	28	29	67	63	5	5	0	4
Kentucky	14	15	73	72	11	11	2	2
Michigan	31	31	54	55	7	8	8	7
Minnesota	12	11	84	85	4	4	0	0
Missouri	16	20	76	75	6	5	0	0
Nebraska	*	10	*	82	*	6	*	2
North Dakota	16	16	78	77	1	1	3	6
Ohio	39	45	46	40	10	12	5	3
South Dakota	12	13	85	85	3	2	0	0
Wisconsin	26	26	72	73	2	2	0	0
<b>Midwest Average</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Connecticut	40	*	43	*	7	*	10	*
Delaware	17	21	62	60	19	18	1	1
Maine	8	9	87	87	4	4	1	0
Maryland	31	34	51	46	18	20	0	0
Massachusetts	36	43	45	35	19	22	0	0
New Hampshire	27	31	43	44	26	21	4	4
New Jersey	52	56	35	32	13	12	0	0
New York	21	22	67	67	11	10	1	<1 (handgun)
Pennsylvania	26	15	66	64	8	22	0	0
Rhode Island	31	37	18	24	51	39	0	0
Vermont	24	23	49	60	18	17	13 (youth)	0
Virginia	12	12	62	66	26	22	0	0
West Virginia	19	20	77	75	4	5	0	0
<b>Northeast Average</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Alabama	*	12	*	86	*	2	*	0
Arkansas	14	9	73	74	13	14	0	3
Florida	27	21	64	68	9	7	0	4
Georgia	16	16	82	81	3	3	0	0
Louisiana	8	7	82	81	10	12	0	0
Mississippi	17	18	57	60	26	22	0	0
North Carolina	7	8	79	77	11	11	3 (crossbow)	4
Oklahoma	22	24	58	59	20	17	0	0
South Carolina	7	6	89	89	3	2	2	2
Tennessee	11	12	64	65	24	24	0	0
Texas	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Southeast Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3-Region Average</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

\*Data not provided/available

## TEN-YEAR TRENDS IN ANTLERED BUCK AND ANTLERLESS HARVESTS



Looking at year-to-year harvests is valuable, but it is also important to monitor long-term trends to gain an accurate perspective on the direction of deer management programs. Therefore, we compared the 2013 antlered buck and antlerless harvests for each state in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast to their harvests a decade ago in 2003. Wow, some deer programs have really changed during the past 10 years!

### Antlered Buck Harvest

Overall, the buck harvest declined 8 percent from 2003 to 2013, and 22 of 33 states (67 percent) shot fewer bucks in 2013. The Southeast (-2 percent) and Northeast (-3 percent) had similar harvests, but the Midwest took a beating with an 18 percent reduction during the decade. It is important to remember that in 2003 many states had deer herds above what their habitats could support, and they were aggressively trying to reduce their deer herds. As deer herds decline, the buck harvest has to drop too. Thus, the question becomes, "How far to reduce the numbers?" Or as many hunters want to know, "Have states reduced the herd too far?"

In the Southeast, seven of 11 states (64 percent) shot fewer bucks in 2013 than in 2003, even though the total harvest for the region was similar between the years. Alabama had the biggest decline (-55 percent) followed by North Carolina (-27 percent) while Arkansas (+39 percent) and

Tennessee (+107 percent) had the largest increases. While deer density can partially explain harvest changes, a bag limit change is most responsible for Alabama's 55 percent decline. For the 2007-08 hunting season, the state reduced the bag limit from one buck per day to three bucks per season, and it has had a huge impact on the annual buck harvests.

In the Northeast, six of 11 states (55 percent) shot more bucks in 2013 than in 2003 even though the total harvest for the region declined 3 percent. New Jersey had the biggest decline (-21 percent) followed by Maryland (-15 percent) while New Hampshire (23 percent) and Connecticut (17 percent) had the largest increases. For perspective, even with the declines New Jersey and Maryland still shot 2.5 and 3.3 bucks per square mile, respectively in 2013, and these are well above the national average of 1.5 bucks per square mile.

In the Midwest, 10 of 11 states (91 percent) shot fewer bucks in 2013 than in 2003, and the harvest dropped more than 10 percent for six of those states and 20 percent or more for four of them. Iowa had the biggest decline (-43 percent) followed by Minnesota (-27 percent) while Kentucky was the only state to shoot more bucks, and it had a big increase (+25 percent). Declines of that magnitude are very noticeable, and hunters in many Midwestern states have been up in arms over the past few seasons. Early reports from the 2014-15 season aren't favorable

for many states, so this issue will continue to grow.

### Antlerless Harvest

Overall, the antlerless harvest declined 12 percent from 2003 to 2013, and 21 of 34 states (62 percent) shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013. The Southeast (-4 percent) had similar harvests, but the Northeast (-15 percent) and Midwest (-20 percent) shot far fewer antlerless deer. While the majority of states had greater antlerless harvest opportunities in 2013 than in 2003 (see page 20), four of the top five deer harvest states (Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) had less antlerless opportunity in 2013. These four states accounted for much of the reduced harvest between 2003 and 2013, and this was planned as all four states were actively trying to reduce deer herds at some point during the decade. Thus, as deer herds declined, these states then reduced the antlerless harvest opportunity and the antlerless harvest also declined by 2013.

In the Southeast, six of 11 states (55 percent) shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013 than in 2003 even though the total harvest for the region was similar between the years. Alabama had the biggest decline (-46 percent) followed by Louisiana (-34 percent) while Texas (55 percent) and

### Top-5 States

2003 to 2013

#### Antlered Buck Harvest Increase

State	Percentage Increase
Tennessee	+107
Arkansas	+39
Texas	+36
Kentucky	+25
New Hampshire	+23

### Top-5 States

2003 to 2013

#### Antlered Buck Harvest Decline

State	Percentage Decline
Alabama	-55
Iowa	-43
Minnesota	-27
North Carolina	-27
Wisconsin	-26

*Deer management is in a very different period today than a decade ago, and how closely legislators, wildlife agencies and hunters work together will dictate our future deer management successes.*

Arkansas (187 percent) had the largest increases.

In the Northeast, seven of 12 states (58 percent) shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013. Maine had the biggest decline (-43 percent) followed by Pennsylvania (-32 percent) while New Hampshire (47 percent) and Rhode Island (96 percent) had the largest increases.

In the Midwest, eight of 11 states (73 percent) shot fewer antlerless deer in 2013, and seven of those states experienced harvest declines of 19 percent or more. Iowa had the biggest decline (-52 percent) followed by Minnesota (-50 percent) while Kentucky (23 percent) and Indiana (38 percent) had big increases.

#### Summary

Overall, things appear pretty good for much of the Northeast and Southeast. Hunters may be grumbling over substan-

tial buck harvest reductions in North Carolina and both buck and antlerless harvest reductions in Alabama, but most states in these regions are faring pretty well. The situation is much different in the Midwest. Large reductions in buck and antlerless harvests have many hunters concerned, and for good reason. Harvest declines of

20 to 50 percent are very noticeable, and state wildlife agencies and legislators hear this from hunters. Deer management is in a very different period today than a decade ago, and how closely legislators, wildlife agencies and hunters work together will dictate our future deer management successes.

#### DEER HARVEST TRENDS, 2003 vs. 2013

State	Antlered Bucks 1½ Years & Older			Antlerless Deer		
	2003	2013	% Change	2003	2013	% Change
Illinois	70,618	57,769	-18	92678	90845	-2
Indiana	49,533	46,240	-7	57453	79395	38
Iowa	69,600	39,447	-43	124912	59953	-52
Kansas	*	41,236	*	*	48424	*
Kentucky	54,188	67,760	25	62352	76649	23
Michigan	254,000	203,057	-20	241000	175737	-27
Minnesota	120,000	87,865	-27	170000	84916	-50
Missouri	109,597	104,815	-4	181034	147109	-19
Nebraska	24,482	24,401	0	19900	15213	-24
North Dakota	*	18,645	*	*	15148	*
Ohio	83,955	70,100	-17	112129	120503	7
South Dakota	26,502	25,199	-5	31520	23548	-25
Wisconsin	193,000	143,738	-26	251000	198893	-21
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>1,055,475</b>	<b>930,272</b>	<b>-18</b>	<b>1,343,978</b>	<b>1,136,333</b>	<b>-20</b>
Connecticut	4,531	5,280	17	6,783	7,269	7
Delaware	*	4,144	*	*	10,119	*
Maine	16,185	16,736	3	14,128	8,035	-43
Maryland	37,704	32,114	-15	49,519	63,749	29
Massachusetts	5,667	6,519	15	6,369	4,925	-23
New Hampshire	5,828	7,171	23	3,664	5,369	47
New Jersey	23,307	18,511	-21	46,149	33,083	-28
New York	107,533	114,716	7	145,555	128,851	-11
Pennsylvania	142,000	134,280	-5	323,000	218,640	-32
Rhode Island	960	1,020	6	756	1,482	96
Vermont	9,194	8,831	-4	5,334	5,276	-1
Virginia	116,629	106,349	-9	117,243	137,973	18
West Virginia	*	74,528	*	89,065	75,446	-15
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>469,538</b>	<b>530,199</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>807,565</b>	<b>700,217</b>	<b>-15</b>
Alabama	217,360	98,400	-55	317,640	171,560	-46
Arkansas	65,607	91,132	39	42,540	122,067	187
Florida	78,841	65,357	-17	39,110	37,269	-5
Georgia	119,270	137,025	15	364,630	316,927	-13
Louisiana	111,350	93,072	-16	111,350	73,128	-34
Mississippi	118,938	108,664	-9	127,912	152,061	19
North Carolina	117,808	86,558	-27	89,441	101,572	14
Oklahoma	54,831	52,197	-5	45,781	35,812	-22
South Carolina	123,000	114,482	-7	150,000	111,324	-26
Tennessee	45,631	94,596	107	71,741	73,898	3
Texas	242,937	330,535	36	189,917	295,042	55
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>1,295,573</b>	<b>1,272,018</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>1,550,062</b>	<b>1,490,660</b>	<b>-4</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>2,820,586</b>	<b>2,732,489</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>3,701,605</b>	<b>3,327,210</b>	<b>-12</b>

\*Data not available/provided

## ISSUES IMPACTING DEER MANAGEMENT



Numerous issues impact state wildlife agencies' abilities to manage whitetails. We selected seven popular issues and asked agencies to rank each of them on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not an issue" and 5 being "a very big issue." We asked them to rank the impacts of disease, predation, bad legislation, high deer density, low deer density, too few deer-focused staff members, and poaching on their management efforts.

Nationally, agencies ranked high deer density as the biggest issue followed by disease, too few deer-focused staff, low deer density, bad legislation, predation, and poaching. High deer density ranked first or second for every region, while predation ranked last or next to last for every region. These rankings show the wide disparity between the current views of agencies and hunters, as popular themes among hunters are that deer herds are too low and predators are a major concern.

In the Southeast, too few deer-focused staff members ranked highest followed by high deer density. Poaching ranked next to last, and predation ranked the lowest. Seven of 11 states (64 percent) only gave predation a score of 1 or 2 (out of 5). This is surprising given all of the recent press on the negative impacts predators are having

on fawn survival and all of the ongoing predation research projects. Too few deer staff ranked higher in the Southeast than any other region, and disease ranked lower here than everywhere else.

In the Northeast, high deer density ranked highest followed by bad legislation. Both of these issues ranked higher in the Northeast than every other region, and seven of 12 states (58 percent) gave high deer density a score of 4 or 5 (out of 5). Predation ranked next to last and poaching ranked the lowest. Ten of 11 states (91 percent) only gave poaching a score of 1 or 2, and this issue ranked lower in the Northeast than every other region.

In the Midwest, disease ranked highest followed by high deer density. Given the Midwest's plummeting deer harvests, we are guessing many hunters would vehemently disagree with an issue of having too many deer; to be fair though, we are confident the high deer density ranking is at least partially related to urban/suburban areas. Disease ranked far higher in the Midwest than the other regions as seven of 13 states (54 percent) gave it a score of 4 or 5. Only Ohio scored disease a 1 of 5, and given that the Buckeye State has discovered chronic wasting disease (CWD) *since* completing our survey, we are guessing it

ranks much higher there today. Predation ranked next to last and bad legislation ranked the lowest. Bad legislation received a lower score in the Midwest than in every other region.

### QDMA's Recommendations

We recognize there are many other issues that impact deer management and some that are likely more important than what we included here. We chose these issues because we asked attendees at the 2014 North American Whitetail Summit and at our 2014 National Convention to rank the items listed above. The results were quite different for all three surveys. This doesn't necessarily mean one survey group is more right or wrong than the others, rather it simply shows the difference in opinions of the groups and highlights the opportunities for agencies, hunters, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to address these and other issues – hence the need for the formation of the National Deer Alliance (NDA – see page 27). QDMA strongly advocates for agencies to engage hunters in their management programs. Engaged and knowledgeable hunters are better partners with agencies and far better ambassadors for their programs.

## STATE WILDLIFE AGENCY RANKING OF ISSUES IMPACTING DEER MANAGEMENT

Ranking Scale: 1 = "Not an issue" 5 = "Very Big Issue"

State	Disease	Predation	Bad Legislation	High Deer Density	Low Deer Density	Too Few Deer Staff	Poaching
Illinois	4	1	1	3	3	3	1
Indiana	3	1	1	4	1	1	1
Iowa	4	1	1	4	1	3	2
Kansas	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Kentucky	2	1	2	4	4	3	3
Michigan	5	3	2	4	3	2	3
Minnesota	3	3	2	5	5	2	2
Missouri	4	2	2	2	3	4	2
Nebraska	5	1	1	2	3	1	1
North Dakota	3	1	1	1	2	2	2
Ohio	1	2	3	1	2	3	2
South Dakota	4	3	2	5	5	5	1
Wisconsin	5	*	*	5	5	2	1
<b>Midwest Average</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>1.85</b>
Connecticut	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Delaware	2	1	2	3	1	4	1
Maine	1	*	*	1	5	4	*
Maryland	2	2	4	4	2	3	2
Massachusetts	1	1	5	4	2	3	1
New Hampshire	3	2	2	2	3	3	2
New Jersey	2	1	2	5	1	3	2
New York	4	2	4	5	2	3	2
Pennsylvania	5	3	4	3	3	2	2
Rhode Island	4	2	3	5	1	1	1
Vermont	1	2	3	2	4	1	2
Virginia	4	3	1	4	2	1	1
West Virginia	5	2	3	4	2	1	3
<b>Northeast Average</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>1.73</b>
Alabama	1	1	1	3	3	4	2
Arkansas	4	2	1	4	2	4	3
Florida	3	3	2	2	4	2	3
Georgia	3	4	5	2	3	4	3
Louisiana	2	3	*	1	3	4	2
Mississippi	5	1	5	5	2	5	3
North Carolina	2	1	2	4	4	3	2
Oklahoma	2	2	3	2	2	5	4
South Carolina	2	4	3	3	3	2	1
Tennessee	1	2	1	4	1	1	1
Texas	2	1	1	3	2	5	1
<b>Southeast Average</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>2.27</b>
<b>3-Region Average</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>1.97</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>1.94</b>

\*Data not provided

 Low Threat  Moderate Threat  High Threat

## ESTIMATED DEER POPULATIONS - 10 YEARS AGO VS. TODAY



Hunters love deer population estimates. They like seeing them for their state, comparing them to other states, and, most of all, complaining about how inaccurate they are. The reality is state agency deer managers do not need population estimates to manage deer herds. They simply need measures of deer health, habitat health, deer damage, and public desires to have successful deer management programs. These, along with one or more indices of whether the population is increasing, stable or decreasing, provides biologists with all the necessary data to manage at the wildlife management unit level. When problems arise, solutions are developed in concert with public input, and new goals can be set to either grow or trim the deer herd. However, since most hunters desire a population estimate, most state wildlife agencies produce one.

To gauge the number of whitetails in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast today and to see how that number has changed from a decade ago, we asked a few questions related to population estimates in our annual survey of state wildlife agencies. Twenty-seven of the 37 states (73 percent) in these regions produce a population estimate today. Nearly every state in

the Northeast and Southeast produces an estimate, but only seven of 13 states (54 percent) in the Midwest do.

In the Southeast, there are over 11.4 million deer, and that does not include Arkansas or Florida. Comparing only the states with estimates today and 10 years ago, there are approximately 1 percent more deer today. Four states have fewer deer, ranging from -6 percent in South Carolina to -33 percent in Louisiana, and four states have more deer, ranging from a 5 percent increase in North Carolina to 29 percent more deer in Oklahoma.

In the Northeast, there are over 3.5 million deer, and that does not include Connecticut or Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania alone likely has over 1 million deer, so the Northeast's number would likely be at least 30 percent higher if the Keystone State produced an estimate. The Northeast has approximately 6 percent fewer deer today than a decade ago. Six states have more deer today, ranging from a 2 percent increase in New York to 38 percent more in Rhode Island. Delaware and Virginia have equal numbers to a decade ago, and three states have fewer deer today, ranging from -18 percent in Maryland to -35 percent in New Jersey.

In the Midwest, there are over 4.8 million deer, but that is a major underestimate as nearly half of the Midwestern states do not calculate a population esti-

### Top-5 States With Largest Increases in Estimated Deer Numbers from 10 years ago to today

State	Percentage Increase
Kansas	+63
Rhode Island	+38
Oklahoma	+29
Texas	+13
Vermont	+10

### Top-5 States With Largest Decreases in Estimated Deer Numbers from 10 years ago to today

State	Percentage Decline
Missouri	-38
New Jersey	-35
Louisiana	-33
West Virginia	-22
Maryland	-18

*The reality is state agency deer managers do not need population estimates to manage deer herds. They simply need measures of deer health, habitat health, deer damage, and public desires to have successful deer management programs.*

mate. Comparing only states with estimates today and 10 years ago, there are 8 percent fewer deer in the Midwest today. This does not compare with the current buck and antlerless harvests today versus 10 years ago as they have declined 18 and 20 percent respectively in this region (see pages 14-15). Two states have more deer today, ranging from a 6 percent increase in Wisconsin to 63 percent more deer in Kansas. Nebraska has an equal number to a decade ago, and three states have fewer deer today ranging from -3 percent in Kentucky to -38 percent in Missouri.

#### QDMA's Recommendations

Some states do a better job than others of producing accurate population estimates, and we caution hunters from reading too much into the estimate for their state (if available). It is better to view herd health parameters such as body weights by age class, age distribution of the harvest, fawn recruitment rates, and habitat health indices such as forest regeneration rates. It is also valuable to assess trends in the harvest, especially in relation to the goals established in an agency's deer management plan.

Comparing population estimates over time can provide important information about deer management programs. However, success of any program involves much more than simply the number of deer today versus any other point in time. Some programs are trying to reduce deer herds, so fewer deer marks success. Other programs are trying to grow deer herds, so more deer would indicate success. It is also important to remember these are statewide estimates – not necessarily a measure of deer density right where you hunt. Too

many hunters get upset if they believe the estimate doesn't match their opinion of the herd in their own location. The key point to remember is that population estimates are simply estimates, they are often produced only to satisfy hunters' desires, and

they are not necessary to successfully manage deer. However, given hunters' interest in them, QDMA appreciates all of the agencies that do produce population estimates and encourages those that currently do not to do so in the future.

#### DEER POPULATION ESTIMATES, 10 YEARS AGO VS. TODAY

State	Number of Deer 10 Years Ago	Number of Deer Today	% Change Deer Population
Illinois	*	*	*
Indiana	*	*	*
Iowa	*	*	*
Kansas	400,000	650,000	63
Kentucky	847,911	821,731	-3
Michigan	*	*	*
Minnesota	1,104,800	1,004,000	-9
Missouri	1,600,000	1,000,000	-38
Nebraska	200,000	200,000	0
North Dakota	*	*	*
Ohio	*	*	*
South Dakota	*	358,000	*
Wisconsin	1,112,300	1,182,000	6
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>5,265,011</b>	<b>4,857,731</b>	<b>-8</b>
Connecticut	*	*	*
Delaware	45,000	45,000	0
Maine	213,000	230,000	8
Maryland	276,000	227,000	-18
Massachusetts	90,000	95,000	6
New Hampshire	93,417	101,125	8
New Jersey	161,509	105,535	-35
New York	940,000	960,000	2
Pennsylvania	*	*	*
Rhode Island	13,000	18,000	38
Vermont	123,000	135,000	10
Virginia	1,000,000	1,000,000	0
West Virginia	761,000	595,000	-22
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>3,715,926</b>	<b>3,511,660</b>	<b>-6</b>
Alabama	1,750,000	1,500,000	-14
Arkansas	*	*	*
Florida	*	*	*
Georgia	1,470,000	1,320,000	-10
Louisiana	750,000	500,000	-33
Mississippi	1,700,000	1,850,000	9
North Carolina	1,111,000	1,165,000	5
Oklahoma	425,000	550,000	29
South Carolina	800,000	750,000	-6
Tennessee	*	600,000	*
Texas	3,367,200	3,804,500	13
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>11,373,200</b>	<b>11,439,500</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>20,354,137</b>	<b>19,808,891</b>	<b>-3</b>

\*Data not provided/available

## ANTLERLESS HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES & CURRENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The size of deer herds is largely driven by the annual antlerless harvest. Among other factors, antlerless harvest opportunities include season length(s), bag limit(s), and antlerless license allocations. Obviously deer-vehicle collisions, predation, disease, severe weather and other factors play roles, but they are minor compared to the number of antlerless deer hunters take each year. Given the current debates raging across many areas of the whitetail's range regarding declining deer numbers, we surveyed state wildlife agencies in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast to learn how each state's antlerless harvest opportunity compared today with that of five and 10 years ago, and to see whether the current management strategy for each state was to increase, stabilize or reduce the deer herd.

### ANTLERLESS HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES

State	Today vs. 10 Years Ago	Today vs. 5 Years Ago
Illinois	Greater	Less
Indiana	Greater	Greater
Iowa	Less	Less
Kansas	Greater	Equal
Kentucky	Equal	Equal
Michigan	Less	Less
Minnesota	Less	Less
Missouri	Less	Less
Nebraska	Greater	Less
North Dakota	Less	Less
Ohio	Greater	Less
South Dakota	Less	Less
Wisconsin	Less	Less
Connecticut	*	*
Delaware	Greater	Equal
Maine	Less	Greater
Maryland	Greater	Greater
Massachusetts	Less	Less
New Hampshire	Greater	Equal
New Jersey	Greater	Greater
New York	Greater	Greater
Pennsylvania	Less	Less
Rhode Island	Greater	Greater
Vermont	Greater	Less/Equal
Virginia	Greater	Greater
West Virginia	Greater	Greater
Alabama	Greater	Less
Arkansas	Greater	Greater
Florida	Greater	Equal
Georgia	Less	Less
Louisiana	Less	Less
Mississippi	Greater	Greater
North Carolina	Greater	Greater
Oklahoma	Greater	Greater
South Carolina	Less	Less
Tennessee	Greater	Greater
Texas	Greater	Equal

\*Data not available/provided

### Antlerless Harvest Opportunities

Nationally, 22 of 36 states (61 percent) have more antlerless harvest opportunity today than they had a decade ago, while only 13 states (36 percent) have less than they did 10 years earlier. Conversely, 23 states (64 percent) offered equal or less opportunity in the 2014-15

hunting season than five seasons ago, and this varied tremendously by region.

