

2015-16 VILLAGE OF TRUMANSBURG DEER MANAGEMENT REPORT

5 August 2016

PREPARED BY BERND BLOSSEY

The second year of the deer management program in the Village of Trumansburg began in September 2015 and continued through the end of March 2016. This report is based on data provided by participants, who are asked to report their observations, fate of every arrow shot, and disposal of venison using a secure website.

Number of shooting locations: 11, which were hunted with very variable pressure (Table 1) and variable success. Due to lack of participation and erratic deer movement over the past winter, many locations saw greatly reduced pressure.

Number of participants: 9; individuals made between 3 and 26 outings (total 105; total number of trips the previous year was 122). Of our participants 4 did not shoot a deer, one shot 1, one shot 6, one 9, and one 11 deer.

Total number of deer killed: Participants saw a total of 359 deer while in their stands (Table 2) and 27 deer (16 males, 12 females; 14 adults and 13 fawns) were shot (see Table 2 for monthly details and Table 1 for location details).

Table 1: Stand location, occupancy by a participant and number of deer shot during the 2015-16 deer nuisance management in the Village of Trumansburg, and planted red oak seedling mortality (%) at select location.

Location	2015-16		Oak mortality (%)
	Times occupied	Number of deer shot	
Carubia	3	0	100
Cassetti	4	1	70
Burlew	17	1	
Darfler	26	5	75
Ferretti	3	0	
Geiger	15	7	85
Groves	5	2	
Merrimann	6	1	
Millspough	3	0	
Page	19	10	
Petrovic	4	0	