In the Southeast, eight of 11 states (73 percent) have more antlerless harvest opportunity today than a decade ago, while only five states (45 percent) have more opportunity than five years ago. This suggests many Southeast states greatly expanded antlerless opportunities during the first half of the past decade and have stabilized or reduced them during the last five years.

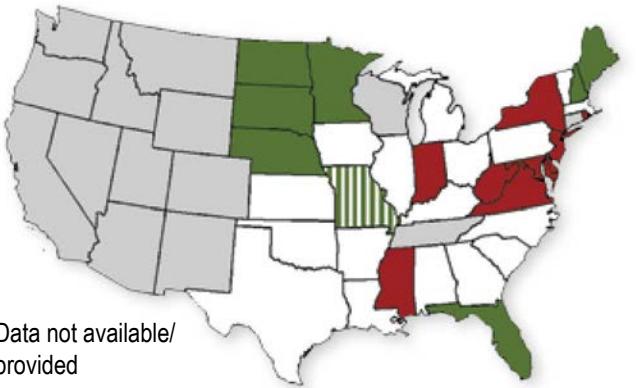
In the Northeast, nine of 12 states (75 percent) have more antlerless harvest opportunity today than a decade ago, and seven states (58 percent) have even more than five years ago. Only Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Vermont offered less antlerless opportunity in 2014 than five years ago. This suggests most Northeast states greatly expanded antlerless opportunities during the first half of the past decade and the majority continued that expansion during the past five years.

In the Midwest, things are very different as only five of 13 states (38 percent) have more antlerless harvest opportunity today than a decade ago, and only one state (8 percent) has more today than five years ago. This suggests the majority of Midwest states began reducing antlerless harvest opportunity in the first half of the past decade, and nearly all (77 percent) reduced them during the past five years.

### Current Management Strategies

Nationally, half of the states are trying to stabilize the existing deer herds, while nearly a quarter are trying to increase them

### CURRENT DEER HERD MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES BY STATE



and a quarter are trying to reduce them (see map). The current management strategies follow the current antlerless harvest opportunities pretty closely. For example, if a state is trying to increase its deer herd, there's a good chance the antlerless harvest opportunities are less today than in the past. Conversely, if a state wants fewer deer, it's nearly guaranteed antlerless opportunities are greater today than past years.

Regionally, there's a lot of variation in management strategies. The vast majority of states (80 percent) in the Southeast are attempting to stabilize populations. The majority of states (58 percent) in the Northeast are trying to decrease herds, and a slight majority (50 to 58 percent) in the Midwest are attempting to stabilize populations.

### QDMA's Recommendations

Antlerless harvest opportunities are determined partially by science, tradition, and increasingly by legislators. QDMA supports full engagement of hunters by state wildlife agencies, especially in creation of a state's deer management plan. Once that plan is in place, hunters should remain firmly in the discussion for the best means of achieving the annual target antlerless harvest, again because population size is essentially driven by hunter harvest. However, science should dominate the discussion on exactly what the target antlerless harvest should be and whether it should be increased or reduced from prior years with the current management strategy based on the management plan's goals in mind.

## BENEFITS OF PROTECTING YEARLING BUCKS

Few deer hunting arguments illicit as much response as a discussion on the potential benefits of protecting yearling bucks. Some hunters strongly advocate for protecting this age class while others want the opportunity to shoot any buck. State wildlife agency deer managers have equally varied views, and this creates confusion for many hunters on the value of protecting 1½-year-old bucks as at least 22 states employ antler restrictions (see map) as a strategy to protect this age class. However, not all of the state wildlife agencies that employ these restrictions agree with their use or with their defined goal of protecting yearling bucks. To assess agencies' opinions on the value of protecting yearlings, we surveyed state wildlife agencies and asked whether they believed protecting yearling bucks provided biological benefits and/or social benefits to deer hunters. The survey

asked for a yes/no answer; however, these were complex questions and many responded with a qualifier with their answer. Thus, we included three possible answers in the attached table that included yes, no and yes in "some situations." To clarify, we did not ask their opinion on antler point restrictions as yearling bucks can be protected without mandatory restrictions. We simply wanted their opinion on the potential value of protecting yearling bucks through any means.

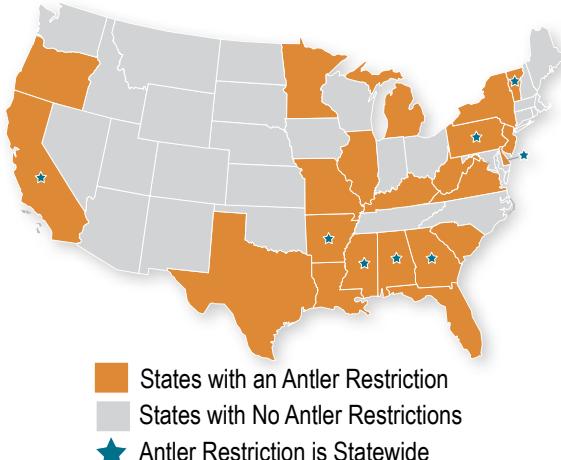
### Biological Benefits

Twenty-three of 33 states (70 percent) felt protecting yearling bucks provided biological benefits at least in some situations, and 16 of those states answered a clear "yes" to the first question. Conversely, 10 states (30 percent) felt there was "no" biological benefit to protecting yearling bucks. The Southeast was most favorable toward protecting yearlings, as all states that responded answered "yes" or yes in "some situations." The Midwest was most unfavorable toward protecting yearlings, as seven of 10 states (70 percent) answered "no." Nine of 12 Northeast states (75 percent) felt there were benefits in at least "some situations." Four states (Connecticut, Minnesota, North Dakota and Tennessee) chose not to answer the question. Of the 10 states that felt there were "no" biological benefits, three (Kentucky, New Jersey and Vermont) have some form of antler restrictions in place to protect yearling bucks.

### Social Benefits

Some state agency deer managers have publicly stated they felt protecting yearling bucks was a social issue rather than a biological one, so we included this question on the survey as well. Twenty-seven of 32 states (84 percent) felt protecting yearling bucks provided social benefits to deer hunters in at least "some situations" and 15 of those states responded a clear "yes." Conversely, only five states (16 percent) felt there were "no" social benefits to protecting yearling bucks. The Southeast was again most favorable, as all

### ANTLER RESTRICTIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



states responded "yes" or yes in "some situations." The Midwest was again most unfavorable as four of 11 states (36 percent) answered "no." Ten of 11 Northeast states (91 percent) felt there were social benefits in at least "some situations." Six states (Kentucky, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota, Vermont and Wisconsin) that felt there were not biological benefits responded there were social benefits in at least "some situations." Rhode Island was the only state that felt protecting yearling bucks provided biological but not social benefits.

### QDMA's Recommendations

QDMA is encouraged by the number of states implementing strategies (educational and/or regulatory) to protect yearling bucks because we feel there are definite biological benefits to protecting the majority of them and providing a balanced and natural age structure. We also feel there are social benefits as hunters become more engaged in deer management programs. Engagement of hunters creates by-in and allows for better collaboration between agencies and hunters, beyond manipulating age structure of the deer herd and even through management of other wildlife species.

Most importantly, QDMA recommends that state wildlife agencies conduct extensive education and outreach programs to inform hunters about the benefits of protecting yearling bucks and to garner their support for sound deer management programs.

### DOES PROTECTING YEARLING BUCKS HAVE BIOLOGICAL OR SOCIAL BENEFITS?

State	Biological	Social
Illinois	Yes	Yes
Indiana	No	No
Iowa	Some Situations	Some Situations
Kansas	No	No
Kentucky	No	Yes
Michigan	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	*	*
Missouri	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	No	No
North Dakota	*	*
Ohio	No	No
South Dakota	No	Yes
Wisconsin	No	Some Situations
Connecticut	*	*
Delaware	Some Situations	Some Situations
Maine	Some Situations	Some Situations
Maryland	Some Situations	Some Situations
Massachusetts	Some Situations	Some Situations
New Hampshire	No	Yes
New Jersey	No	Yes
New York	Some Situations	Some Situations
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	Yes	No
Vermont	No	Some Situations
Virginia	Yes	Some Situations
West Virginia	Some Situations	*
Alabama	Yes	Yes
Arkansas	Yes	Yes
Florida	Yes	Yes
Georgia	Some Situations	Some Situations
Louisiana	Some Situations	Some Situations
Mississippi	Yes	Yes
North Carolina	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	Yes	Yes
Tennessee	*	*
Texas	Some Situations	Some Situations

\*Data not available/provided

## BOONE & CROCKETT CLUB EXPERIENCES BIG DROP IN WHITETAIL ENTRIES

Over 100 years ago, at the forefront of the conservation movement, a group of concerned individuals banded together to save wildlife – the result was the Boone and Crockett Club (B&C). The long list of accomplishments of B&C and its members through the years is beyond impressive, many of which have either created and/or preserved the hunting opportunities we enjoy today. One of its achievements was establishing a national collection of taxidermy specimens from big game that had experienced severe population declines at the turn of the century. The development of this collection spurred an interest in recording trophy measurements from North America's big game animals, including white-tailed deer, which is possibly what B&C is best known for today within the general public.

As a matter of tradition, the B&C Records Program has always compared the previous seasons' entries as the next approaches – a sort of watch-dog-like strategy to gauge if something is amiss. However, considering the standard 60-day drying period requirement before official entry, the overall picture of total records for a given year usually is not in full view

until the year following. This past year (2014) officials at B&C noticed a substantial decline in trophy whitetail numbers being entered from the 2013-14 hunting season. While alarms may not be going off yet, it was certainly something worth investigating.

In an effort to identify the issue, Justin E. Spring, B&C Assistant Director of Big Game Records, ran a basic analysis on entry numbers to try and pinpoint why, or where, numbers appear to be down. What he came across points to a fairly significant decrease in trophy production from across much of the Midwest (see map).

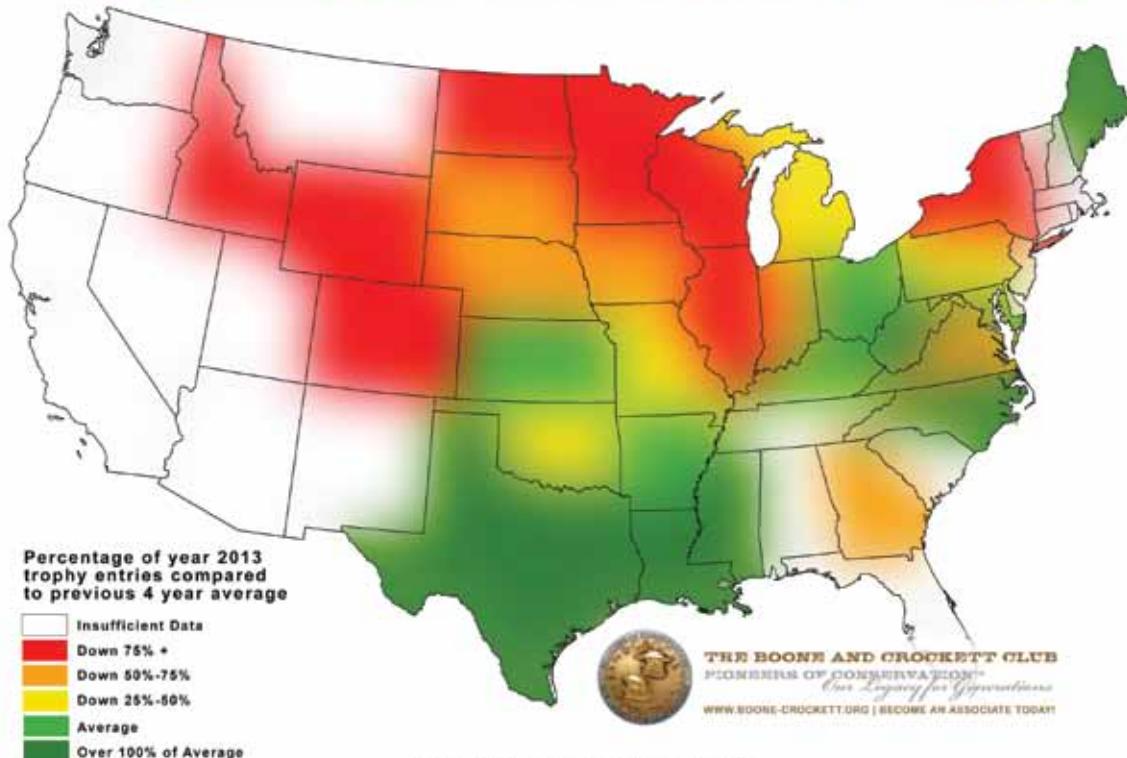
### QDMA Engaged

Staff at B&C were concerned about this drop in production, so they sought input from QDMA to help sift through the potential sources. "We don't know what would cause this," Justin said. "We didn't want to speculate, so we engaged the QDMA. They have biologists on staff, and because they are a national organization, they have a good feel for what's happening with whitetails across North America."

Numerous causes were discussed upon meeting, but ultimately a combination of

factors is likely the source of decline. Most notably, valuable deer habitat provided through the conservation reserve program (CRP) has declined substantially during the past decade. From 2007 to 2014, the U.S. lost over 9.1 million acres of CRP. Over half of this acreage (5.1 million acres) was lost in the Midwest. Given that good cover is often the limiting habitat component in this region, the loss of over 5 million acres of it can have tremendous negative impacts on deer and other wildlife. Also, several states in the upper Midwest experienced significant winter severity during at least two or three of the previous five years, and some saw historical hemorrhagic disease (HD) outbreaks during that same time (2007 and 2012 were all-time records), to the point a few wildlife agencies offered refunds on hunting licenses. In addition, a general overharvest in this region has been cited as a concern for deer hunters in recent years. Fewer deer produce fewer bucks, and fewer bucks mean even fewer trophies (see page 7). Other regions of the country experienced bad winters, or HD, or concern for overharvest – but the upper Midwest seems to be the epicenter for each of these issues. Therefore, QDMA suspects

## 2013 TROPHY WHITETAIL DEER HARVEST\*



all of these factors are playing a role in the number of record-book entries from the Midwest.

It's unlikely this drop in entries is a reflection of fewer people choosing to have their buck measured, and it's definitely not related to any lag effect from waiting the obligatory 60 days. That's the beauty of a long-running, large data set like this one. Its strength comes from being able to observe broad trends over time. Justin Spring was sure to eliminate all possible bias by calculating the same number of entries between a given time period annually going back to 2009, and then compared the 2013-14 season to the four-year average.

"What has happened to some of our whitetail populations in recent years is one of the reasons we continue to maintain data on big game trophies," said Morrie Stevens, B&C President. "Most people don't realize B&C records are maintained to track both positive and negative trends in big game populations as a tool for future management decisions."

#### QDMA's Recommendations

Good communication is the key to numerous kinds of relationships, and it can certainly help uncover solutions to some of the world's biggest problems. Is this the perfect storm of factors? Can we expect to see even fewer B&C whitetails from the upper Midwest in the future? And, if so, what can we do about it? At this point there have been many reports of reduced harvests during the 2014-15 deer season, and we're positive that B&C is looking hard to see if this past hunting season reflects an uptick or a continued downward trend of record-book bucks. But, what is important is increasing collaboration between conservation groups like QDMA and B&C, and for folks to get involved. This is why the formation of the National Deer Alliance is so critical (see page 27). Hunters are the original conservationists. In the same way the B&C was formed over a century ago, today's deer hunter's need to follow in the footsteps of those founding fathers. If fewer record book bucks, or even fewer deer, concerns you – your voice should be heard. Get involved with conservation today.

## 2015 North American Deer Summit

The Galt House  
Louisville, Kentucky  
**May 6-8, 2015**



The **NORTH AMERICAN DEER SUMMIT** is a unique event that unites national deer conservation organizations, hunters, state/federal agencies, industry leaders, outdoor media and other stakeholders to work collaboratively on behalf of deer, deer hunters and our hunting heritage. Following the success of the inaugural Summit in 2014, a clear need was identified for a follow-up event in 2015. Future Summits will be held on a 2- to 3-year cycle.

**GOAL:** The goal of the 2015 Summit is to identify specific strategies, timelines and measurable goals for the key issues identified at the 2014 Summit. This event is about establishing real solutions and actions.

**WHO CAN ATTEND:** Unlike the 2014 Summit which was invitation-only, the 2015 Summit will be open to the public and filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

**FORMAT:** The Summit will include two days of expert speakers, interactive sessions and panel discussions. This is not a "sit back and listen" event – attendees will be actively involved in developing solutions that will impact the future of deer hunting and management.

#### SPEAKERS (PARTIAL LIST):

**Kip Adams**, QDMA Director of Education & Outreach; **Dr. Gary Alt**, retired Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife biologist and former Deer Management Section Supervisor; **Warren Bluntzer**, Texas wildlife biologist and consultant; **Dr. Mike Chamberlain**, University of Georgia Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management; **Craig Dougherty**, NDA Executive Director; **Dr. John Fischer**, Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study Director; **John Frampton**, Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports President & CEO; **Jim Heffelfinger**, Arizona Game & Fish Department Regional Game Specialist & WAFWA Mule Deer Working Group Chair; **Shane Mahoney**, Conservation Visions; **Jay McAninch**, Archery Trade Association President & CEO; **Miles Moretti**, Mule Deer Foundation President & CEO; **Brian Murphy**, QDMA CEO; **Ron Regan**, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Resource Director; **Steven Rinella**, outdoorsman, author and TV show host; **Jenny Sanders**, Texans for Saving our Hunting Heritage Executive Director; **Shawn Schafer**, North American Deer Farmers Association Executive Director; **Jeffrey Schinkten**, Whitetails Unlimited President.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:** VISIT [QDMA.com/DeerSummit](http://QDMA.com/DeerSummit)

## MINIMUM FINES FOR DEER STOLEN BY POACHERS



Some argue poaching a deer is not that big of a deal. We completely disagree. Wildlife is held in trust by each state for all of its citizens to enjoy. This public ownership of wildlife is an instrumental component of the successful North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Ethical sportsmen created and have supported the North American Model for the past century. Unfortunately, unlawful activities with respect to wildlife contrast the Model, and illegally killing wildlife is nothing less than public theft. Plus, whitetails are the most popular big game animal in the U.S., and whitetail hunters are the foundation of the \$87 billion hunting industry as approximately three of every four hunters pursue deer. So, we were naturally interested in compiling a clearinghouse of the current minimum fines out there for poaching a white-tailed deer. We surveyed state wildlife agencies and asked the question: What is the minimum fine for illegally killing a white-tailed deer in your jurisdiction? Here is what we found.

Minimum fines are all over the board and, in our opinion, on average well below the value of loss of that animal to the ethical sportsmen and women who follow the rules, as well as to all citizens who enjoy

them. This is not to mention the message it sends would-be violators of how the governing agency perceives wrong-doing. Ask yourself: Is it worth the risk of poaching a deer for some meat or antlers to hang on my wall? Unfortunately, for some of the fines (listed in the chart on the facing page) that answer is likely a resounding “yes,” and in a few cases, fines may even be less than the cost of a legally acquired hunting license.

Analysis by region for this topic is difficult, at best. In some locales differences exist in the fine structure for illegal harvest of an antlered versus antlerless deer. Some states have a clearly set minimum fine, while others provide a range or court-determined fee. On top of all that, add-on deterrents also sometimes include court costs, jail time, a meat processing fee for venison donation, com-

pounding fines with multiple offenses, and even minimum restitution payments in a few places, some with formulas based on inches of antler – the bigger the rack, the higher the fee.

*Minimum fines are all over the board, and in our opinion, on average well below the value of loss of that animal to the ethical sportsmen and women who follow the rules, as well as to all citizens who enjoy them.*

the real question: Why do some states place a higher value on deer than others? Or, in other words, why isn’t there more fine structure uniformity against poaching across all states?

Luckily, the national message on poaching isn’t as confusing. Thirty-three of 37 states (89 percent) provided an answer to our question. Nationally, the minimum average fine for poaching a whitetail is just over \$350 per first offense, with a range of \$0 to \$1,500. However, from this data we may have discovered

**QDMA's Recommendations**

Let's stop sending mixed messages to poachers and develop a consistent, or nearly so, minimum fine for poaching white-tailed deer across all states; and let's set that value at a place that acts as a real deterrent to violators. A valuable vehicle for this process may be the newly formed National Deer Alliance (see page 27); the conversation can possibly start with all participants of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. Through this process QDMA will be an active leader, by pushing this issue with state wildlife agencies that currently have modest fines and penalties for poaching and by working with key legislators to enact legislation for stricter fines, restitution fees and more.

Whether for viewing or hunting, white-tailed deer are captivating, and this is especially true for large-antlered bucks. Part of their appeal lies in their relative scarcity due to the difficulty of raising one to maturity. Many of these animals are taken prior to maturity by hunters, are involved in deer-vehicle collisions, or they succumb to disease or other mortality factors – including poaching. Thus, the investment of time, sweat and money required to grow a mature deer is substantial. That is why QDMA members understand more than the average hunter how these resources add up to a far greater value than the current minimum fine or restitution cost of a deer “stolen” by a poacher.

*Nationally, the minimum average fine for poaching a whitetail is just over \$350 per first offense, with a range of \$0 to \$1,500. In a few cases, fines may even be less than the cost of a legally acquired hunting license.*

**TURN IN POACHERS HOTLINE DIRECTORY**

Most states provide toll-free hotlines for reporting poaching activity. In 2013, Dr. Stephen Webb and Dr. Aaron Haines compiled a list of numbers by state, and that list remains available on QDMA.com by navigating to the resources menu and selecting “Turn in Poachers.”

To help your local conservation officers anytime you witness a poaching incident, collect the following information: vehicle make and model, license plate number, suspect description and location (GPS coordinates or address).

When collecting information on poaching suspects, stay a safe distance and do not put yourself in harm's way.

**MINIMUM POACHING FINES BY STATE**

State	Minimum Fine	Comments
Illinois	\$250	
Indiana	\$500	\$1,000 for every other deer than the first
<b>Iowa</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>	
Kansas	\$500	Restitution based on formula from antlers for bucks
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>\$754</b>	
Michigan	\$200	
Minnesota	\$185	
Missouri	\$150	
Nebraska	\$250	\$250 doe, \$1,500 buck; Additional \$5,000 if >18-inch spread
North Dakota	*	
Ohio	\$0 (Determined by court)	Min. restitution \$250, based on formula from antlers for bucks
South Dakota	\$250	
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	
<b>Midwest Average</b>	<b>\$462</b>	
Connecticut	*	
Delaware	\$50	\$50 antlerless, \$1,000 antlered
<b>Maine</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	Three days jail
Maryland	\$500	
Massachusetts	\$300	
New Hampshire	\$248	Must also pay for butchering to donate
New Jersey	\$100	
New York	\$0-250 (Determined by court)	Fine range picked by officer; judge determines final amount
Pennsylvania	\$25	
Rhode Island	\$500	90 days in jail
Vermont	\$500	
Virginia	\$25	
West Virginia	\$20	Min. \$200 restitution cost and \$169 court cost
<b>Northeast Average</b>	<b>\$283</b>	
Alabama	\$250	
Arkansas	\$300-600	
Florida	*	
Georgia	\$0	
Louisiana	*	
Mississippi	\$250-500	Plus court costs
North Carolina	\$250	
<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>\$946</b>	Restitution up to \$5,000
South Carolina	Not more than \$200	
Tennessee	\$0	
Texas	\$500	Restitution \$881
<b>Southeast Average</b>	<b>\$319</b>	
<b>3-Region Average</b>	<b>\$354</b>	

\*Data not available/provided; Top-5 highest minimum fines highlighted in Red

## LEGISLATION IMPACTING HUNTING

Each year there are countless threats to the future of deer hunting and management at the local, state and federal levels. In fact, QDMA engaged in 67 advocacy issues in 2014, including 53 at the state level in 24 states and one Canadian province (see page 47). To monitor states or regions with increased legislative activity, we surveyed state wildlife agencies in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast and asked how many legislative bills were proposed in 2014 that would have directly or indirectly impacted deer hunting. States could answer less than three, three to five, six to 10, or more than 10 bills.

Nationally, 19 of 34 states (56 percent) reported less than three bills and only two states (6 percent) reported more than 10 bills. In the Southeast, eight of 11 states (73 percent) had less than three bills and none had more than five. In the Northeast, six of 11 states (55 percent) had less than three bills, while two had three to five, two had six to 10, and one had more than 10 bills. In the Midwest, five of 12 states (42 percent) had less than three bills, while four had three to five, two had six to 10, and one had more than 10 bills.

### QDMA's Recommendations

In 2014, the Southeast was the least legislatively active while the Midwest was the busiest. QDMA engaged in issues in eight states in the Southeast, six states in the Northeast, eight states in the Midwest, and two states in the West. QDMA fights for hunters' rights by engaging in these issues and encourages hunters to support our advocacy efforts by joining QDMA and also by joining the National Deer Alliance (see page 27). QDMA established the NDA in 2014 to serve, in part, as an advocacy arm for hunters.

*Only two states reported more than 10 bills impacting hunting in 2014 – Iowa and New York.*



Kip Adams, QDMA's Director of Education and Outreach, leads the organization's advocacy efforts. In 2014, QDMA engaged in 67 advocacy issues in 24 states and one Canadian province.

### NUMBER OF LEGISLATIVE BILLS IMPACTING HUNTING BY STATE IN 2014

State	Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10
Illinois		X		
Indiana	X			
<b>Iowa</b>				X
Kansas		X		
Kentucky	X			
Michigan		X		
<b>Minnesota</b>			X	
Missouri		X		
Nebraska	X			
North Dakota*				
Ohio	X			
South Dakota	X			
<b>Wisconsin</b>			X	
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Connecticut*				
Delaware	X			
<b>Maine*</b>				
Maryland		X		
Massachusetts	X			
<b>New Hampshire</b>			X	
New Jersey	X			
<b>New York</b>				X
<b>Pennsylvania</b>			X	
Rhode Island	X			
Vermont	X			
Virginia		X		
West Virginia	X			
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Alabama		X		
Arkansas	X			
Florida	X			
Georgia	X			
Louisiana	X			
Mississippi		X		
North Carolina	X			
Oklahoma	X			
South Carolina		X		
Tennessee	X			
Texas	X			
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>6%</b>

\*Data not available/provided

States with the most legislative bills impacting hunting highlighted in **Red**

## NATIONAL DEER ALLIANCE

Alliances exist in many forms, for many reasons. They exist for the purpose of wildlife conservation. They exist for habitat loss and enhancement. They even exist to drive legislation. But, until now, there has never been one widespread enough that it joined the majority of hunters and wildlife enthusiasts in North America under one umbrella. Following the North American Whitetail Summit, hosted by QDMA and held in March 2014, a clear need was exposed for the formation of a unified voice of the modern deer hunter. QDMA was called upon to make it happen, and we are proud to announce the formation of the National Deer Alliance (NDA).

The goal of NDA is to serve as the unified voice of the modern deer hunter and guardian of North America's wild deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. To achieve this, the NDA will establish the largest and most diverse group of deer hunters, managers and enthusiasts ever assembled under a single umbrella.

### Why is the NDA Necessary?

Deer are the most commonly pursued and economically important big game animal in North America. However, less

than 1 percent of deer hunters belong to a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection of deer and our deer hunting heritage (see the chart below).

This lack of unity prevents a strong, centralized voice to address current and emerging threats such as hunter access, disease, predators, and declining deer populations. The time has come for deer hunters to organize and speak up for their rights. Along with QDMA, other deer conservation organizations (Mule Deer Foundation and Whitetails Unlimited), industry leaders, wildlife agencies and hunters, the NDA is quickly becoming a force in the deer hunting world.

### How It Will Work

The NDA's digital network will attract and retain deer enthusiasts of all types through deer-hunting content that is both serious as well as topical.

From an advocacy standpoint, the goal

is to be proactive (advance issues like those identified at the Summit) as well as reactive (respond to issues as they surface). Importantly, NDA will focus on issues that unite deer hunters and are critical to a sustainable future for wild deer and our hunting heritage. To this end, a steering committee with broad representation has been created to guide NDA's advocacy efforts. When the steering committee identifies a subject of broad concern, it will engage NDA staff and members to achieve positive outcomes for deer and deer hunting. In all cases, engagement by individual NDA supporters will be voluntary.

### What You Get

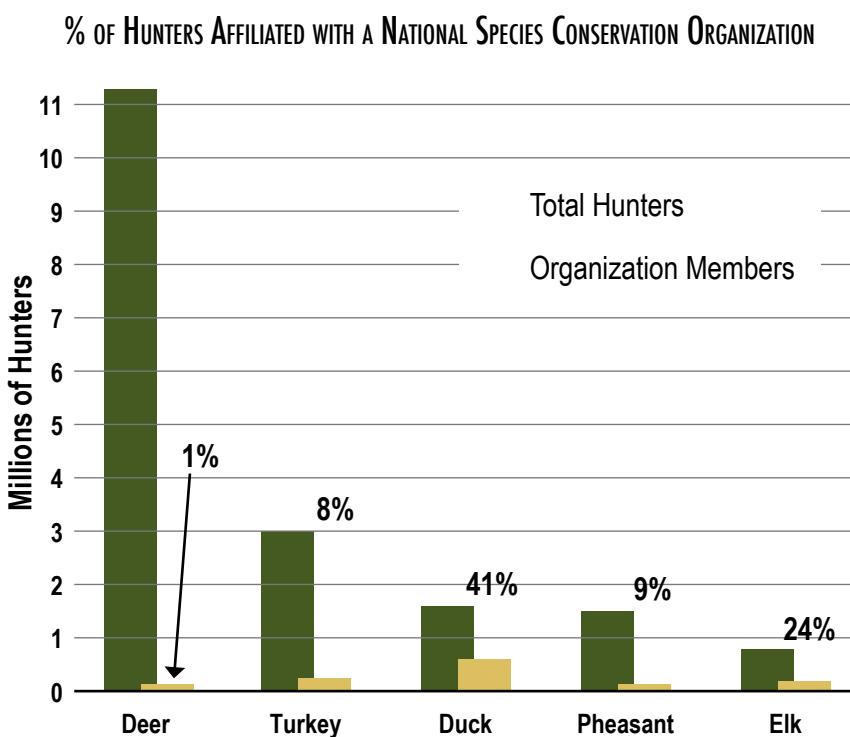
NDA members will realize two key benefits:

1. NDA members will be kept informed on key deer issues in North America on a weekly basis through e-mail, and real-time through social media and the NDA website.

2. NDA members will have the opportunity to have their voice heard by participating in NDA's advocacy efforts at both a local and national level.

### QDMA's Recommendation - Join Now

Participation in the NDA is free and open to all deer hunters, managers and enthusiasts. All you need to do to participate in the NDA is sign up for the outreach network and get ready to engage on key issues. As NDA outreach tools expand, you will be notified as to how to participate in those as well. Join thousands of other deer hunters today and sign up by visiting [www.nationaldeeralliance.com](http://www.nationaldeeralliance.com).



## WHERE ARE RIFLES PERMITTED FOR DEER HUNTING?



Surprisingly to some, the use of rifles for deer hunting isn't allowed everywhere. What's more, their use has expanded to new states in recent years. To gain a better understanding of where they are used, we surveyed state wildlife agencies to learn where rifles are permitted for harvesting deer. For our survey, rifles included traditional high-powered calibers as well as straight-walled pistol cartridges, and states responded whether they are permitted in all, part or none of the state.

Of the 36 states that responded, rifle use is allowed completely in 21 states and in some areas of 10 more states. Thus, rifles are allowed at least somewhere in 31 of 36 states (86 percent). However, some states like Indiana and Ohio only allow pistol cartridges. Only five states reported not allowing any use of rifles, and they were Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island.

The Midwest and Southeast are nearly wide open with respect to rifles (or at least some rifle cartridges), and the majority of states in the Northeast allow rifles to be used in some places. Most areas in the Northeast that prohibit rifles are centered around urban/suburban locations. Indiana is currently debating whether to expand the use of rifles and allow high-powered calibers, and given the widespread use of

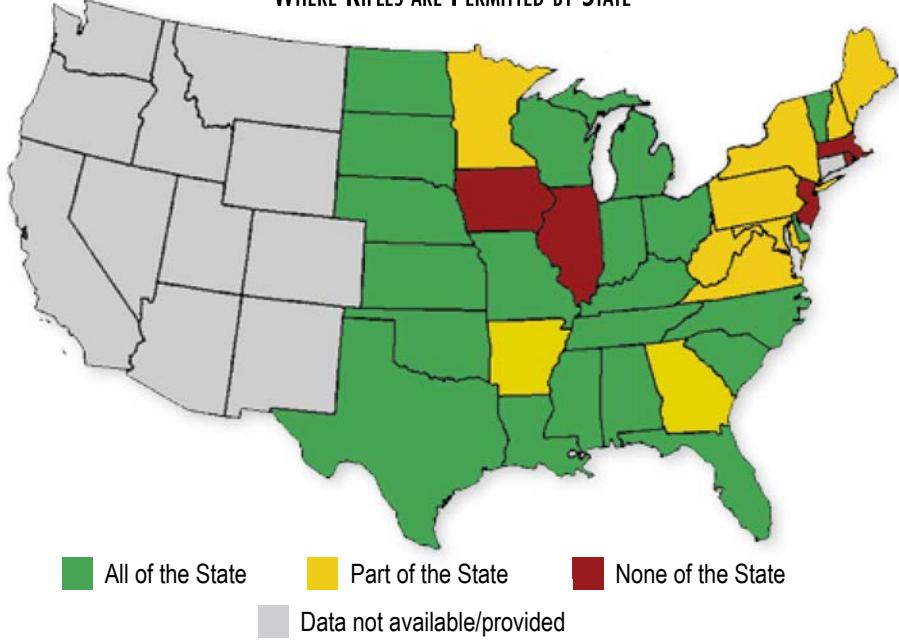
in-line muzzleloaders, other states that prohibit them are likely to follow.

### QDMA's Recommendations

The use of rifles versus shotguns is more of a cultural rather than safety issue as studies have shown nearly equal safety concerns between the firearms. This is supported by the widespread use of in-line muzzleloaders in states that currently do

not allow rifles. QDMA is more interested in success of overall deer management programs rather than debating specific firearm use. As long as deer and their habitat are healthy and hunters have good opportunities to go afield, we leave it to the local hunters and state wildlife agencies to determine what firearms can be used based on public input and the agencies' recommendations.

### WHERE RIFLES ARE PERMITTED BY STATE



## CROSSTAGGING (PARTY HUNTING) FOR DEER



Deer hunting cultures and traditions run deep throughout the whitetail's range. Some pursue deer with dogs, some with bait, some with organized drives, and others as part of a group or party where deer tags can be traded after a deer is harvested. Crosstaggering, or party hunting, is where a hunter can hunt as part of a group, even if he or she does not have a deer tag. If that hunter shoots a deer, he or she can use a tag from a hunter in the group to legally tag the animal. This practice has been challenged in recent years as contributing to overharvest or unethical behavior, so we surveyed state wildlife agencies in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast to learn where crosstaggering or party hunting is allowed for bucks and antlerless deer.

In the Southeast, no states allow this practice for bucks or antlerless deer. All hunters must have their own tag or license to pursue deer. In the Northeast, no states allow this for bucks, and only Pennsylvania allows it for antlerless deer. However, Pennsylvania has a mentored youth program, and antlerless tags can only be legally transferred from a mentor to a mentored

youth after the youth has harvested an antlerless deer. New York allows antlerless tags to be consigned from one hunter to another, but it must be done prior to harvest. Neither of these circumstances is considered crosstaggering or party hunting in the traditional sense. In the Midwest, three of 12 states (25 percent) allow crosstaggering for bucks, and they also allow it for antlerless deer. These states are Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

### QDMA's Recommendations

For hunters where this management strategy is not used, shooting a deer using someone else's tag on it may seem illegal and unethical. However, for hunters in a few Midwestern states it is as much a part of deer season as camouflage, fluorescent orange and tall stories of monster bucks. Given the Midwest's current trend of dramatically declining deer harvests, this issue will likely play a bigger role in future deer discussions, and that will certainly be necessary when/where antlerless harvest opportunities are reduced.

*Crosstaggering, or party hunting, is where a hunter can hunt as part of a group, even if he or she does not have a deer tag. If that hunter shoots a deer, he or she can use a tag from a hunter in the group to legally tag the animal.*

### WHERE IS CROSSTAGGING DEER PERMITTED?

State	Bucks	Antlerless
Illinois	No	No
Indiana	No	No
Iowa	Allowed	Allowed
Kansas	No	No
Kentucky	No	No
Michigan	No	No
Minnesota	Allowed	Allowed
Missouri	No	No
Nebraska	No	No
North Dakota	No	No
Ohio	No	No
South Dakota	No	No
Wisconsin	Allowed	Allowed
Connecticut	*	*
Delaware	No	No
Maine	No	No
Maryland	No	No
Massachusetts	No	No
New Hampshire	No	No
New Jersey	No	No
New York	No	No**
Pennsylvania	No	Allowed***
Rhode Island	No	No
Vermont	No	No
Virginia	No	No
West Virginia	No	No
Alabama	No	No
Arkansas	No	No
Florida	*	*
Georgia	No	No
Louisiana	No	No
Mississippi	No	No
North Carolina	No	No
Oklahoma	No	No
South Carolina	*	*
Tennessee	No	*
Texas	No	No

\*Data not available/provided

\*\*New York: Antlerless tags may be consigned from one hunter to another, but it must be done prior to harvest.

\*\*\*Pennsylvania: Antlerless tags can only be transferred from a mentor to a mentored youth immediately after the youth has harvested an antlerless deer.

## WILD VENISON FOR SALE?

By Kip Adams

Ever pay for wild venison? If so, you either a) did so outside of the United States and Canada or b) did so illegally. You can purchase venison in North America, but it must be farm-raised. Some people are now calling for change, proposing a limited market for wild venison.

In 1900 the Lacey Act was the first law to successfully regulate white-tailed deer harvest, and it essentially ended market hunting by, among other things, restricting the sale and/or purchase of wild venison. The Lacey Act is widely recognized for its key contribution to recovery of deer and numerous other wildlife species and was crucial to creation of the highly successful North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

Fast forward 100 years and you'll find whitetails successfully recovered throughout their range. So successfully recovered, in fact, that many areas had too many deer. Deer managers have worked tirelessly during the past decade to reduce deer herds in many states, but numerous urban/suburban locales continue to have overabundant and/or increasing deer populations.

Hunting is by far the optimal choice for managing deer. Hunters provide a free ecological service to society, \$87 billion annually to our economy, and they harvest approximately 6 million whitetails in the United States each year. In addition to the tremendous recreational opportunity and monetary support, harvested deer also provide approximately 1.2 billion high-quality meals annually. In fact, a 2013 national survey by Responsive Management showed hunting "for meat" was the most popular reason cited for hunting by adult Americans. More than a third (35 percent) of hunters selected this option while the next closest choices were for sport/recreation (31 percent), to be with family and friends (21 percent), and to be close to nature (9 percent).

Unfortunately some areas are off-limits to hunting, and others are so restrictive

that hunting has produced limited success, at best. These are typically urban or suburban areas, and numerous communities and homeowners struggle with deer in these environments. There is no easy solution to this. Sharpshooting programs are the most effective in these situations, but they are expensive. Special hunts are less expensive but can't be used in every locale.

It is in these environments where proponents of regulated commercial harvest of deer suggest deer managers consider this management option.

### A Little Background

On January 7, 2011, seven scientists from the National Wildlife Research Center in Colorado, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Nebraska submitted



Creating a market for wild venison goes against the fundamentals of modern wildlife conservation, but some view it as a potential solution to deer population control in areas where hunting is restricted or impossible.

an article to the Wildlife Society Bulletin titled "Regulated Commercial Harvest to Manage Overabundant White-Tailed Deer: An Idea to Consider?" The article was peer-reviewed, published later that year, and the proverbial horse was out of the barn. Some urban deer managers had privately discussed this idea, but many wildlife professionals considered selling venison and other deer parts as akin to cancelling Christmas (or the opening day of deer season). The article's authors carefully stated that regulated commercial harvest could provide an additional tool to help state wildlife agencies manage overabundant

populations of white-tailed deer. They also outlined a potential means to govern regulated commercial deer harvest and explained how it was compatible within the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Finally, they addressed several perceived benefits and expected concerns.

The concept was hotly debated in wildlife circles, and on August 9, 2012, the editors of Bloomberg Report – a site for business and financial news – ran a piece titled "Deer Infestation Calls for a Radical Free-Market Solution." The article painted deer and deer hunters in a poor light, and the authors suggested, "The most promising reform could be legalizing the sale of venison and hides to small manufacturing enterprises. If the state allowed a commercial market for deer products...

Farm markets can sell local beef, so why shouldn't they be able to market local venison?"

The short answer is because local beef belongs to the local farmers while deer (and all wildlife) belong to the public. The sticky point is that fish and other wildlife meat and parts (hides, antlers, etc.) are already allowed for sale in some states.

### Second Attempt

On October 7, 2013, The Wildlife Society's Wildlife Damage Management Working Group and Urban Wildlife Group sponsored a facilitated discussion on "Regulated Commercial Harvest to Manage Overabundant White-Tailed Deer" at the Society's annual meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I listed this as the "second attempt" because the panel organizers had arranged a similar meeting months earlier that was cancelled by administrators due to the contentiousness of the issue. The Wildlife Society is the parent organization of approximately 10,000 wildlife professionals, and its mission is to represent and serve the professional community of scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners and others who work actively to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and habitat worldwide. I am a member of The

Wildlife Society, and I was one of the nine panel members for that facilitated discussion.

Around 70 people attended the four-hour session, and opinions ranged widely. Among the panel and audience, most discussions focused on how this potential deer management tool could or could not be applied within the confines of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The conversation remained professional even though passion and polarizing views were clearly evident.

Less than two weeks later on October 18, Jim Sterba wrote an article for The Wall Street Journal titled “If Only Hunters Could Sell Venison: Could Loosening Rules on Deer Meat Help Combat a Suburban Scourge?” Jim is also author of “Nature Wars: The incredible story of how wildlife comebacks turned backyards into battle grounds.” Jim learned about The Wildlife Society’s panel discussion and contacted two panel participants who were also authors of the original manuscript I mentioned at the beginning of this article to

### Pros & Cons of a Potential Wild Venison Market

Kip Adams, QDMA’s Education & Outreach Director, was one of a small handful of biologists who have attended both of the gatherings of professional wildlife biologists held recently to discuss the potential for legalized commercial deer harvest. Debate focused on these pros and cons surrounding the issue:

#### PROS of Commercial Deer Harvest:

- Could reduce overabundant deer herds where hunting is severely restricted.
- Could provide an additional tool to state wildlife agencies for urban/suburban deer management programs.
- Could provide local source of healthy meat.

#### CONS of Commercial Deer Harvest:

- Creates issues with privatization of wildlife. Potential profits will attract political and economic interest.
- Creates potential issues with North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which was based on ending markets for wildlife and ensuring public ownership of wildlife.
- Potential overexploitation of resource and food safety issues.

obtain information for his article. I mention this not to promote Jim or his book but rather to show this issue is much larger than something that will be discussed and solved solely by deer managers.

### New Jersey Assembly Bill 3039

As evidence of my previous statement, it didn’t take long for legislators to take notice of the commercial harvest discussion. On March 24, 2014, New Jersey District 11 Assemblywoman Caroline Casagrande introduced Assembly Bill 3039 that would establish a commercial deer harvesting license and allow commercial harvest of deer. The bill stalled in the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, but I’m sure this is the first of many commercial harvest bills that will be introduced in coming years.

### Current Status

That brings us to the present. This topic was discussed in a professional setting as recently as September 22 at the Northeast Deer Technical Committee (NEDTC) meeting in Blue Mountain Lake, New York. The NEDTC is comprised of professional deer biologists employed by 13 northeastern state wildlife agencies and four eastern Canadian provincial wildlife agencies. The annual meeting includes the NEDTC and invited guests. QDMA receives an invite, and I attended on our behalf. Dr. David Drake from the University of Wisconsin was also invited to discuss the commercial harvest of whitetails. Dr. Drake co-authored the original manuscript I referenced and participated in the panel discussion at The Wildlife Society meeting in Milwaukee.

Dr. Drake led the two-hour session, and like the panel discussion in Milwaukee, emotions ran high and opinions ranged widely. Some states appeared eager to use this tool while some were adamantly opposed. Others were noncommittal and seemed to recognize potential benefits and pitfalls. Unlike The Wildlife Society’s panel discussion, the main focus was not on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, rather it centered on markets (or lack thereof) for deer meat and other parts and the economics of this approach. I was one of a small group who

were present at both discussions, and the difference in focal topics was striking.

### What to Expect in the Future

I believe you’ll see commercial harvest used in some locations within the next five years. Some states are more likely candidates given their urban/suburban deer issues, legislative involvement in deer management, amount of affluent suburban communities, and state wildlife agency’s interest, but you can’t underestimate the power of the legislature, so the first state to use this tool could be anywhere in the whitetail’s range. I purposely listed the state agency’s interest last in the above list as I don’t believe they will decide where and when commercial harvest is initially used. I believe the legislature will determine that, and it won’t be the first time a wildlife agency implements a program they neither proposed nor recommended.

### What Hunters Should Expect

If this is applied as proposed – to be used only in areas where hunters currently cannot hunt or have extremely restricted access – then it shouldn’t impact the majority of hunters. If existing sharpshooting programs in urban/suburban areas (not to be confused with those associated with disease monitoring) impact your hunting, then commercial harvesting programs likely would too. If they don’t, then your hunting likely won’t be impacted.

However, all hunters should expect much debate on this topic in professional, media and hunting camp circles in the future. As hunters we love to talk anything and everything deer, and this is clearly a new hot topic to add to the list.

### QDMA’s Stance on This Issue

QDMA remains highly guarded regarding commercialization of white-tailed deer, even if tightly restricted and confined to urban areas. Before considering supporting such a program, we would need to be convinced that all efforts to use hunters have been exhausted and that the program wouldn’t negatively impact the whitetail resource, hunter opportunity, or create black markets for illegally harvested deer. QDMA will remain actively engaged in this discussion to protect the interests of deer and deer hunters as we have done for nearly three decades.

## SALE OF ANTLERS AND MOUNTED DEER HEADS



Deer hunters love antlers. We love seeing, comparing, photographing, collecting and holding them. A quick internet search reveals hoards of antlers and deer mounts for sale. However, just because they are advertised does not mean their sale is legal. Therefore, we surveyed state wildlife agencies to gain a better understanding of where antlers and mounted deer heads can be legally sold.

Shed antlers or those attached to the skull plate can be sold in 26 of 34 states (76 percent) and mounted heads can be sold in 26 of 33 states (79 percent). Oklahoma

and South Carolina only allow the sale of shed antlers. Neither state allows sale of any antlers attached to a skull plate, and this includes mounted deer. In Virginia, mounted heads are legal for sale but only at/by a licensed auction.

The Northeast is the most stingy with selling antlers as only six of 11 states (55 percent) allow it. Conversely, the Midwest is the most liberal as 12 of 13 states (92 percent) allow their sale. Only Kentucky prohibits the sale of antlers in this region. The Southeast is the most stingy with selling deer mounts as only six of 10 (60

percent) allow it. The Midwest is again the most liberal as all 13 states allow their sale.

Nationally, only five states reported not allowing any sale of antlers, and they were Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, Mississippi and New Jersey. Most states allow some antler sales, but whether you're looking to buy or sell these crown jewels be sure it is permitted in the state where the sale is occurring. Check with the state wildlife agency before the sale to ensure you don't receive an unwanted visit from a conservation officer.

### WHERE IS THE SALE OF ANTLERS AND MOUNTED HEADS LEGAL?

State	Antlers	Mounted Heads
Illinois	Yes	Yes
Indiana	Yes	Yes
Iowa	Yes	Yes
Kansas	Yes	Yes
Kentucky	No	Yes
Michigan	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	Yes	Yes
Missouri	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	Yes	Yes
Ohio	Yes	Yes
South Dakota	Yes	Yes
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	*	*
Delaware	No	No
Maine	Yes	*
Maryland	No	No
Massachusetts	*	*
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	No	No
New York	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	No	Yes
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes
Vermont	Yes	Yes
Virginia	No	Yes**
West Virginia	Yes	Yes
Alabama	No	No
Arkansas	Yes	Yes
Florida	Yes	Yes
Georgia	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	*	*
Mississippi	No	No
North Carolina	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes**	No
South Carolina	Yes**	No
Tennessee	Yes	Yes
Texas	Yes	Yes

\*Data not available/provided

\*\*Only shed antlers are legal for sale in Oklahoma and South Carolina, and mounted deer heads can only be sold at/by a licensed auction in Virginia.

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outdoorsman, author  
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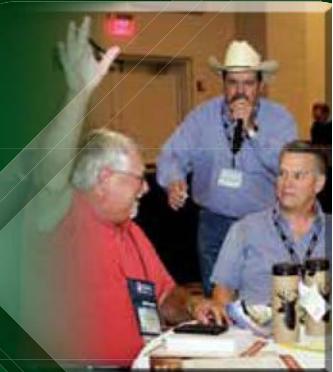
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## TRENDS IN FAWN RECRUITMENT RATES



The fawn recruitment rate is one of the most important measures of herd productivity, and it directly impacts the number of antlerless deer that can be harvested annually as well as the number of bucks you can realistically expect to have available for harvest. It also alerts managers to potential problems such as high fawn predation rates. The fawn recruitment rate is a measure of the number of fawns per adult doe (1½ years and older) alive in the fall pre-hunt population. Basically, this index records the number of fawns that survive to approximately six months of age and expresses that number in relation to the number of adult does in the population. The fawn recruitment rate is lower than the number of fetuses per doe and the number of fawns born in the spring, since not all fetuses survive to become fawns and not all fawns survive until fall. Many hunters feel the fawn recruitment rate is higher than it actually is because they assume all adult does have twin fawns each year. Many may give birth to twins, but the actual recruitment rate is far less than two fawns per adult doe.

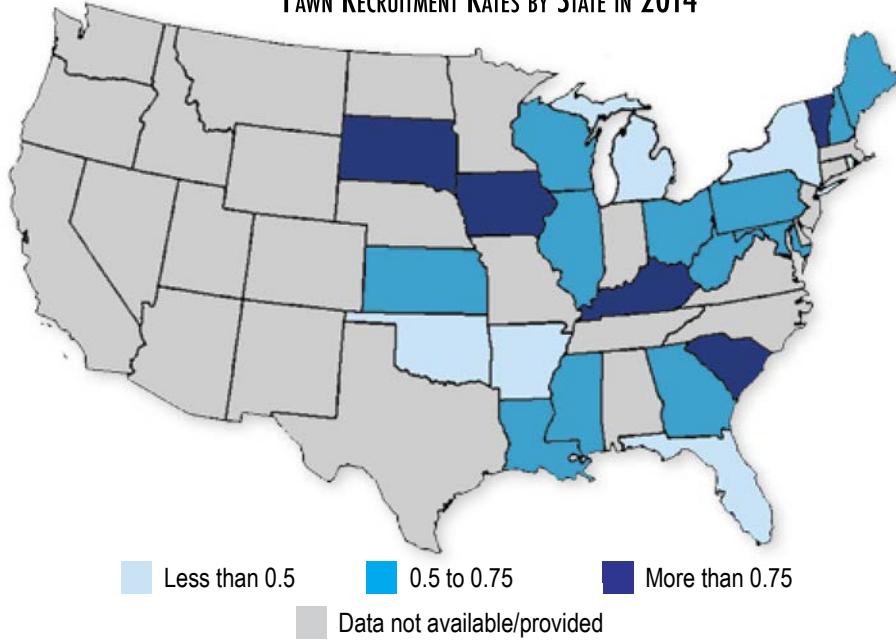
We surveyed state wildlife agencies in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast and asked them to provide their estimated

fawn recruitment rate for 2014. We conducted a similar survey in 2011 so we already had state-by-state fawn recruitment rates for 2000, 2005 and 2010. Our new data allowed us to compare regional fawn recruitment rates and see if/how the average recruitment rates changed during the past 14 years. This analysis is especially timely given the recent expansion of coyote

and other predator populations.

Nationally, the average fawn recruitment rate declined significantly from 2000 to 2005, dropped again from 2005 to 2010, and remained similar from 2010 to 2014. The Midwest recruited significantly more fawns per doe (0.83) than the Northeast (0.57) or Southeast (0.55 fawns per doe), but the national mean (0.66) indicated that

FAWN RECRUITMENT RATES BY STATE IN 2014



## Top-5 States

### 2014 Fawn Recruitment Rates (Fawns per Adult Doe)

Iowa	1.60
Kentucky	1.25
South Carolina	0.88
South Dakota	0.86
Vermont	0.80

on average it took three does to recruit two fawns last year!

Midwestern states had the highest fawn recruitment rate in the U.S. by averaging 0.83 fawns per adult doe in 2014. This was nearly identical to the region's 2010 average, and it ranged from 0.47 in Michigan to 1.60 in Iowa. Notably, Iowa and Kentucky were the only states in the country to average more than one fawn per adult doe. Interestingly, five of seven states (71 percent) that provided data for 2010 and 2014 experienced reduced recruitment rates across the years. Wisconsin had the largest drop in recruitment rate (1.07 to 0.70) while Iowa had the largest increase (1.30 to 1.60 fawns per doe). The Midwest's current fawn recruitment rate means, on average, three does will recruit approximately 2.5 fawns.

In the Northeast, the average fawn recruitment rate in 2014 was 0.57 fawns per doe, and this equaled the region's average in 2010, but was lower than in 2005 and 2000. The rate ranged from 0.40 in Rhode Island to 0.80 fawns per doe in Vermont. Five states provided data for 2010 and 2014, and four of those had reduced fawn recruitment rates in 2014. Maryland had the largest drop in recruitment rate (0.60 to 0.50) while Rhode Island fared best by simply maintaining its rate, as no states increased their recruitment rate from 2010 to 2014. The Northeast's current fawn recruitment rate means, on average, it will take approximately two does to recruit one fawn.

In the Southeast, the average fawn recruitment rate was 0.55 fawns per doe. While this looks like a steep drop for the region in recent years, our 2014 data include three new states, Arkansas, Florida and Oklahoma, all of which reported low rates, bringing the regional average down. The fawn recruitment rate ranged

from 0.30 in Oklahoma to 0.88 in South Carolina. Four states provided data for 2010 and 2014, and two had increased fawn recruitment rates in 2014 and two were equal between the years. No state reported a reduced recruitment rate and Mississippi had the largest increase by going from 0.47 to 0.66 fawns per doe. The Southeast's current fawn recruitment rate means, on average, it will take approximately two does to recruit one fawn.

fawn:doe harvest ratios, and others use a combination of these and/or other techniques. Given this variety, the data in the table is not directly comparable among states. However, it is very comparable across years for any given state. Surprisingly, several states do not estimate their fawn recruitment rate. Given the importance of this index, QDMA encourages all deer managers (large and small, public and private) to collect fall/winter observation and harvest data to estimate the fawn recruitment rate. This statistic should be estimated annually and compared across years to identify changes in herd health and/or predation rates.

### QDMA's Recommendations

There are multiple ways to estimate the fawn recruitment rate. Some states use hunter observation rates, some use

### MULTI-YEAR FAWN RECRUITMENT RATES (NUMBER OF FAWNS PER DOE) BY STATE

State	2000	2005	2010	2014
Illinois	0.79	0.65	0.55	0.54
Indiana	*	*	*	*
Iowa	*	*	1.30	1.60
Kansas	*	0.71	0.64	0.55
Kentucky	*	*	*	1.25
Michigan	0.57	0.53	0.39	0.47
Minnesota	*	*	*	*
Missouri	*	*	*	*
Nebraska	*	*	*	*
North Dakota	*	*	*	*
Ohio	1.00	0.84	0.81	0.70
South Dakota	*	*	0.95	0.86
Wisconsin	1.06	1.07	1.07	0.70
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>0.83</b>
Connecticut	*	*	0.50	*
Delaware	*	*	*	*
Maine	0.91	0.81	0.75	0.65
Maryland	0.74	0.68	0.60	0.50
Massachusetts	*	*	*	*
New Hampshire	0.70	0.68	0.63	0.59
New Jersey	*	*	*	*
New York	*	*	*	0.45
Pennsylvania	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.62
Rhode Island	*	*	0.40	0.40
Vermont	*	*	*	0.80
Virginia	0.42	0.47	0.44	*
West Virginia	*	*	*	0.58
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.57</b>
Alabama	*	*	*	*
Arkansas	*	*	*	0.47
Florida	*	*	*	0.40
Georgia	0.71	0.37	0.52	0.59
Louisiana	0.74	0.60	0.58	0.58
Mississippi	*	0.60	0.47	0.66
North Carolina	*	*	*	*
Oklahoma	*	*	*	0.30
South Carolina	1.23	1.09	0.88	0.88
Tennessee	*	*	*	*
Texas	*	0.54	0.53	*
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.55</b>
<b>3-Region Total</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.66</b>

\*Data not available/provided

## FAWNING TIME = LUNCH TIME FOR PREDATORS

By Kip Adams

Spring is an exciting time in the woods. The landscape is greening, buds are bursting, turkeys are gobbling, brook trout are rising, fawns are dropping, and at an ever increasing rate, predators are swarming. Much has been said and written in the past few years regarding increasing predator populations and declining deer herds. There's been some fascinating research on fawn predation, predator ecology and home range size, and potential management strategies to help enhance fawn survival. The research is pretty clear with respect to coyotes: It's extremely difficult to remove enough annually to lower their numbers across much of their range. As deer managers our best shot is to provide the best habitat possible and remove as many coyotes as possible just before fawns hit the ground. It's likely the local coyote population will quickly rebound, but at least more of that year's fawn crop has a better chance to survive to the fall and be recruited into the deer herd.

With the majority of focus on coyotes, many forget about the other predators taking their toll on fawns, namely bobcats and bears. Bears are not as widely distributed as bobcats and coyotes, but they can play a significant role in fawn survival, especially when their predation is additive to the impact of coyotes.

### Case in Point

Here is some actual data from our camp in north-central Pennsylvania during the past 12 years. For some background, I collect data – a lot of it – on our 700-acre farm. Every spring I conduct a pellet count and browse survey to estimate the over-winter deer population using our land and the impact it has on our woods. Each summer I conduct a trail-camera survey using the technique described in QDMA's book *Deer Cameras: the Science of Scouting* to estimate the pre-season deer herd as well as its adult sex ratio, age structure and fawn recruitment rate. Each fall and winter I collect observation data from everyone hunting our farm to estimate the fawn recruitment rate, adult sex ratio, deer density and buck age structure. Finally, each fall and winter I collect harvest data from every

deer we shoot or find dead on our property. We enjoy hunting with friends and family, and around 15 people hunt our farm annually. Thus I get a lot of observation data from throughout the property. One final piece of background information is we have a lot of coyotes, a lot of bears and a lot fewer deer than in past years.

Our QDM program began in 2002, and at that time we had over 100 deer per square mile, zero tree regeneration in our woods, and healthy bear and coyote populations. We dramatically reduced the deer herd from 2002 to 2004. The reduction phase was awesome, as we love to shoot deer. In fact, we shot 74 adult does on 700 acres in three years! That was an average of one adult doe per 28 acres for three straight years, and that is an extremely high harvest rate. It provided a lot of fun, nearly 15,000 high-quality venison meals, and a deer herd more in balance with what our habitat could support. We simultaneously implemented some forest management practices, and oak seedlings exploded across our farm. We still had a high deer density of around 50 deer per square mile, but our habitat management efforts allowed successful oak regeneration. In the words of our forester, "We were the poster child for oak regeneration in Pennsylvania."

From 2004 to 2011, the deer density on our farm was relatively stable. The big difference was instead of shooting 23 adult does like in 2005 or 15 adult does like in 2006 to keep the herd stabilized, we had dropped to shooting less than 10 per year by 2008, a trend that continues today. Shooting fewer adult does should have allowed our deer herd to grow, but something else was at play, something else was forcing us to shoot fewer does to keep the deer herd from further decline, something



QDMA Director of Education and Outreach Kip Adams, along with daughter Katie, and his nephews, Tyler (left) and Justin (right) took this picture after Kip killed this bear last year. Kip had the kids accompany him hunting that day, and Katie actually spotted the bear and pointed it out. If she had not done so, Kip wouldn't have seen it. Bear numbers in the area are high, while fawn recruitment has been falling.

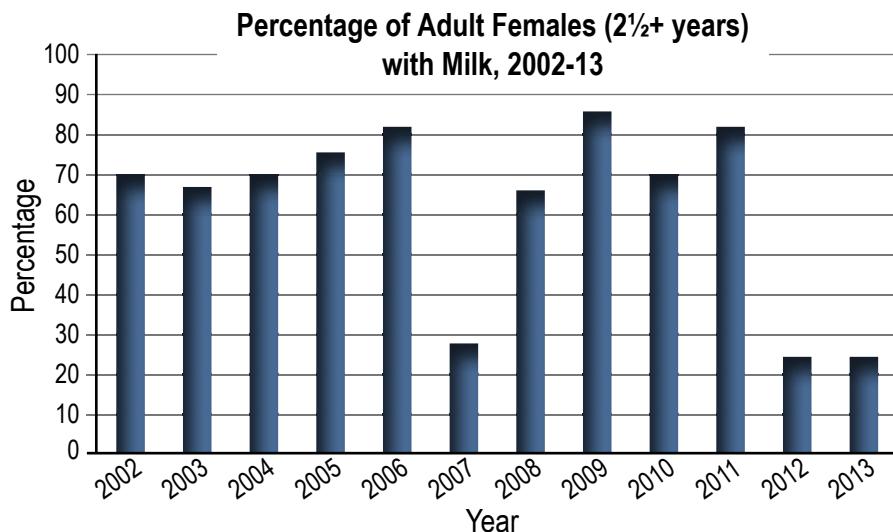
else was taking our fun away, and that something else was a growing predator population.

### Predator Fan

I'll admit right up front that I admire predators. I like having bears, coyotes, bobcats, fishers, foxes, raccoons and others on our farm. I enjoy seeing them, photographing them, trapping them, and especially hunting them. They are part of the landscape, and our environment is richer because of their presence. However, just like deer, beavers and every other wildlife species, their numbers and impacts need to be managed.

### And the Survey Says

I mentioned the deer herd using our property is stabilized by a much lower harvest rate today than a decade ago. If we shot as many adult does today as we did five to 10 years ago, we would drive the deer herd to a very low density. It's easy to simply blame predators for this, and many hunters do. However, I have the data to support that claim. From 2002 to 2011, our average lactation rate for 2½-year-old and older does was approximately 70 percent. That means about seven of every 10 does 2½ years and older that we shot was lactating and thus had recruited at least



one fawn into the fall herd. That number has dropped to 25 percent for the past two years (see graph above). That is a huge decline.

Twelve years of observation surveys show the fawn recruitment rate (the number of fawns observed per adult doe in the fall) bounced around from 2002 to 2006, declined through 2008, increased in 2009, and then declined for four straight years (see graph to the lower right).

This data suggests that a decade ago we recruited 1½ fawns for every two does – not two fawns per doe as many hunters assume. That was a good recruitment rate, and it nearly mirrored the national average at that time. Five years ago we also recruited 1½ fawns for every two does, so things were still good. However, today we recruit just over one fawn for every two does. I don't know how many fawns hit the ground in the spring on our farm, but I can assure you it is way more than one fawn for every two does. Our trail-camera surveys suggest we have about 30 does on the farm. Thus, five and 10 years ago those 30 does would have recruited 22 to 23 fawns annually. Today those 30 does recruit 18 fawns. That's 19 percent fewer fawns surviving to enter the fall population, 19 percent fewer fawns to watch in the fields during summer, 19 percent fewer fawns to see in the woods in the fall, and 19 percent fewer yearlings next year. A 19 percent reduction is extremely noticeable.

Given that we significantly reduced the deer herd and balanced it with our habitat

a decade ago, an additional decline of this magnitude is a big deal, and it translates to greatly reduced deer observation rates while hunting. In 2002 and 2003, we averaged seeing about 3½ deer per hour during rifle season. Over the past three years we've averaged 0.8 deer per hour. That's a 77 percent reduction in deer sightings per hour! Granted, in 2002 and 2003 the deer herd was above where it should have been, but even once the herd was balanced with the habitat, the observation rate has continued to decline, and it mirrors the estimated decline in fawn recruitment (see graph on page 38).

#### More is Better

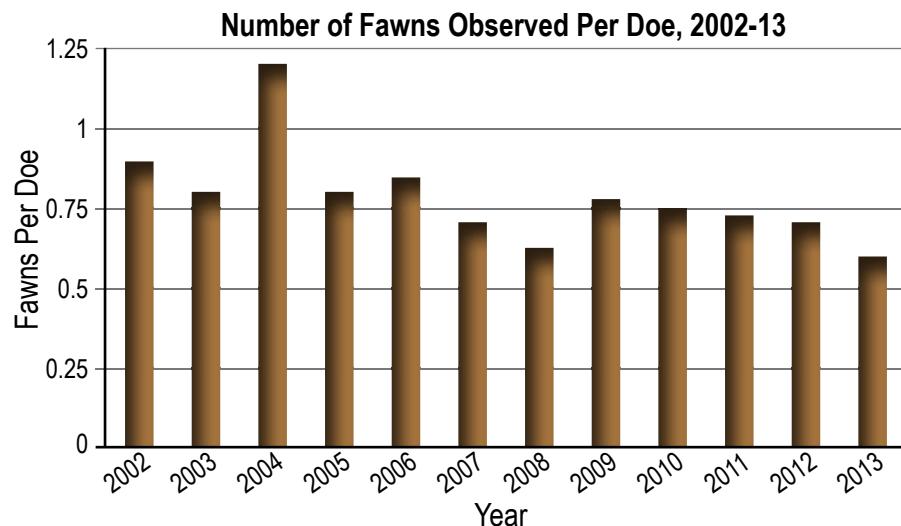
This is not the result of a small sample size. We have thousands of hours of observation data over the past 12 years, from

10 to 15 hunters per year, hunting during October, November and December. Thus, we have good representative observation data during each hunting season. Combine that with 12 years of harvest data, nine years of pre-season trail-camera surveys, and seven years of post-season pellet count and browse surveys and I have a really good feel for the size and structure of the deer herd using our property.

#### Skinning Pole Tally

So the data suggests far fewer fawns are surviving today. That doesn't mean it's directly related to predators. It could result from poor nutrition, poor habitat, disease, or other factors. Except our increasing body weights by age class suggest increasing health, we have good habitat and ample fawning cover, and we've had no disease outbreaks. I don't know how many coyotes are in our area although we hear, photograph and see their sign regularly. Conversely, I do have some measure of the number of bears in our area, and it is a lot. During the 2012 archery season I actually had more bears than does in bow range. That was not an unusual year as we routinely see bears throughout the summer and fall. Unfortunately you cannot shoot bears during Pennsylvania's archery season. This past year our camp shot three bears and saw at least eight others during bear season. A quick post-season survey showed ours and five neighboring camps killed a total of 19 bears! Our camp is in Tioga County, and our county led the state

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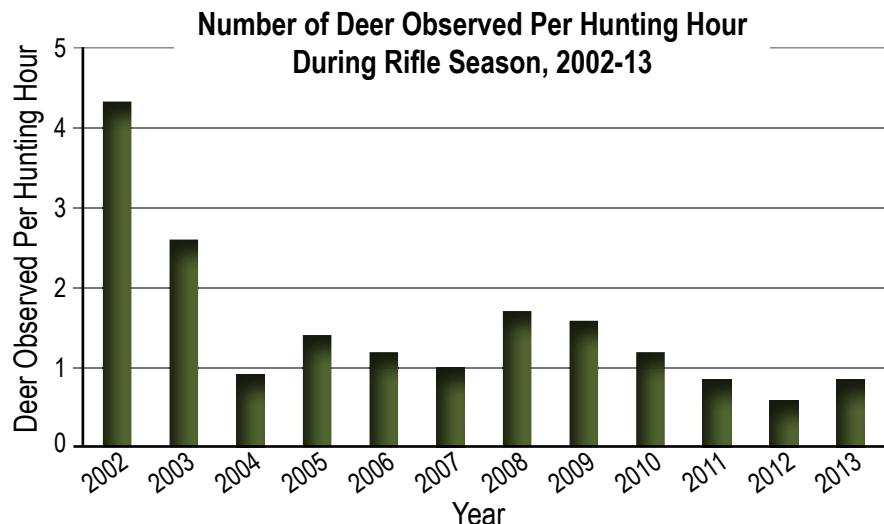
in bear harvest in 2013. Hunters shot 286 bears in Tioga County, and that averaged one bear per 2,544 acres. Ironically, the six camps I mentioned encompass approximately 2,500 acres, and with 19 bears our harvest rate averaged one bear per 132 acres! That is an astounding harvest rate, and as I mentioned we only shot three of the 11 we saw during bear season. Not surprisingly those same camps that shot 19 bears only shot 17 bucks.

I like bears, but I like bucks a lot more, and our area should be harvesting far more bucks than bruins.

## What to Do

I know we recruit fewer fawns today than in past years. I also know we have high predator numbers that are impacting fawn survival. As a deer manager, I use that information to direct my management decisions.

For example, I've reduced our target doe harvest to account for lower fawn survival, I provide/create as much high-quality fawning cover as possible, and we shoot as many bears as possible. I wish we could



shoot bears during archery season, and I wish we could trap coyotes in the spring. These are currently not allowed in my state, but maybe they will be in the future. Until then, I'll work within the framework of our seasons and work toward attaining those opportunities.

Wherever you live or hunt, I strongly encourage you to monitor the deer herd

as much as possible so you can make the best management decisions or so you can share that data with the person calling the shots. It's also helpful to share that information with your state wildlife agency. Complaining rarely helps, but sharing information can be very productive. Here's to a great new year and successful fawn recruitment!

## Your QDMA Regional Directors are here for you!

Our job is to help you and your Branch. Whether you have a question about QDM on your property, you want to know more about Branch events going on in the area, you want to host a Branch event on your land, or you would like to charter a new QDMA Branch, we can help.

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Canadian members should contact National Headquarters at 800-209-DEER for assistance.

## DEER HUNTERS IN QDM COOPERATIVES ENJOY HIGHER HUNTING SATISFACTION



Deer hunters who participate in Quality Deer Management (QDM) Cooperatives enjoy nearly twice the level of hunting satisfaction that other deer hunters experience, according to new research from Michigan State University (MSU).

MSU graduate student Anna Mitterling surveyed 350 members of 16 different QDM Cooperatives covering 90,000 acres in south central Michigan for her Master's thesis in Fisheries and Wildlife. She found satisfaction levels among the hunters increased from 44 percent before to 75 percent after they became involved in a QDM Cooperative. That's much higher than the 46 percent satisfaction rate among all Michigan deer hunters measured by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources around the same time.

QDM Cooperatives are formed by hunters on neighboring lands who voluntarily agree to pursue similar deer herd management goals, giving the larger group the ability to achieve improvements in deer hunting that could not be accomplished independently. Agreements between hunters usually address selective buck harvest and doe harvest goals intended to balance buck:doe ratios and protect yearling bucks so they survive to older age classes.

While Anna found that QDM Cooperatives made great improvements in these aspects of deer hunting, it was the enhanced social communication that made it possible.

"I witnessed many benefits for members of QDM Cooperatives, but the social interactions, camaraderie, sharing of hunting stories, and discussions were of greatest note to me," said Anna. "The deer management changes that occurred were made possible because of the social interactions occurring within these groups."

In 2010 and 2011, the years Anna studied the 16 Cooperatives, less than 15 percent of the antlered bucks killed by participating hunters were yearlings; that figure was 57 to 59 percent in the statewide buck harvest during the same time period.

As for doe harvest, QDM Cooperative members killed more than 2.2 does for every buck taken in 2010 and 2011. Statewide, Michigan hunters took slightly more antlered bucks than antlerless deer in those years.

"In short, we found QDM Cooperatives improve deer management, increase hunter satisfaction, and provide an avenue for better education and communication," said Anna. "Within these social networks, information spreads quickly, and grassroots advocacy for sound deer management is more effective. QDM Cooperatives may be the key to a successful future for deer hunting in Michigan and throughout the whitetail's range."

QDMA is aware of at least 50 active QDM Cooperatives in Michigan alone, and the organization has placed a priority on supporting and creat-

*Satisfaction levels among the hunters increased from 44 percent before to 75 percent after they became involved in a Quality Deer Management Cooperative.*

ing Cooperatives nationally. Our first Cooperative Specialist, Brian Towe, went to work full-time in Missouri in 2013 (see page 51), and QDMA's Education & Outreach Staff also helped launch three new QDM Cooperatives built around National Wildlife Refuges in Michigan and Oklahoma that encompass private and public hunting lands. Upon completing her graduate work, Anna was named the Wildlife Cooperative Coordinator for Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and the Michigan DNR, QDMA and Pheasants Forever collaborated to fund the position.

Additional details and other findings of Anna's study appeared in the April/May 2014 issue of *Quality Whitetails* magazine.

### Details About the 16 QDM Cooperatives Studied

Membership*	Year Started	Acres
90 (20)	2008	4,900
35 (25)	2009	5,500
90 (40)	1999	9,134
300 (75)	2005	5,000
116 (80)	2006	8,000
50 (10)	2009	5,000
250 (23)	2005	7,500
100 (35)	2009	9,000
50 (45)	2006	2,500
55 (35)	2004	2,500
116 (23)	1997	7,000
72 (6)	2008	5,000
40 (20)	2008	3,500
50 (30)	2010	4,000
25 (10)	2005	5,000
35 (20)	2009	2,500

\* First number includes entire membership list, while estimated numbers of regular meeting attendees are shown in parenthesis.

## PRIVATE LAND ACCESS PROGRAMS



Access to hunting land is one of the single most important issues today for deer hunters. In fact, this issue alone has been blamed in numerous professional circles for being the limiting factor negatively impacting hunter recruitment, retention and ultimately funding for both game and non-game wildlife programs, everywhere (see the Deer Summit sidebar below).

In addition, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hunter surveys, white-tailed deer hunting and management across the East and Midwest is largely a private lands issue, and as reported in the 2014 *Whitetail Report*, roughly 90 percent of the land in these regions is privately owned. So, it would seem, the solution to these problems lies somehow in getting hunters who need a place to hunt onto private land. To assess this we surveyed state wildlife agencies from all 37 states in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast to determine if a private land access program exists in their jurisdiction.

Regionally speaking, the Southeast appears to have the largest restriction on gaining access to private land with two of 11 (18 percent) states offering a formal program. Hunters in the Northeast have a little bit more opportunity with pro-

grams available in six of 12 (50 percent) states. That's good news for a region with notoriously small (average) parcel sizes, large hunter densities (see page 21 of 2013 *Whitetail Report* or search "Hunter Density Across the U.S." on [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com)) and possibly the most restrictive private property rights culture among the three regions. Midwest hunters enjoy the greatest opportunity to find a place for chasing deer with 11 of 13 (85 percent) states offering a private lands access program.

One thing is clear, with roughly half (19 of 36, or 53 percent) of white-tail states helping hunters gain access to private land for hunting, there is room to improve. That's also good news; an obvious window of opportunity to increase the number and retention of deer hunters in North America today.

### QDMA's Recommendations

To do this, wildlife managers and hunters will need to establish/maintain landowner education and outreach programs at local and regional levels that emphasize safety and promote ethical hunting behaviors. Doing so promotes a better public image for hunters and, in turn, shows landowners that currently

### Deer Summit

Hunting land access was identified as the third most important issue for deer hunting and management at the 2014 Whitetail Summit, a gathering of nearly 200 people representing 19 companies in the hunting industry; 18 state wildlife agencies and one provincial agency; 10 leading institutes of deer research; 17 major landowner groups; 15 hunting or conservation organizations; and deer hunters from more than 20 different states and one Canadian province.

### VPA-HIP

The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) is a competitive national grants program that helps state governments and Indian tribes increase public access to private lands for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing or hiking. Through the VPA-HIP the Natural Resource Conservation Service invested \$20 million in nine states and one Tribal Nation in 2014. To see which states were awarded a grant last year, please visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) and search for VPA-HIP.

don't allow access that providing it not only assists wildlife agencies better opportunity to manage wildlife populations, but it builds stronger communities during the process by breaking down stigmatic walls of unethical, unkempt and disrespectful hunters, allowing neighbors to be neighborly. Luckily, programs also exist at a state and national level to help increase access to private lands as well (see the VPA-HIP sidebar below). These tactics, and simply urging states that currently don't offer a private lands access program to create one, will certainly help solve one of the most important issues facing deer hunting today.

### PRIVATE LAND ACCESS PROGRAMS BY STATE

State	Does a Program Exist?
Illinois	Yes
Indiana	Yes
Iowa	Yes
Kansas	Yes
Kentucky	No
Michigan	Yes
Minnesota	Yes
Missouri	No
Nebraska	Yes
North Dakota	Yes
Ohio	Yes
South Dakota	Yes
Wisconsin	Yes
<b>Midwest Total</b>	<b>11 of 13 (85%)</b>

Connecticut	*
Delaware	No
Maine	No
Maryland	No
Massachusetts	No
New Hampshire	Yes
New Jersey	No
New York	Yes
Pennsylvania	Yes
Rhode Island	Yes
Vermont	Yes
Virginia	Yes
West Virginia	No
<b>Northeast Total</b>	<b>6 of 12 (50%)</b>

Alabama	No
Arkansas	No
Florida	No
Georgia	No
Louisiana	Yes
Mississippi	No
North Carolina	No
Oklahoma	No
South Carolina	No
Tennessee	No
Texas	Yes
<b>Southeast Total</b>	<b>2 of 11 (18%)</b>

**3-Region Total** **19 of 36 (53%)**

\*Data not available/provided

## 10 TIPS ON ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO HUNT



Hunter access was identified as one of the largest issues impacting the future of hunting at the 2014 North American Whitetail Summit. East of the Rocky Mountains, most hunting occurs on private land, and this is especially true in states like Alabama, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Texas where 97 to 98 percent of the land is in private ownership. Add in development, anti-hunting sentiment among some landowners, liability concerns, and competition from other hunters, and it can be downright difficult finding a place to hunt.

In decades past, many hunters could walk out the back door, cross several boundary lines during the course of a hunt, and never worry about upsetting the landowners or being arrested for trespassing. Unfortunately those days are long gone. There may be a few remote areas like this left, but for the vast majority of whitetail hunters this isn't the case.

The reality for many hunters today is they must seek land to hunt on. Some own land, some lease land, and most seek the opportunity to hunt on someone else's land by receiving permission from the landowner. A few are good with "the ask" but most are not, so here are 10 tips to help you secure a spot to hunt.

**1. Ask permission well in advance of the season.** Don't show up the week before opening day and expect a positive response. It may happen, but increase your odds by asking weeks or months in advance.

**2. Make a good first impression.** Don't show up dirty from work or in hunting attire. A shower and clean (non-camo)

clothes can go a long way toward receiving permission.

**3. Be polite and respectable.** Your language and behavior can be the deciding factor, so don't blow it before you even make the ask. Continue being polite and respectable even if the answer is no. Thank the landowner for his or her time and leave on good terms. Doing so can turn a "no" today into a "yes" in the future. Being impolite or disrespectful is a guaranteed continual "no."

**4. Take a child with you.** It's amazing how a well-behaved child can help create a great first impression or enhance an existing relationship with the landowner. Some landowners are also far more likely to allow you to hunt if they feel they're helping a child.

**5. Offer to help the landowner.** Let them know you're willing to help them for the opportunity to hunt. You can offer to help cut wood, fix fences, pick up trash, or anything else they may need help with. Members of the QDMA staff have personally secured permission to hunt by offering each of these tasks as well as helping ranchers work their cows and even just keeping an eye on their land for them. You can also offer to help plant trees, pick rocks, and mark or paint boundary lines. If you're not willing to help the landowner, don't expect them to be willing to help you.

**6. Start small.** Small game, that is. Many landowners who wouldn't let you hunt deer on their land may let you hunt squirrels and rabbits. Use this opportunity to mentor a child and develop a

positive relationship with the landowner. Doing so could be your ticket to a future deer stand on his or her property.

**7. Give them your information.** Hand them a business card or note card with your name and contact information. Landowners like to know who is on their property and how to contact them if necessary. This is also important if the landowner initially declines your request but reconsiders at a later time or knows another landowner that he or she can pass your information to.

**8. Offer to provide and pay for insurance.** For as little as a few cents per acre you can get hunting land liability insurance through QDMA that covers you, any guests, and the landowner. Many landowners deny permission to hunt for fear of liability. Offering to provide this insurance policy can make all the difference with your request.

These last two items pertain to situations where you receive permission to hunt.

**9. Get details on where, when and how.** Be sure to ask the landowner where you can and cannot park, when you can and cannot hunt, and how you may hunt. Some landowners don't like rifles. Some may not want you there on a special weekend their son and daughter-in-law visit to hunt. Oblige them and just hunt with your bow or hunt elsewhere when their family is in town. Follow their wishes. Be sure to close each gate you go through and pick up any litter you find on their property.

**10. Give back.** Hunting on someone's land is a big privilege, so give something back to the landowner to show your appreciation. We've shared turkey and venison with generous landowners. Thank-you cards, Christmas cards, and other tokens of appreciation go a long way toward receiving permission again in the future.

We hope this information helps you gain permission to hunt new land this fall. Be sure to mentor a youth or new hunter this year, and good luck in the woods.

## MAKE DEER HUNTING FUN FOR KIDS

### By Kip Adams

We hunt for many reasons – to be with family and friends, to spend time with nature, to provide meat for the table, and because it is fun. That last reason should not be overlooked when introducing a new deer hunter to this wonderful pastime, especially when that new hunter is a youth. Families Afield programs have removed barriers for more than 1 million new hunters to go afield since 2006. That is important for the future of hunting, and a great way to ensure these new hunters remain in the fold is to make it fun for them.

I have a young daughter who went on her first hunt with me when she was 2 years old. In November 2008, being securely bundled in a chest pack, Katie participated in a bear drive. I wasn't carrying my rifle, and our crew did not shoot a bear that morning, but there's no denying we were both an integral part of the hunt – me as a driver and Katie as a future hunter.

Katie has been on numerous hunts with me since that day.

- Opening day of spring gobbler – check.
- Opening day of archery – check.
- Opening day of fall turkey – check.
- Opening day of bear – check.
- Opening day of rifle season – check.

We firmly believe if you want someone to understand and enjoy the outdoors, then you take them hunting and teach them about wildlife and wild places. Katie has spent more days in the woods with me than I can count, and every time it's because she wanted to go, and in most cases was asking (occasionally almost begging) to go. And she likes to go because we have fun in the woods.

We have a great relationship, and I wouldn't trade Katie for everything in the world. However, I have several serious hunting friends who are great fathers

whose kids care almost nothing about going to the woods with them. Given that I am not the brightest guy around, but I am so thankful my daughter wants to hunt with me as much as she does, I figured I'd better find out exactly what we did to make it enjoyable so she wants to keep going.

So I simply asked her why she likes to go and she said, "Because it is fun." I smiled and then asked her why it was fun, and I'm guessing many will be amazed by her answers.

She didn't say "because we always shoot something." She's been by my side when I've shot a bear, turkey and some deer, but those hunts are by far the exception to the norm.

She didn't say "because we always see deer or bear or turkeys." She's seen a lot of these animals in the woods, but we've walked home many times after dark after seeing none of them.

What she did say made me smile and realize once again how lucky I am to have done a few things right (mostly by accident) introducing her to hunting and how fortunate I am to have her as my hunting buddy. I'll share her answers in hopes they can help you be as lucky in mentoring a youth or new hunter as I was with her.

"Hunting is fun because we play cards, word search and we color in the blind while waiting for deer. We share snacks, and play games on which bird is singing, and an even better game is guessing which bird will sing next," Katie said. Her songbird vocabulary is limited so we often guess whether the next bird we hear will be a blue jay, crow, or "other." She can easily identify a blue jay, crow, or bird that's clearly not either of those so that's fun for her.

She also said she likes to play "where will the first (and next) deer come from." Slow day in the woods with few or no deer sightings? We've had those too, so we change to "where will the next squirrel

come from." I'll admit that few things make her feel more like a true hunter than when she beats me at this, and few things hone her woodsmen's skills like being engaged and playing these games.

Katie also said hunting was fun because, "We paint our faces, put on hunting (camouflage or fluorescent orange) clothes, and spray ourselves so deer can't smell us." No one taking a youth hunting should overlook the importance of these items. To this day in Katie's mind if we skip one of these steps then we aren't really hunting. It's a mental thing, and doing each of these put her in a different place – a very good place. It's amazing how much quieter her feet are and how much more focused her eyes are when her face contains green, black and brown stripes. We can be sitting against a tree or in a blind, but if we didn't camouflage our faces or spray our clothes then we are only half-heartedly watching for deer, not truly hunting them. Sometimes I'm not sure which of us learns more on our hunts together.

Her final items for a fun hunt were, you have to take pictures while hunting and you have to take calls with you – and you have to use them. Turkey calls, crow calls and grunt tubes; she has some of each, and she loves to use them. More



QDMA Director of Education and Outreach Kip Adams says it is important to remember deer hunting is fun when introducing the pastime to newcomers, especially youth. Kip is pictured here with his daughter, Katie, and son, Bo.

### Katie's List of Things That Make Deer Hunting Fun

- Putting on camo face paint
- Wearing camo clothes
- Spraying for scent-control
- Playing cards in the blind
- Carrying (and using) game calls and grunt tubes
- Word searches
- Coloring books
- Sharing snacks
- Playing "What bird is singing?"
- Playing "What bird will sing next?"
- Playing "Where will the next deer come from?"
- No deer moving? Playing "Where will the next squirrel come from?"
- Taking photos

importantly I love to watch her use them. She hasn't called in any turkeys yet, but she has called in some crows and does, and the connection she has to hunting because she is calling is unmistakable.

Notice at no point do our hunts involve the statement, "Sit down, be quiet and don't move." Where's the fun in that? Sure, I teach her patience and how to be quiet, but I also teach her how and when to move, and I encourage her to explore the woods. "I wonder what's under that log, over that ridge, and behind that blow down?" are common topics of conversation for us. Are you too worried about spooking a deer? Quit worrying – they'll learn more about being a good woodsman and a good hunter by spooking a few deer than by sitting still and being quiet.

Regarding pictures, we've taken shots of everything from her to me to buck rubs, funny looking trees and pretty leaves. Each photo connects her (and me) to the hunt and time spent together in the woods. This past season we made a point to take a picture of her on every hunt sitting in a blind or on stand (the photo on the facing page shows me and Katie, along with Katie's little brother Bo, on a recent hunt). October to December is a short time frame for an adult, but you wouldn't believe the changes in a 7-year-old during that span. By the end of rifle season she looked older, bigger, and more seasoned. My little girl a more seasoned hunter? How is that possible? Successful educators would tell you kids – and possibly adults – learn best when they're engaged and having fun. Maybe there's a lesson there for us as hunting mentors.

This year let's all take a youth hunting and make sure we make it fun for them. It's not just about shooting a deer, rather it is about painting our faces, learning about nature, and having fun in the woods. That "fun" part is what will keep them coming back. I challenge all of my hunting brethren to take a new hunter to the woods this year. If that new hunter also is fortunate enough to get their first deer, share the photos with our Rack Pack's #FirstDeer program.

Have fun, and for goodness sakes, don't forget the face paint!



Putting on camo face paint is a great way to make deer hunting fun for kids. Above, hunting guide Amanda Wood applies face paint to a young hunter at QDMA's 2013 National Youth Hunt. Below, a couple of the youth hunt participants show off their finished face-painting work prior to going into the woods.



## Your BEST hunt is their FIRST hunt!

QDMA is aiming at more #FirstDeer! We would like to challenge you to take someone, youth or adult, on his or her first hunt. Send us stories and pictures from this hunt, or one from the past, for a chance to be featured in one of QDMA's publications – print and/or online!

If you have a #FirstDeer story you would like to share,

please send story and picture submissions to: [FirstDeer@qdma.com](mailto:FirstDeer@qdma.com)

*Please note: By sending stories and photos, you are giving QDMA permission to use them online (including social media) and in print publications.*

**#FIRSTDEER**

## MENTORED YOUTH & ADULT APPRENTICE HUNTING PROGRAMS



Hunter recruitment and retention was identified as the single most important issue impacting deer hunting and management by attendees at the 2014 North American Whitetail Summit. This has been a major issue for years, and it is the primary reason Families Afield was launched in 2004. Since then 35 states have changed laws and regulations to create additional hunting opportunities for youth, and in doing so, they have sold over one million apprentice licenses. Much of this success with new youth hunters is being transformed into adult apprentice programs too. To gain a better understanding of what states offer these opportunities, we surveyed state wildlife agencies in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast and asked whether they had a mentored youth hunting program and/or an adult apprentice hunting program. We also asked if there were minimum ages to participate in either.

### Mentored Youth Programs

Twenty-one of 35 states (60 percent) have a mentored youth program, and 13 of those have minimum age requirements ranging from six to 14 years. Eight states have no minimum age requirement, and they allow the parents/guardians to determine when the youth is ready to participate. Seven of 10 states (70 percent) in the Southeast offer such a program, nine of 13 states (69 percent) in the Midwest have one, and five of 12 states (42 percent) in the Northeast have a mentored youth program.

### Adult Apprentice Programs

Far fewer states have similar opportunities for adults, as only 14 of 35 states (40 percent) have adult programs. Seven

of those have minimum age requirements, and they range from 10 to 18 years. Eight of 13 states (62 percent) in the Midwest have a program, four of 8 states (50 percent) in the Northeast have a program, and only two of eight states (25 percent) in the Southeast have an adult apprentice program.

Interestingly, 10 states (Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Wisconsin) have both youth and adult programs. Eleven states (Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas) have a youth program but not an adult program, and four states (North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio and West Virginia) have an

adult program but not a youth program.

### QDMA's Recommendations

QDMA is a big supporter of youth and adult hunting apprentice programs. We have youth hunting kits for our QDMA Branches to use, a mentored hunting guide available at QDMA.com, and a #FirstDeer campaign to encourage hunters to mentor youths and interested adults. As such, we encourage all hunters to take advantage of these programs to help improve hunter recruitment and retention. QDMA also created the National Deer Alliance (NDA) to help tackle this problem, and we strongly advocate for all hunters to join the NDA at [www.nationaldeeralliance.com](http://www.nationaldeeralliance.com) because when hunters work together anything is possible.

### MENTORED YOUTH & ADULT APPRENTICE HUNTING PROGRAMS BY STATE

State	Mentored Youth	Age	Apprentice Adult	Age
Illinois	Y	None	Y	None
Indiana	N		N	
Iowa	Y	None	N	
Kansas	Y	None	Y	None
Kentucky	N		N	
Michigan	Y	None	Y	10
Minnesota	Y	10	Y	18
Missouri	Y	6	Y	16
Nebraska	Y	10	N	
North Dakota	N		Y	
Ohio	N	*	Y	None
South Dakota	Y	10	N	
Wisconsin	Y	10	Y	10
Connecticut	*	*	*	*
Delaware	N		N	
Maine	N		N	
Maryland	N		N	
Massachusetts	Y	12	N	
New Hampshire	Y	None	Y	None
New Jersey	N		N	
New York	Y	12 Bow, 14 Gun	N	
Pennsylvania	Y	None	Y	None
Rhode Island	N	*	N	*
Vermont	Y	None	Y	None
Virginia	N		N	
West Virginia	N	*	Y	15+
Alabama	N		N	
Arkansas	N		N	
Florida	Y	12	N	
Georgia	Y	No Minimum or Max	N	*
Louisiana	*		*	
Mississippi	Y	10	Y	16
North Carolina	N		Y	16
Oklahoma	Y	12	N	
South Carolina	Y	10	N	
Tennessee	Y	10	N	
Texas	Y	9	N	

\*Data not available/provided

# 2015 QDMA NATIONAL YOUTH HUNT NOMINATIONS



QDMA will hold its 11th annual National Hunt in October 2015. The nomination period is currently open and will run until **May 31, 2015**, and QDMA will announce the young hunters selected for the National Youth Hunt during the summer of 2015.

Nomination forms are available online at [www.qdma.com/corporate/national-youth-hunt](http://www.qdma.com/corporate/national-youth-hunt) and can also be obtained by e-mailing Hank Forester at [hforester@qdma.com](mailto:hforester@qdma.com). Instructions are included on the form for submitting the completed nomination.

#### **Important details to keep in mind as you prepare your nomination:**

- Nominations must be submitted by a QDMA member or Branch.
- Nominees MUST be between the ages of 12-17 by October 2015.
- QDMA will pay travel expenses for each youngster. A parent/guardian may accompany the youth hunter, but their travel expenses will be their own responsibility (unless driving is a reasonable option and arranged by QDMA).
- QDMA will not be able to accommodate additional parents/adults for youngsters. The property used for the hunt has wonderful facilities, but only enough to accommodate the hunters and one parent/guardian for each.
- The attendees will need to miss two days of school to participate. Please clear this BEFORE you file nominations.
- All nominations MUST BE RECEIVED at the QDMA National Office by the last day of the nomination period.

#### **Important Consideration for Your Nomination:**

To be consistent with the spirit and intent of the QDMA National Youth Hunt, please do your best to nominate a youngster who is NEW to hunting, interested in hunting, and, preferably, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to participate in the outdoor sports. Please nominate those youngsters you believe will benefit the most from participating in the National Youth Hunt.

Please keep in mind that the youth hunter will be hunting with a property guide. Although we try to involve the guardian in as much of the deer harvesting process as possible, in most cases, the parents/guardians will not accompany the youngster while hunting.



## QDMA: ENSURING THE FUTURE OF DEER HUNTING



Ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage: That's the non-profit mission of QDMA. Our education and outreach efforts impact hunters and our hunting heritage in several ways. In 2006, using input from our members, wildlife agencies and conservation leaders, QDMA organized our mission efforts into five areas, represented by the acronym REACH: Research, Educate, Advocate, Certify, and Hunt. QDMA's goals for all these efforts are ambitious, and they directly benefit *all* deer hunters, QDMA members or not. Here is a brief look at each area of our mission work.

### RESEARCH

Sound deer management decisions require reliable information, and this information generally comes from research. QDMA is involved in all areas of whitetail deer research including biology, ecology, management, hunting, diseases and human dimensions. QDMA helps design, coordinate, and fund practical research projects that increase knowledge and improve management. Since 2006, QDMA has contributed more than half a million dollars to support important research projects in several states, including securing \$46,000 in 2014 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for projects on Private Landowner Cooperatives and Effects of Seasonality of Fire on Mixed Upland Hardwoods.

### EDUCATE

Since its earliest days, QDMA has been a recognized leader in educating hunters, landowners, wildlife professionals and the public on all aspects of whitetail biology

and management and habitat improvement. However, the types of information desired by these groups as well as the tools available to deliver this information constantly change, and QDMA is keeping pace. QDMA continues with existing educational activities such as seminars, field days, and the ever popular *Quality Whitetails* magazine, but outreach also includes delivery methods such as television, DVDs, and Web-based opportunities.

### ADVOCATE

Each year there are countless threats to the future of deer hunting and management as the local, state and national levels. These issues impact everyone that pursues white-tailed deer in the fall. Due to QDMA's growth and strong support from the professional wildlife community, it is considered the most respected and influential whitetail organization in North America. As a result, QDMA serves as the leading advocate for the wise management of white-tailed deer and the protection of our deer-hunting heritage. QDMA also maintains strong ties with its members, other conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, and other groups with an interest in whitetail hunting and management. In fact, in 2014 QDMA hosted the inaugural North American Whitetail Summit and launched the National Deer Alliance as a result. Since 2006, QDMA has engaged in over 650 legislative and management issues. Every day QDMA fights for all deer hunters across North America!

### CERTIFY

In 2006, QDMA created an individual certification program that includes three levels of potential achievement, and

each must be completed in sequence. Deer Steward I provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the key principles of deer and habitat biology, ecology, and management. Deer Steward II teaches students how to apply the principles learned in Level I through hands-on and field experience. Finally, Deer Steward III, the most prestigious, must be earned through an individual's long-term service to whitetailed deer and/or QDMA. QDMA also launched the Land Certification Program in 2012. The goal of these programs is to create more knowledgeable hunters and managers and to have improved deer herds and habitats.

### HUNT

Hunting is an essential tool for sound deer management and part of our sporting heritage. However, in many states hunter numbers have declined, and existing hunter recruitment programs are proving only marginally effective. In response, QDMA developed an innovative youth and new hunter education and outreach program, and it is comprised of two parts: the Mentored Hunting Program and our new membership-based Rack Pack. Unlike most other programs which involve a one-time contact with a young person or new hunter, this outreach program attacks the loss of hunting in a couple of ways. First, it combines the use of a grassroots, in-person program with a sense of achievement, by involving individuals never exposed to hunting and pairing them up with experienced hunters, thereby providing the opportunity to go through the "steps" of learning to hunt and "earning" your place in the brotherhood of deer hunting. Second, the Rack Pack allows involved youth members to experience a true feeling of belonging, and it accomplishes this through a groundbreaking supplemental youth-led, multimedia approach. The goal of these programs is to produce more deer hunters and better ambassadors for hunting, not simply to take more kids deer hunting.

The following pages are a brief synopsis of what was accomplished in the last 12 months within each of these mission areas.

## 2014 ADVOCACY UPDATE



Every year QDMA monitors legislation (see page 26), regulation changes and policy on behalf of deer hunters, supporting initiatives that help ensure the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat, and our hunting heritage – and opposing those that do not. This past year was a particularly busy legislative and regulatory season for Kip Adams (pictured), QDMA's Director of Education & Outreach, who is responsible for QDMA's advocacy efforts. What follows is a look at QDMA's actions on legislation and policy during 2014.

Since 2006 QDMA has engaged in over 650 major initiatives. In 2014 we engaged in 67 legislative, regulatory or policy issues: 14 at the national level and 53 at the state level in 24 states and one province (see map). Regionally, this included eight states in the Midwest, eight in the Southeast, six in the Northeast, and two in the West. QDMA's engagement ranged from comments on deer, habitat and predator management programs to leashed tracking laws, mentored hunting programs, disease prevention, and more. Below is a sample of some of the advocacy issues.

- Supported reauthorization of the Farm Bill
- Supported Virginia House Bill 1237 to legalize Sunday hunting
- Supported wildfire disaster funding
- Supported Utah Senate Bill 165

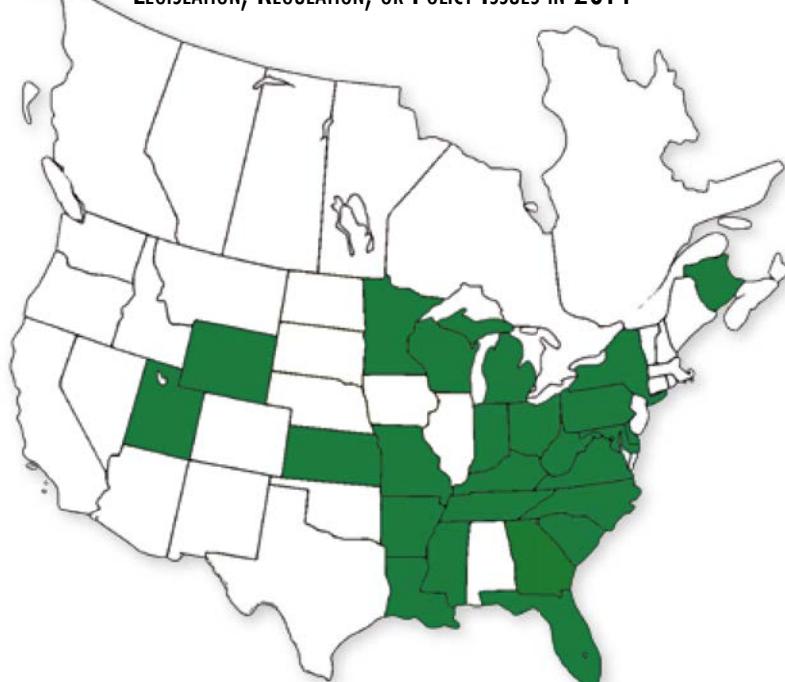
to create an apprentice (youth) hunting license

- Opposed Missouri House Bill 2031 to change the definition of captive deer from wildlife to livestock
- Supported New York Assembly Bill 8184 and Senate Bill 2582 to create a junior big game license

- Supported New York Assembly Bill 4911 to increase penalties for poaching whitetails
- Supported Kansas Senate Bill 357 to expand hunter education deferral program
- Supported Wisconsin Assembly Bill 497 to increase poaching fines
- Opposed the new, weaker USDA-APHIS federal CWD guidelines
- Supported Louisiana Senate Bill 179 to allow the taking of escaped cervids
- Opposed Pennsylvania House Bill 1370 to remove concurrent deer seasons
- Supported creation of young forests on North Carolina's Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests
- Supported Mississippi's Amendment 1 guaranteeing the right to hunt, fish and trap

If you have questions about any of these items, or if there are emerging issues in your state that you'd like to discuss with QDMA, contact Kip Adams. We need your help to increase QDMA's effectiveness at fighting for deer hunters, so please consider becoming a member of QDMA today if you are not one already, or help by signing up your hunting friends and family.

### STATES/PROVINCES WHERE QDMA ENGAGED IN LEGISLATION, REGULATION, OR POLICY ISSUES IN 2014



## 2014 QDMA BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS



No doubt, the heart and soul of the QDMA is our volunteers; and, as a grassroots, member-based conservation organization, our network of local volunteers is integral to helping QDMA spread our mission and the message about Quality Deer Management (QDM).

### 2014 Branch Accomplishments

- QDMA Branches raised over \$2.5 million for conservation.
- QDMA Branches contributed nearly 23 tons of venison – representing over 180,000 meals – to venison donation programs and soup kitchens.
- QDMA Branches conducted at least 164 educational events (field days, seminars and workshops) in 35 states and three Canadian provinces.
- QDMA Branches or Branch members started and/or maintained approximately 130 QDM Cooperatives, impacting literally millions of acres across North America.
- QDMA Branches organized 46 youth, military and/or special hunts.
- QDMA Branches enrolled well over 14,000 QDMA members – including nearly 975 youth and 750 Life and Sponsor Members.
- QDMA Branches hosted 134 fund-raising events across the United States and Canada.
- QDMA Regional Directors formed 31 new Branches.
- QDMA Regional Directors maintained 187 active Branches in the United States and Canada.
- QDMA Branches or Branch members were directly involved in at least 87 advocacy issues in their locales involving white-tailed deer legislation or regulations.

It was a great year for QDMA Branches and for those impacted by their efforts. Importantly, we look forward to an even better 2015.

Would you like to become a volunteer leader in your local hunting community, helping spread QDMA's message of sound deer management? Consider starting an official QDMA Branch – that's our name for local groups of QDMA members who join together for fellowship, fundraising, and promotion of the philosophy at the grassroots level. By volunteering to help lead a QDMA Branch, you get to know other like-minded deer hunters in your area and have fun working together to grow QDMA membership and QDM knowledge in your community. QDMA Branches host annual banquets and other fundraisers, field days, youth hunts, and other educational and promotional events.

QDMA needs volunteer leaders like you! Join the fun by sending an e-mail to [backyard@qdma.com](mailto:backyard@qdma.com) and letting us know you would be willing to help form or grow a QDMA Branch in your area. We look forward to working with you to ensure the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage!

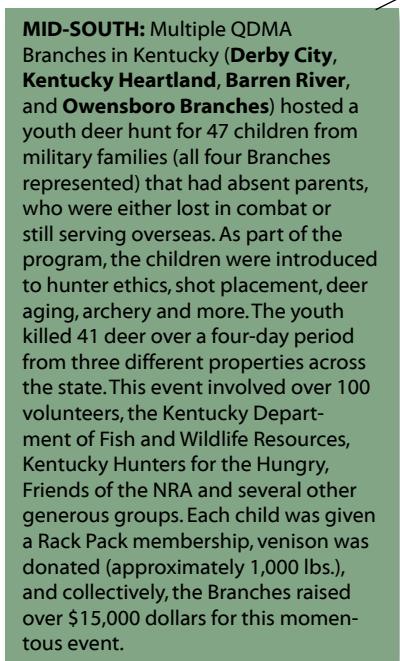


## SPECIAL BRANCH EVENTS IN 2014

Many QDMA Branches host phenomenal events. Here is an example from each Regional Director's region to highlight some of the great work performed by QDMA volunteers.

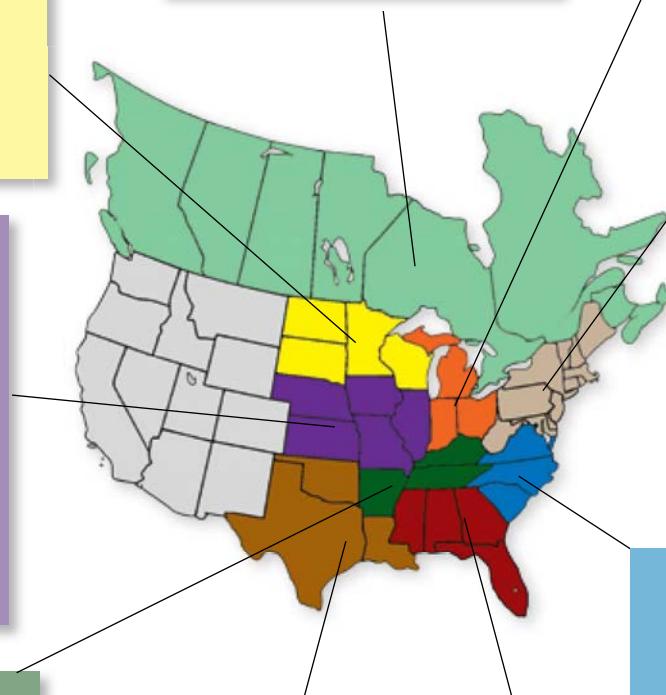


**MIDWEST:** The **Southeast Missouri (SEMO) Branch** sponsored a Rack Pack field day where 50 youth, ages 9 to 16, attended with their guardians. Each youth received a Rack Pack T-shirt and nametag at registration. Six stations, each with two instructors, were set up to teach different aspects of hunting including clay shooting, archery, blood trailing, treestand safety, trapping and fish identification. The primary focus at each station was to teach the safety aspects involved.



**MID-SOUTH:** Multiple QDMA Branches in Kentucky (**Derby City, Kentucky Heartland, Barren River, and Owensboro Branches**) hosted a youth deer hunt for 47 children from military families (all four Branches represented) that had absent parents, who were either lost in combat or still serving overseas. As part of the program, the children were introduced to hunter ethics, shot placement, deer aging, archery and more. The youth killed 41 deer over a four-day period from three different properties across the state. This event involved over 100 volunteers, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry, Friends of the NRA and several other generous groups. Each child was given a Rack Pack membership, venison was donated (approximately 1,000 lbs.), and collectively, the Branches raised over \$15,000 dollars for this momentous event.

**CANADA:** The **Southwest Ontario Branch** donated \$1,500 to Camp Trillium, which hosts 3,100 kids with cancer each year for a week or two of relaxation, education and fun. Also, for the fourth year in a row, Branch volunteers also co-hosted the Long Point youth hunter education camp held near Long Point, Ontario. Branch members presented several whitetail facts to the class of 30 students, who participated in discussions about jawbone aging, antler development and a mock shed hunt. The Branch provided each student with a one-year youth QDMA membership and a QDMA Canada T-shirt.



**SOUTHWEST:** The **Bayou Branch** in South Louisiana, with assistance from the **Central Louisiana** and **South Louisiana Branches** and other local groups, took on a special mission over the past year to help one of America's heroes, Sergeant George Wells of the United States Army, who was tragically and permanently injured after serving three tours and 200 missions abroad. The primary goal was to help Sgt. Wells return to the outdoors so he could enjoy time in the outdoors with his children. Through these efforts, Sgt. Wells and his family were presented a day of fishing on the Gulf, a fully-guided whitetail hunt for two, an inspiration award in appreciation for all he has done for the United States, and a specialized Action TrackChair.

**GREAT LAKES:** The **Southeast Michigan Branch** held its seventh annual habitat day at The Hanging Fen Farm of Branch members Jim and Dianne Brauker just outside of Hudson, Michigan. Approximately 175 people attended the event including representatives from five different state Branches, the Michigan State Advisory Council and national staff members. The habitat day also featured a free lunch and a raffle with prizes including a Dolmar chainsaw and two habitat hooks as well as QDMA memberships, apparel and posters.

**NORTHEAST:** The **Jefferson-Lewis Branch** of New York again held a youth adventure day with over 70 youth and their parents in attendance; all kids became Rack Pack members, and participated in archery, fishing, air rifle, and sporting clays and an interactive food plot event, as well as viewed a taxidermy demo, a reptile exhibit, and demonstration from a fly fishing experts. The **National Pike Branch** of Pennsylvania was really active in 2014, partnering with local organizations to form and promote a "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" program, as well as donating to an Adopt a Highway program in their community. The **Mountain Maryland Branch** maintained a growing QDM Cooperative that amazingly has now reached over 50,000 acres.

**SOUTHEAST:** The **Morgan County Georgia Branch** donated \$500 to the local shotgun team and will make another donation in 2015. The **Gulf Coast Alabama Branch** held their banquet on September 11 and pledged 10 percent of their net income to local first responders. In their first year, the **Griffin G2 Branch** of Georgia held two fundraising events and is finalizing a donation to the local DNR. The **Devils Garden Branch** set up a scholarship for graduating high school seniors and has taken the steps to begin implementing a Hunters for the Hungry program in south Florida. The **Magnolia State Branch** sponsored a deer seminar led by Mississippi State University. The **Southwest Mississippi Branch** donated to a local scholarship program.

## QDMA MEMBERSHIP HITS RECORD

QDMA set an organizational record for winter and spring membership growth, recruiting more than 7,000 new members in the first four months of 2014 and reaching a record level at year's end of nearly 62,000 members in the United States and Canada.

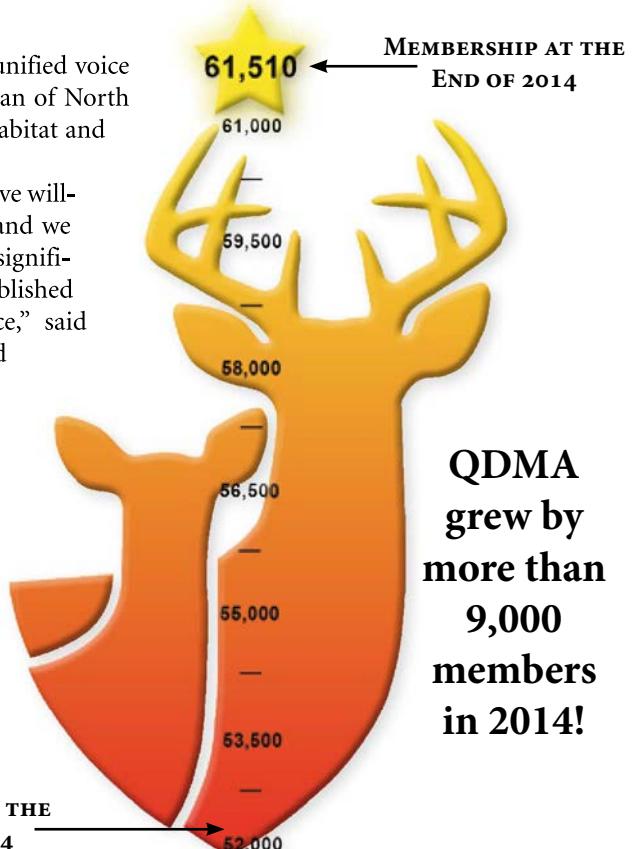
"QDMA is in the strongest position in the organization's history," said CEO Brian Murphy. "Membership is growing faster than at any time in our history, new volunteer Branches are on the rise, and we are having a greater positive impact on our deer-hunting heritage than ever before, both at the grassroots and national levels."

The success of the North American Whitetail Summit is just the latest achievement in a list of new accomplishments. Conceived and organized by QDMA, the first-ever Whitetail Summit attracted more than 200 leaders from throughout the whitetail industry who helped identify challenges facing the future of deer hunting and management. Many also called on QDMA to create and spearhead a national

deer coalition to serve as the unified voice of all deer hunters and guardian of North America's wild deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage.

"I am pleased to say we have willingly accepted this challenge and we unveiled the largest and most significant deer coalition ever established – the National Deer Alliance," said Murphy. "The QDMA staff and our volunteers are committed to growing membership and increasing mission success, and their hard work is paying off. We're on a steady and rapid incline, and we're fighting for deer hunters harder than ever."

MEMBERSHIP AT THE  
START OF 2014



**QDMA  
grew by  
more than  
9,000  
members  
in 2014!**

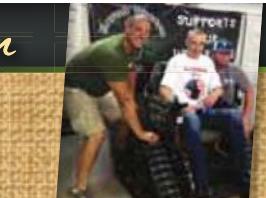
## QDMA - A COMMUNITY Sharing the Passion



### Your support enables QDMA to share our:

- ★ Educational Resources in Your Community
- ★ Commitment to Recruit and Mentor New Hunters
- ★ Powerful Voice on Whitetail Hunting and Management Issues
- ★ Resources to Fund Whitetail Research Projects

*Join us in making a difference  
in your community by becoming  
a member today!*



## QDMA's WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT COOPERATIVE SPECIALIST

In 2013, QDMA worked in partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation (DOC) to hire Brian Towe to engage landowners and establish wildlife management cooperatives (WMCs) in Missouri. This position is responsible for establishing new WMCs, servicing existing WMCs, assisting landowners with wildlife and habitat management programs, and making them aware of CRP and other NRCS and DOC conservation programs. This is proving to be a highly successful position, and below is a summary of the work accomplished in 2014.

In 2014, the development of new Cooperatives was slower in an effort to maintain momentum of the existing 37 Cooperatives encompassing 185,000 acres. The primary objective for the year was the maintenance of existing Cooperatives by ensuring they had the tools necessary to succeed. The success of any Cooperative is largely dependent upon the support and knowledge they gain during their infancy, which consisted of a vast majority of the Cooperatives throughout Missouri. After all, the goal of the Missouri program is not to simply develop Cooperatives but to develop them so they are sustainable.

"The effort to support Cooperatives was much more than simply helping to coordinate meetings or events," said Brian. "In addition to hosting a statewide Cooperative meeting, I worked to get discounted rates on certain products that benefited the efforts of Cooperative members. I also worked to develop a Facebook page to encourage interaction among Cooperatives around the state. While it is becoming increasingly difficult to find open dates on the calendar, I strive to make myself available to Cooperatives anytime they need me."

Efforts to develop new Cooperatives were not totally abandoned as two deer Cooperatives were developed encompassing 15,000 acres. Both Cooperatives were driven by landowners as opposed to conservation officials or Brian encouraging their development, a much more favorable scenario as the engine comes from within the group as opposed to someone externally. Both Cooperatives collected data during Missouri's 2014-15 deer seasons, a positive indicator of their motivation.

### Moving in the Right Direction

"One of the primary goals I have for the development of a Cooperative is to have a better understanding of localized issues and a means to address them," said Brian. "While Missouri is known for excellent hunting and having conservation minded hunters, many hunters base their actions upon their perceptions."

Perceptions can change from season-to-season or even day-to-day. By having established goals and objectives based upon available information, hunters are able to rely less upon perception and more on numbers. How are we getting this information? This past summer, nine Cooperatives performed a trail-camera survey during August. This marked the fourth year for one Cooperative. Two Cooperatives began the year with harvest and observation information from the 2013 hunting season. So, while many Southern Missouri hunters have a perception that deer numbers are low due to a lack of sightings, Cooperative members throughout Southern Missouri remain in good spirits as they have actual numbers to dismay the perceptions. They realized that acorn production and warm weather impacted deer observations more so than a population decline.

### Keeping it Fun

Cooperative meetings could be considered educational workshops as much as they are a meeting.

"During a traditional meeting we cover topics such as how to perform a trail-camera survey, review observation and harvest data collected, or we might work on a habitat project – all interesting to a deer nerd," said Brian. "However, there isn't a lot of excitement for the family looking at a graph highlighting the weights of antlerless deer."

To offset the traditional meeting, Cooperatives held events such as an antler scoring gathering. The goal for the Cooperative was to bring in folks who traditionally may not have attended a meeting. The Mayfield Holler Wildlife Cooperative held a "Cooperative Day" where there were educational components with talks on trapping, prescribed fire, and of course



deer, but the event also had manned stations for shooting archery and .22 rifles. A local wildlife rehabilitator brought a coyote that was as tame as any Labrador, allowing kids and adults to interact with one animal most deer managers see as a threat. A number of the Cooperatives held a pre-deer season meeting that was purely a social event. Traditional Cooperative meetings and workshops are vital to the forward momentum of goals. However, it's the interactive and fun events that allow Cooperatives to truly grow as members become better acquainted and more trusting of one another.

### A Look into the Crystal Ball

"Now that many of the existing Cooperatives have a solid foundation, I will once again be working to develop a number of new Cooperatives," said Brian. "My goal for the year is 10 new Cooperatives, and I'd like to begin efforts in areas where there currently are none. With more Cooperatives being developed, the amount of exposure should also increase, and with the added exposure I would expect added demand."

Efforts to develop new Cooperatives will not be at a cost to existing ones. Already underway are plans for a second statewide Cooperative meeting along with discounted products. In addition, the calendar is filling up with dates for workshops, meetings and family events to help support their efforts. Brian will also be looking to existing Cooperatives to aid efforts in the development of new Cooperatives. Ultimately, a successful Cooperative is one that can persist with very little effort from outside.

To get involved with an existing Cooperative or to start a new one in Missouri contact Brian by e-mail at [btowe@qdma.com](mailto:btowe@qdma.com) or by calling (573) 397-1664.

## QDMA CONVENED THE FIRST-EVER NORTH AMERICAN WHITETAIL SUMMIT IN 2014

QDMA's North American Whitetail Summit was the place where a new alliance of deer hunters was born. QDMA was called upon to turn ideas into action to protect deer hunting.

It was a message repeated by leaders from all sectors of the hunting community gathered for the Whitetail Summit: *Deer hunting needs a unified voice to secure and enhance its future, and QDMA is positioned to fill that need.*

"This event has revealed a clear need for a national umbrella organization to carry this work forward for deer hunting. QDMA, you're it," said Jay McAninch, President/CEO of the Archery Trade Association, in his comments at the Whitetail Summit press conference.

Held March 3-6 at Bass Pro Shops' Grandview Conference Center at Big Cedar Lodge in Branson, Missouri, the four-day event was attended by more than 200 people including representatives from

17 companies in the hunting industry, 21 state wildlife agencies and one provincial agency, 10 leading institutes of deer research, 18 major landowner groups including the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 15 hunting or conservation organizations, and deer hunters from more than 20 different states and one Canadian province. Groups and states represented are listed below.

In breakout sessions, these groups identified their top issues of concern, highlighted ways they could address those issues, and discussed steps the other stakeholder groups should take. The Top-10 most important issues identified by the assembled group are shown in the chart on the facing page.

"QDMA convened the Whitetail Summit to create dialogue between all these stakeholder groups regarding the future of white-tailed deer, and it was a huge success," said QDMA's CEO Brian

Murphy. "Beyond the issues, we kept hearing a call for a broad coalition to unify these voices and push for action. Many people pointed to us saying that we should be the architects of this new entity. We agree that it's a logical and natural step for QDMA to expand beyond our founding mission at this point in our history to do more for every deer hunter in North America. Creating a new and broader entity is really the only acceptable response to the message from the summit – and we're up to the challenge."

Throughout the Summit, concern for the whitetail resource and the future of deer hunting was evident.

"The path of the whitetail hangs in the balance and will be determined by you here at this symposium," said Will Primos, founder of Primos Hunting, in his comments at the opening of the Summit.

That idea was echoed by Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops and a

### Academia/Research:

Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute  
Clemson University  
Kansas State University Extension  
Mississippi State University  
South Dakota State University  
University of Georgia  
University of Tennessee  
USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services  
West Virginia University

### Non-Governmental Organizations:

Bluffland Whitetails Association  
Boone & Crockett Club  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
Farmers & Hunters Feeding the Hungry  
National Bowhunter Education Foundation  
National Rifle Association  
The Nature Conservancy  
Orion-The Hunter's Institute  
**Pope & Young Club**  
**QDMA**  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Tennessee Wildlife Federation  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance  
Whitetails Unlimited

### Deer Hunters:

Alabama  
Delaware  
Georgia  
Illinois  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Louisiana  
Maryland  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
Nebraska  
New Jersey  
New York  
North Carolina  
Ohio  
Pennsylvania  
South Carolina  
Texas  
Vermont  
Ontario, Canada

### Landownership/Management:

Callaway Gardens  
The Campbell Group  
Choctaw Wildlife & Parks Dept.  
Deep Fork Whitetail Management Assoc.  
Drumming Log Wildlife Management  
The Forestland Group  
GrowingDeer.TV  
Lucky Star Ranch  
The Noble Foundation  
NorthCountry Whitetails  
**Plum Creek**  
**Rayonier Inc.**  
**Resource Management Services LLC**  
**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**USDA-Forest Service**  
W.C. Bradley Farms  
**The Westervelt Co.**  
Weyerhaeuser Co.

### Hunting Industry:

**Archery Trade Association**  
**Bass Pro Shops**  
Big Game Logic LLC  
**Bushnell Outdoor Products**  
**Cabela's**  
Federal Premium Ammunition  
**Mossy Oak**  
**National Shooting Sports Foundation**  
**Outdoor Underwriters**  
Pape's Inc.  
Primos Hunting  
Redneck Blinds  
Responsive Management  
Sitka Gear  
Tink's  
**Trophy Rock**  
Whitetail Properties

### Wildlife Agencies:

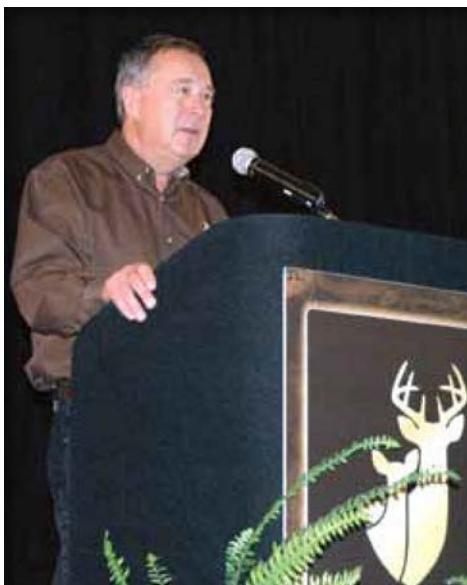
Alabama DWFF  
**Florida FWCC**  
**Georgia DNR-WRD**  
Illinois DNR  
Indiana DNR  
Kentucky DFWR  
**Louisiana DWF**  
Michigan DNR  
Minnesota DNR  
Mississippi DWFP  
**Missouri DC**  
Nebraska GPC  
North Carolina WRC  
Ohio DW  
Oklahoma DWC  
Ontario MNR, Canada  
South Carolina DNR  
**Texas P&W**  
**Virginia DGF**  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin DNR

### Media:

Big Deer TV  
Bowhunter  
Driftwood Outdoors  
Field & Stream  
Green Bay Press-Gazette  
Intermedia Outdoors  
**Outdoor Hub**  
Outdoor Life  
OutdoorFreaks.net  
Patton's Outdoors  
Peterson's Outdoors  
Petersen's Bowhunting  
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review  
Realtree.com  
Wildlife Trends Journal

**Note:** Groups listed in red type participated as a sponsor or supporter of the Whitetail Summit. QDMA appreciates the participation of all the groups listed here, and especially the sponsors and partners whose financial support made the event possible.





Johnny Morris (left), founder of Bass Pro Shops, welcomed Whitetail Summit attendees to Big Cedar Lodge and applauded the diversity of groups represented, including some groups that normally view each other as business competitors. "There is no competition in conservation," he said.

presenting sponsor of the event, who said organizations that often view themselves as competitors share a common need to protect white-tailed deer.

"There is no competition in conservation," Morris said to the group.

The urgency and necessity of the Whitetail Summit was also emphasized

by U.S. Congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, former Vice Presidential candidate and an enthusiastic deer hunter who spoke to attendees through a video message, and also by Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, who was a keynote speaker.

"The cooperative energy generated at

the Summit was impressive, but it means nothing if we fail to turn this opportunity into action," said Murphy. "The stakeholders spoke of their confidence in QDMA's ability to keep the momentum going. With that kind of support, and with the broader support of the deer-hunting world, we will continue to bring hunters together to ensure a strong future for our tradition."

As a result of the first North American Summit, QDMA, along with Whitetails Unlimited and the Mule Deer Foundation, created the National Deer Alliance (NDA). A follow-up to the Whitetail Summit, the NDA's North American Deer Summit, will be held May 6-8 in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information about the Summit, see page 23. For more information about the NDA, see page 27.

## Top 10 Issues Impacting Deer Hunting and Management Identified by 2014 Whitetail Summit Attendees

0 Not An Issue  Big Issue 5

Hunter Recruitment & Retention: 4.27

Education & Outreach to Support Current and Potential Hunters: 4.24

Hunting Land Access: 4.11

Political Influences on Deer Hunting & Management: 4.06

Captive Deer Industry: 3.99

Deer Diseases: 3.94

Public Concern for Deer Population Levels, Low or High: 3.75

Landscape Change/Habitat Loss: 3.71

Connecting Hunters with Accurate Scientific Information: 3.69

Impacts of Predators, Feral Hogs, Invasive Species: 3.67



The ranking above was determined by key-pad voting by the complete group of attendees. After brainstorming to generate suggested issues, each suggestion was ranked by the audience using electronic keypads (left), producing the top-10 ranking seen above. The stakeholder groups then went into separate sessions and refined their own ranking of issues before discussing unique ways to tackle those issues.



Will Primos was one of several keynote speakers invited to the Summit, but he also contributed ideas during open discussion and participated in the Hunting Industry breakout group.

## QDMA WEBSITE RESOURCES

In the world of deer hunting, knowledge is king. As an addendum to other portions of this year's *Whitetail Report*, our flagship magazine *Quality Whitetails*, educational material from The Shed, and other benefits QDMA offers its members and non-members alike, below is just an example of the quality free content found on QDMA.com. Visit our website to learn about managing deer, and if you're not a member join today to receive access to other educational resources while at the same time helping to ensure the future of deer hunting!

The QDMA website homepage features a navigation bar with links to JOIN TODAY, Bambi QDMA, and various sections: WHITETAIL BIOLOGY, QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT, HABITAT IMPROVEMENT, HERD MANAGEMENT, HEAD MONITORING, DEER HUNTING, and FOOD PLOTS. Below the navigation is a main content area with a large image of a buck and a doe. A banner for "QDMA's Guide to the Whitetail Rut" is displayed, along with links for "RUT GUIDE" and "DEER FAQ". The main content area is divided into several sections: WHITETAIL BIOLOGY, QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT, HABITAT IMPROVEMENT, HERD MANAGEMENT, HEAD MONITORING, and DEER HUNTING. Each section contains a thumbnail image and a brief description.

### WHITETAIL BIOLOGY

- **10 Weird Parasites That Live Inside Deer** (by Lindsay Thomas Jr.): Whitetails are virtual school buses for parasites. They are packed from nose to tail with mucus-covered life forms. Here the author covers 10 of the creepiest crawlies you may find on, or in, a deer next time you're field-dressing one. We hope you have a strong stomach; so keep reading, if you dare, because the whitetail is an ecosystem unto itself.

### QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT

- **The Reality of Doe: Buck Ratios** (by Kip Adams): Deer sex ratios are a common topic of conversation among whitetail hunters. Other than deer density, few subjects ignite controversy as quickly as a discussion of the number of does per buck in any given parcel of woods. There are many misunderstandings regarding sex ratios. In this piece the author defines what they are, how they are measured, and what they mean to your QDM program.

### HABITAT MANAGEMENT

- **7 Steps to Stronger Acorn Production** (by Matt Ross): The key to improving acorn production in oaks begins with identifying the best acorn-producing trees where you hunt, followed by a strategically-planned timber harvest. In this two part series, the author explains how you will be able to encourage more consistent, abundant acorn crops from your oak stands — and that means better deer habitat, nutrition and hunting opportunities!

### HERD MANAGEMENT

- **Coyote Control: When Is It The Right Option?** (by Drs. Will Gulsby and Karl V. Miller): Given our current knowledge of coyote predation on deer, when is coyote control justified? The answer depends on where your current management program is in relation to the Four Cornerstones of QDM. This piece breaks all this information down in a easy-to-read manner.

*Find these and many  
more articles at  
QDMA.com!*

### HERD MONITORING

- **7 Ways to Check a Deer Herd's Health** (by QDMA Staff): QDM can help you produce healthier deer, more fawns, heavier deer body weights, more mature bucks, more rut activity, larger antlers, and other benefits. To achieve these goals, you need to see where the herd has come from and whether it's on course to get where you want it to go. Here are seven simple but important types of information you can collect during the hunting season to help you achieve better deer and better deer hunting.

### DEER HUNTING

- **How Fast Can a Stand "Recover" From Hunting Pressure?** (by Clint McCoy): It's simple: Deer respond negatively to hunting pressure. Their avoidance of heavily hunted areas is undeniable, as the authors' graduate-level research documented. But exactly how long does it take for a specific stand site to "recover" from a hunter's presence? We now have an idea. Read this great article to find out.

### FOOD PLOTS

- **The Story Behind the Most Awesome Food Plot Ever** (by Lindsay Thomas Jr.): There are dedicated QDMA members who go all out to help promote the QDMA mission and grow our organization. And then there's Steve Elmy. Steve and his family grew a King Kong-sized QDMA logo in one of their 2014 food plots to help promote our organization...apparently to passing astronauts. Read on to see how they did it!

## THE RACK PACK – QDMA's YOUTH PROGRAM

### SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Another deer season is behind us, and we hope yours was filled with productive hunts and precious memories. We also hope you took some time to introduce hunting to the next generation. The Rack Pack would like to ask every deer hunter to think about the role they can play in growing youth involvement in your community. Can you commit to signing up a new member, helping organize a youth hunt, championing a food plot competition or sponsoring a classroom? With your help, we can accomplish our goal of ensuring the future of deer hunting for generations to come.



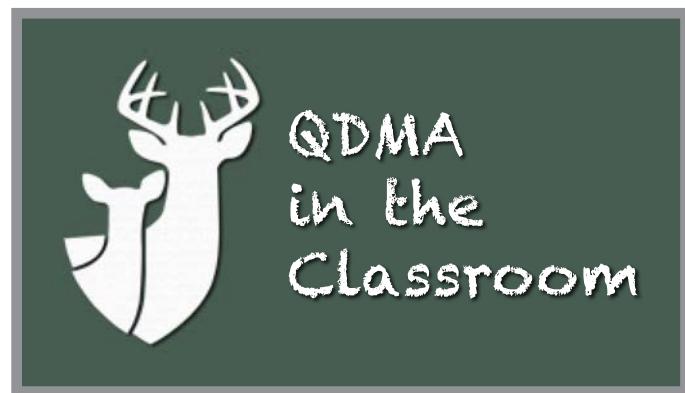
### QDMA TEAMS WITH 4-H ON FOOD PLOT PROJECT

Currently only in South Carolina, QDMA has teamed up with Clemson Extension, Wannamaker Wildlife Seed Co. and the 4-H to create the South Carolina 4-H Food Plot Project. Over 100 youth from the state helped plant and maintain a quarter-acre food plot, kept a record book, and in the end, were judged on their project. We would like to replicate this project in more states. E-mail [hforester@qdma.com](mailto:hforester@qdma.com) if you're interested in helping your state get started!



### MILITARY YOUTH HUNTS

Every year, 50 youth from Kentucky hit the woods on a deer hunt hosted by the Derby City, Kentucky Heartland, Barren River and Owensboro Branches of QDMA (see page 49). Through a partnership with the National Guard State Family Program and many generous donors, the hunt has always been a major success. The National Guard is interested in expanding this program into more states. If interested, please e-mail [hforester@qdma.com](mailto:hforester@qdma.com).



### QDMA IN THE CLASSROOM

Don't you wish you learned about deer biology and management in school? Help us properly educate the next generation of deer stewards by spreading the word or sponsoring a local classroom today. Learn more about the program by going online to [QDMA.com](http://QDMA.com) and looking for the "QDMA in the Classroom" web page under the Rack Pack menu.



Membership includes a Rack Pack Grunt Call, publication of choice\*, decals, coupons to QDMA's store *The Shed*, and personalized member card. Visit the Rack Pack website to learn more about local events, hunts and more.



MORE  
DEER  
KNOWLEDGE

MORE  
HUNTING  
SUCCESS

MORE FRIENDS  
AND FUN!

[www.rackpack.qdma.com](http://www.rackpack.qdma.com)

## THEIR STORY: QDMA MEMBER JASON ASHE, BLOOMFIELD, NEW YORK

Jason is a QDMA member and board member of QDMA's Greater Rochester Southern Tier Branch in New York.

### How long have you practiced QDM?

I've been doing it since 2005 on our 14 acres in Allegany County and on our 125-acre farm in western New York. My father and I decided to try QDM after visiting Craig and Neil Dougherty's property and seeing what they had accomplished.

### Have there been any particular obstacles?

Not really. It's been an eye-opener to see what we could achieve with a little sweat equity. We don't even put antler restrictions on any of our family or guests, we just have fun, hunt hard, and get youth involved every chance we get, even if it is just rock picking!

### Has QDM worked?

I have been blessed the last three years to kill some amazing whitetails and see Laura, my wife, kill some of her best bucks. QDM has brought Laura and I to a new level of hunting. It has turned us into whitetail fanatics 24-7, 365. We are always spending time in the woods, checking trail-cameras, hanging tree stands, and enjoying the benefits of a full freezer of venison. We have shared our best hunts together through QDM.

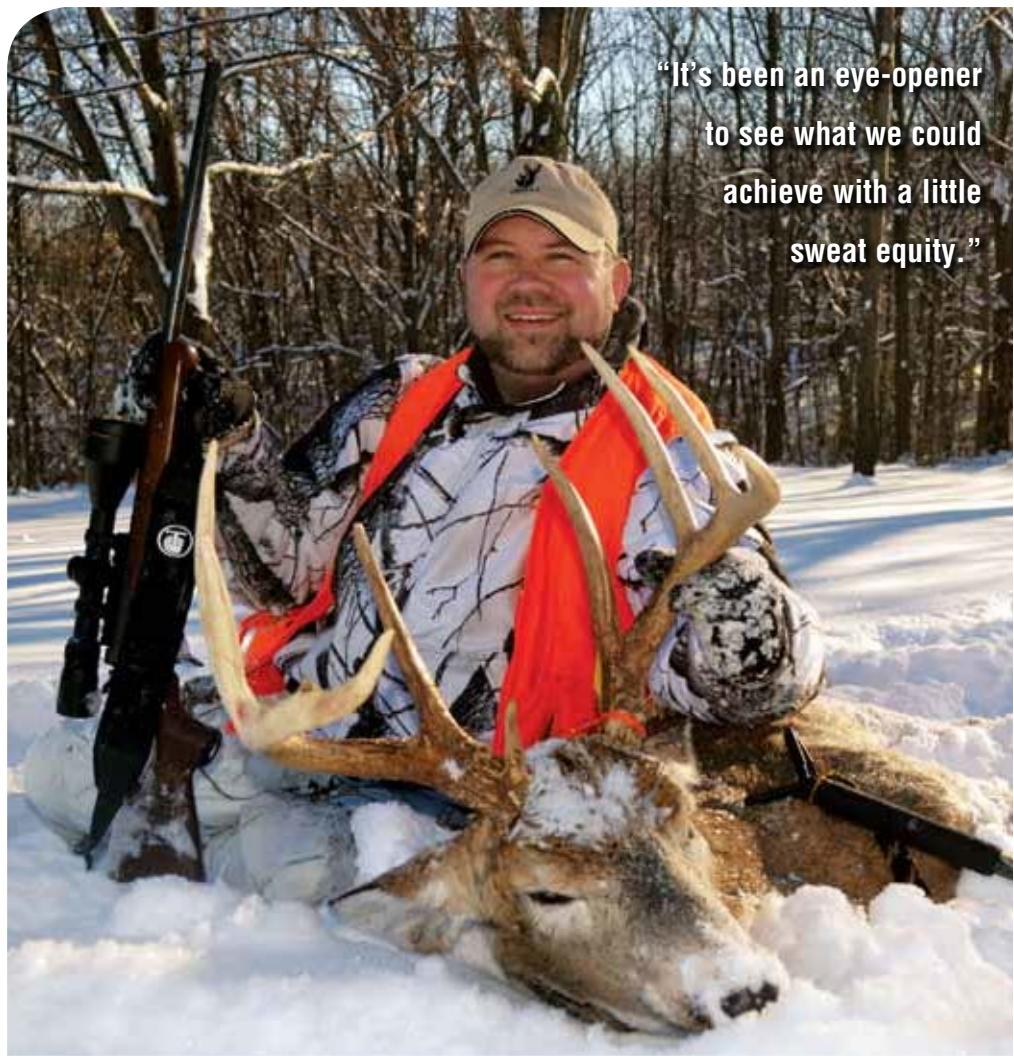
### What made you decide to volunteer with the local QDMA Branch?

QDM has become a lifestyle for us, and being involved with the Branch allows me to teach others what can be accomplished and how much enjoyment you can find. It's not just about big bucks – it's a year-round experience, it's enjoying great deer hunting moments with family, seeing my wife harvest something she is proud of. I enjoy making those moments happen for youth, friends, anyone who wants to try deer hunting. When QDM is presented in a non-threatening way, they realize it benefits whitetails and people.

### So, about the photo: Nice brow tines! What's the story?

On November 27, I knew deer would move and feed since we had been blasted with 14 inches of snow and extreme cold for the previous five days. The evening was going great and I saw several young bucks, some does and seven gobblers feeding in a cut soybean field. Then the wind shifted, blowing all the deer out of the field, and I had to relocate to another cut bean field. Around 4:15, nine does fed out into the field about 200 yards away, and shortly after a 2½-year-old 8-point came into the field and started checking all the does in the field. Then, the 8-point started staring over his shoulder back toward the creekbed, where all the deer had come from. I saw a big-bodied buck step into the field and focus on the does.

He presented me a shot at 180 yards, and I touched off my .270 TC Encore. The field cleared except for the big buck – he just stood with head drooped and ears flat, so I fired a second shot and he bolted. I went back home and got Laura, and she found the buck 60 yards from where I'd shot him. He scores in the 140s and dressed out at 180 pounds, but what is most impressive is that he lived on that farm for 5½ years without us ever knowing he existed! Our neighbor has a 2010 photo of him at 2½ about 1 mile away, you can't mistake those brow-tines. A lot of times bucks will slip up when it's late season and they need to feed, and he did. I have to give credit to Laura because being together when we found that buck was a huge part of the story for me. She also took a great photo of me with the buck!



**"It's been an eye-opener to see what we could achieve with a little sweat equity."**

## THEIR STORY: QDMA MEMBERS MICHAEL AND JULIE JOY, PORT HOPE, MICHIGAN

Michael and Julie Joy are QDMA members and officers in Michigan's Thumb Area Branch (Julie is treasurer and Michael is a Branch Board member).

### How long have you practiced QDM?

**Julie:** I've been a QDMA member since 2011, and until this year I had only harvested does and passed on several bucks. Michael has been doing it since he became a QDMA member in 2007. He decided he was tired of harvesting small bucks and really wanted to see some bigger ones. There was only one way to do that, and that was by passing yearling bucks and spreading the word. He didn't shoot a buck for six seasons, until he killed two in 2013.

### What benefits have been your favorites?

The greatest benefit is that you never stop learning about deer and habitat management. There have been challenges, like getting others on board with QDM, and also overcoming your own thoughts of "If I don't shoot it, the neighbor will." But through QDMA Branch events we've met other people in the area who share the same interests and who gave us encouragement, and we've learned lots of valuable information from the magazine. We also met another QDMA member, Mark Lemke at Practical Whitetail Strategies, and he helped us with a habitat management plan for our 20 acres. All of this really helped us overcome the challenges.

### We hear that two hunters killed three bucks out of one stand. What's the story?

Friday morning, November 15, was opening day, and Michael headed out to hunt a new blind for the first time. It was located near one edge of our 20-acre property to try to take advantage of deer being pushed by opening day hunting pressure on surrounding properties. Just after daybreak, he spotted a buck coming out of the thicket. He waited for him to move toward a clear opening and took a shot at 40 yards with his muzzleloader. He watched the buck run hard, but he felt he had made a good shot, so he waited to give the buck time to expire. At that point, Michael thought he had shot a tall-tined buck

he had seen while bowhunting the night before. But a short time later he looked up and there was the tall-tined buck! This completely confused him because he could have sworn he already shot that particular buck. Regardless, he was now certain that this was the buck he had seen, and he took a shot at 40 yards. Buck fever times two!

When it finally came time to track these deer and solve the mystery, he found them both within 20 yards of each other. The first deer tumbled hard and had broken its antler. The beam snapped

boring properties had already made some nice harvests. I didn't have much confidence that I would see a buck out of the same blind, but we went there anyway.

As the sun started coming up, a couple groups of does made their way into a grassy field and some into a patch of corn. Within a couple minutes, we noticed a 4-pointer chasing one of the does out of the corn. Shortly after, a spike chased a doe. Minutes later, I noticed movement in a small bunch of trees just 20 yards away from the corn and told Michael to check it out with the binoculars. Sure enough, it



between the base and the brow tine, and the antler was stuck in the ground about 8 yards away from where the deer was lying (*Editor's Note: this is the buck on the left in the photo, but the antler has been zip-tied in place for the picture*). Even though this deer wasn't the one he thought it was, it was still an impressive 8-point that dressed 164 pounds. Twenty yards away was the tall-tined buck that Michael originally thought he had seen at day break. Even though this deer's body wasn't quite as large as the other, its rack had more mass. Michael was ecstatic that he got two bucks considering it had been six years since he had harvested one!

By the next morning, lots of neigh-

was a buck! We waited for it to come into the grass field and chase the doe back into the corn. At that point, we had both only seen the deer from a side profile and it was hard to tell how wide it was or exactly how many points it had. Luckily, when he came out of the corn following the hot doe, he wasn't moving fast. I was able to evaluate him, make my decision to shoot, and then follow him until I was ready. I took the shot at 80 yards with my shotgun and watched him go down. I was beyond excited to get my first buck! He field-dressed 156 pounds.

It was official: the new blind was now "The Miracle Blind!"

## QDMA CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS



A 2014 Deer Steward Level I course was held in West Monroe, Louisiana, and featured a field trip to the Duck Commander/ Buck Commander warehouse as seen on the A&E reality TV show *Duck Dynasty*.

### Over 1,250 Deer Stewards and Counting!

QDMA's Deer Steward Certification program is a personal educational experience designed to offer landowners, hunters, and natural resource professionals an opportunity to learn from the nation's top experts about QDM. The first two Levels are courses, Level III is an application; all three need to be taken in succession. By taking Levels I and II, graduates are able to design and implement their personal comprehensive property-specific white-tailed deer management plan. Level III is an honor earned after giving back to the resource over a long period of time, rather than something you can learn in a course.

To date, well over 1,250 individuals have participated in the Deer Steward program, with 779 Level I, 361 Level II,

and 37 Level III graduates by the end of 2014, representing 44 states and the nation's capitol, four Canadian provinces, one U.S. Virgin Island and Australia. Since 2007, the QDMA has held 18 Level I classes and 14 Level II classes in the following states: Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

To learn more about the Deer Steward Certification program, or about registering for an upcoming course, visit [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com) and navigate to the Deer Steward Courses page under the "Advanced Ed" menu option.

### Online Deer Steward Courses

In the eighth year of the Deer Steward Certification program, QDMA's popular educational series continued to offer the option to take the first Level on-line, making it as convenient and affordable as it's ever been, and boy was it popular. After three years of availability, nearly 500 people have registered to participate in the Level I course from the comfort of their home or office, matching or slightly exceeding the inaugural year's volume of participants for the second year in a row.

The good news is that it never sells out! All that is required is a high-speed internet connection (and the Mozilla Firefox web browser) and you can enroll in the Level I class online. Once registered, attendees gain access to a digital recording of one of

## QDMA NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND KENTUCKY PROVING GROUNDS AMONG 2014 DEER STEWARD LOCATIONS



### Level 1

May 29 - June 1

Bogart, Ga. – QDMA National Headquarters  
University of Georgia Deer Lab  
Research Facility Field Trip

### Level 2

June 26-29

Cadiz, Ky.  
Kentucky Proving  
Grounds

August 21-24

Eden, N.C.  
Willow Oaks  
Plantation

For more information, visit [QDMA.com](http://QDMA.com) or contact  
QDMA Certification Programs Manager Matt Ross by  
e-mail at [mross@qdma.com](mailto:mross@qdma.com) or by calling (518) 280-3714.

our previous Deer Steward Level I courses (filmed in front of a live audience at Clemson University) and will have up to 180 days to complete the series of six sessions (approximately 16 one-hour topics) at their own pace. Speakers include Kip Adams, Dr. David Guynn, Joe Hamilton, Dr. Craig Harper, Dr. Karl V. Miller, Brian Murphy, Matt Ross and Dr. Grant Woods.

Just like the in-person classes, registrants must pass an exam to graduate, and Continuing Forestry Education (CFEs) credits from the Society of American Foresters are available. Graduates of online Deer Steward will be eligible to take one of the in-person Level II courses upon completion.

For additional details, visit [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com) and navigate to the Deer Steward Online page under the "Advanced Ed" menu option.

Those who choose to enroll in the on-line version of Deer Steward Level I can do so at \$200 for non-members, \$175 for QDMA members, and \$150 for Life and Sponsor members (on-line fees increase \$50 with CFEs). This course is free for active military members in combat zones.



### Land Certification Program Update

In 2011, QDMA launched its new Land Certification Program (LCP). The LCP was created in response to numerous member and landowner requests. Collectively, these individuals sought a means to: 1) determine if the property they owned, leased or managed met a baseline QDM standard; 2) receive specific management recommendations on their hunting property from qualified QDM professionals; and 3) promote QDM in their area by displaying a sign that recognizes their efforts.

The LCP was developed to recog-

nize the accomplishments of landowners and sportsmen implementing the Four Cornerstones of QDM throughout North America, as well as those committed to ethics, conservation and biodiversity through land stewardship. The LCP will also encourage management practices on participating lands that will enhance deer and other wildlife species, habitat conditions, and hunting experiences by providing incentives and/or assistance.

The LCP is a multi-level, voluntary process which evaluates one or more prop-

erties against an established list of standards. Three categories of achievement are outlined in the program, including Pledged Lands, Certified Lands and Legacy Lands. Criteria are established for each level of achievement.

Numerous half-day training courses to qualify LCP property inspectors were also conducted over the last four years in the states of Georgia, Louisiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, South Carolina, and in New Brunswick, Canada. Six (Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Minnesota, New York, and South Carolina) have been held in cooperation with American Tree Farm System inspector trainings, and one of those was at the Association of Consulting Foresters National Convention in 2014. To date, nearly 250 LCP inspectors are now available to QDMA members, and can be found online at [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com) by navigating to the Land Certification page under the "Advanced Ed" menu option.

In addition to the Land Certification website, more information can be obtained by contacting QDMA's Certification Program Manager, Matt Ross by email at [mross@qdma.com](mailto:mross@qdma.com) or by calling (518) 280-3714.



QDMA Certification Programs Manager Matt Ross goes over the inspection process at a Land Certification Program inspector training session at QDMA National Headquarters.

## 2013 HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

QDMA would like to thank and recognize those who were generous donors to QDMA in the 2013 calendar year (the most recent year available as a complete list for this report). Through financial support beyond membership and participation in other programs, these donors are securing QDMA's mission: *To ensure the future of the white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage.*

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### Donor Recognition Categories

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**QDMA PATRON** \$100-\$249

Please consider becoming a donor by contributing to QDMA. Your support is tax-deductible and will be greatly appreciated and used wisely to further our mission. Contact Joe Hamilton, QDMA Founder & Senior Advisor ([jhamilton@qdma.com](mailto:jhamilton@qdma.com) or **843-844-8610**), to learn about several options for Planned Giving.

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## HOW TO DONATE TO QDMA



### A VOICE FROM THE DEER WOODS

By Joe Hamilton

In early January 2014, I received a telephone call from an elderly gentleman in Michigan. His voice was weak, his words didn't come easily, yet he was deliberate with his message. He announced, "I have checked on your organization through the website and was impressed by how tight a ship you guys run with administrative costs in the single digits." He also mentioned that he was impressed by the array of educational materials produced for our members and he was interested in seeing a copy of our *Quality Whitetails* magazine as well as a copy of the annual *Whitetail Report*.

"You see, I have been a sportsman all of my life and I want to include the QDMA in my will so I can give back through a deserving organization for the excitement and enjoyment I have received as a long-time deer hunter," he proudly exclaimed. "I'm not sure just how much the QDMA will receive, but it should be at least \$10,000, and I would like for my donation to be spent on activities and programs in Michigan."

I thanked him for his generosity and explained that QDMA was very active in his home state of Michigan. I told him that Michigan had been among the top five states in membership for many years.

He was particularly proud that Michigan has the most QDM Cooperatives of any other state. We talked about the Branch activities that involved hunts for youth, the mobility impaired, and Wounded Warriors. When I mentioned the venison donation programs supported by local Branches, he commented that this was definitely the kind of activity he wanted to support as a means of "giving back." His final comment was, "I enjoyed our conversation, and I'm comfortable with the decision to include the QDMA in my will."

The following day I contacted our National Headquarters and arranged for him to receive a gift membership in the QDMA. Also, six issues of the *Quality Whitetails* magazine and the two most recent *Whitetail Reports* were mailed to his home address in Michigan. He got his wish to "...put his hands on" one of our magazines and an annual report.

On March 10, 2014, Mr. Daniel A. Peroni passed away in Commerce Township, Michigan, at the age of 83. Thirty photos posted in a gallery in his obituary (including the one shown here) revealed that Dan Peroni served in the armed forces, worked for Western Union, caught salmon and smallmouth bass, and was successful in taking several wild turkeys, an elk, and numerous whitetails – several whitetails were shot with a recurve bow.

I regret that I learned more about Mr. Peroni through his obituary than

from our single telephone conversation. According to comments of his coworkers, Mr. Dan was quite a raconteur. We missed a great opportunity to share some of his many hunting experiences with our members, but we can grant his wish to enhance QDMA activities in his beloved Michigan with his generous financial support. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the late Daniel A. Peroni, a long-lasting voice from the deer woods.

Robert Louis Stevenson penned a poem that seems fitting for a sportsman of Mr. Dan's stature.

#### Epitaph

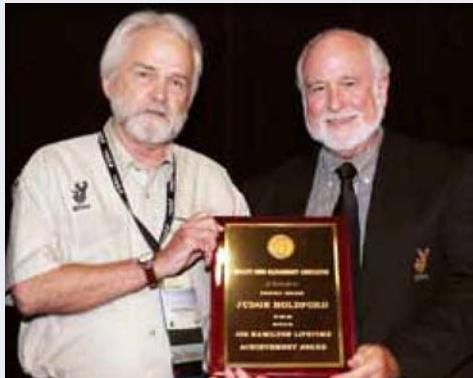
*Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie.  
Glad did I live and glad did I die  
And I lay me down with a will.*

*This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he longs to be.  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

We have made it as easy as possible for you to support QDMA. Below are suggested ways to get more involved in the organization and methods of providing financial support. Remember, through a concerted effort among our members the QDMA will become better equipped to fulfill its mission: To ensure the future of the white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage.

- Make a donation to QDMA in memory or honor of a relative, close friend, or fellow QDMA member.
- Become a Life Member of QDMA.
- Be an active Branch member by attending all activities.
- Attend our next National Convention (May 8-9, 2015, in Louisville, Ky.).
- Attend QDMA's Deer Steward Certification courses.
- Join QDMA's Land Certification Program.
- Provide gift memberships to family, fellow hunters and neighbors.
- Involve your children or grandchildren in the "Rack Pack" Program.
- Include QDMA in your will, or participate in a variety of other Planned Giving categories.
- **800-209-3337** - Call our toll-free number to donate by credit card.
- **www.QDMA.com** Visit our website to donate through PayPal.
- Send a personal check to our National Headquarters:  
P.O. Box 160, Bogart, GA, 30622
- Contact Joe Hamilton, QDMA Founder & Senior Advisor:  
jhamilton@qdma.com

## 2014 QDMA CONSERVATION & BRANCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



An integral participant in QDMA activities since the organization's beginnings, Judge Holdford (left) of North Carolina was named the recipient of the **Joe Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award**. A Life Member and the 2008 recipient of QDMA's Ambassador Award, Judge strives to ensure that QDMA flourishes through countless donations and his work on numerous events and youth education.



QDMA's **Ambassador Award** recognizes an individual's commitment to QDMA through numerous avenues of volunteerism over an extended period at local, state and national levels. This award is not presented annually, and this year's recipient, Chip West of Delaware, is just the third person to earn the honor of being called a QDMA Ambassador. Chip is pictured here with his wife Debbie.



The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation was named the **Agency of the Year**. The Department's Big Game Biologist Erik Bartholomew (right) accepted the award on behalf of the agency, which has promoted appropriate doe harvest with the slogan, "Hunters in the Know, Take a Doe!" In 2013, they updated that slogan to "Hunters in the Know, Let Young Bucks Grow" to promote voluntary trigger management.



Vic Blanchard of Louisiana was named the **AI Brothers Deer Manager of the Year (professional)**. Vic (right) is the Timber and Wildlife Manager for A. Wilbert's Sons timber company, where he manages 100,000 acres in Louisiana and Mississippi. Under his direction and supervision over 1.5 million trees have been planted and are monitored through a Certified Forest Inventory plot program.



Paul Knox of Iowa, shown here speaking at a past QDMA Convention, earned our **AI Brothers Deer Manager of the Year Award (non-professional)** for his tireless and selfless efforts to share his knowledge of deer habitat improvement with others. Sadly, Paul passed away in December of 2014 after fighting ALS. Paul will long be remembered by countless people who enjoy better hunting today because of his advice and guidance.



Mark Kenyon (right) of Michigan was the recipient of the **Signpost Communicator of the Year Award**. Mark, a QDMA Deer Steward, is the founder and full-time managing editor of the deer hunting blog Wired to Hunt, where he has promoted QDMA and continually referred web traffic to QDMA.com in support of the organization.



Michael Goyne of Michigan was named the recipient of the **Hunting Heritage Award**, which recognizes individuals for their lifetime contributions to deer, deer hunters, deer research and deer management. A Level II Deer Steward, Michael has been involved with QDMA for many years and now serves as the president of the Michigan State Advisory Council.



The recipient of the **Hunting Heritage Award** in the corporate category was the W.C. Bradley Co., which is committed to preserving and protecting our rich hunting heritage and has been a staunch supporter of QDMA. Dan Fletcher (right) accepted the award on behalf of the W.C. Bradley Co. from QDMA Board of Directors Chairman Louis P. Batson III.



Eddie Monts (right) of South Carolina was named the **Wildlife Officer of the Year**. Eddie has served the sportsmen of the Palmetto State working with the DNR for over 28 years, and he has a passion for introducing youth to the outdoors. He serves as a Take One, Make One Coordinator in upstate South Carolina, is active in 4-H youth programs and is the Rack Pack chairman for the Lakelands Branch.



Grace Adkins (left) of North Carolina was named the recipient of the **Rack Pack Four-Point Award**, which recognizes outstanding service and leadership to youth in the spirit of the QDMA mission, future generations and our hunting heritage. Grace, a Rack Pack field staff member and Rack Pack Coordinator for the Cape Fear River Branch, was named the 2013 North Carolina Youth Conservationist of the Year.



Mike Edwards (left) of the Greater Rochester Southern Tier Branch was named the **Branch President of the Year**. This award recognizes the volunteer leader who demonstrates the daily vision, dedication and attitude it demands to be a successful Branch president. Mike has led the Branch at educational and fundraising events, in forming the New York State Advisory Council and hosting the Northeast Leadership Conference.



Darren Boudreaux, president of the Louisiana State Advisory Council, was named the **Volunteer of the Year**. The award was presented to Darren (right) by 2013 Volunteer of the Year Rick Watts. Darren, who is also active in the Central Louisiana and South Louisiana Branches, is a Life Member, a Level III Deer Steward and a Land Certification Program Inspector.



The Prairie to Woods Whitetails Branch of Minnesota was named the **Branch of the Year**. Over the past year, the Branch has many accomplishments that include designing and purchasing a \$9,000 mobile, handicap accessible hunting blind for local disabled hunters, sponsoring and participating in several more educational seminars, youth events and deer management projects. Tom Kalsbeck, Bruce Lien & North Central Volunteer of the Year Phil Goeden accepted the award.



The Bayou Branch of Louisiana earned the **Membership Branch of the Year** award, which goes to the Branch that recruits the most new QDMA members in the past year. The Bayou Branch recruited a total of 426 QDMA members. QDMA Membership Manager Tori Andrews (left) presented the award to Lyndsey Scallan and Branch vice president Jonathan Scallan.



The **Event of the Year** was the East Central Ohio Field Day. The Branch, led by president Curt Yoder, got the Ohio Division of Wildlife involved in the field day, which was attended by more than 150 people.



The Northern Jack Pine Branch of Michigan was named the **New Branch of the Year**. The Branch's many accomplishments over its first year included a very successful first banquet, bringing in over 100 memberships, hosting field days and providing support for the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP).



For the second-straight year, the Mid-Carolina Branch of South Carolina earned the **Sponsor Membership Branch of the Year** award, which goes to the Branch that recruits the most new QDMA Sponsor Members in the past year. The Mid-Carolina Branch netted 52 Sponsor Memberships. Alan Brock and Joel Wilson are shown here accepting the award in 2012.

## CONTACT A QDMA BRANCH NEAR YOU

Branch Name	Town	State	Branch Contact	Phone	E-mail
Auburn University Toomer's Branch	Auburn	Alabama	CJ Glassey	(205) 405-1640	cjg0017@auburn.edu
Gulf Coast Branch	McIntosh	Alabama	Russ Sims	(601) 572-7711	rsims3006@gmail.com
Lake Martin Branch	Opelika	Alabama	Michael Heatherly	(256) 338-4718	heatherly.michael@gmail.com
Delta Doptine Branch	Lake Village	Arkansas	Joey Williamson	(870) 265-1206	sales@southernaquaculturesupply.com
Northeast Arkansas Branch	Trumann	Arkansas	David Box	(870) 926-8713	david.h.box@gmail.com
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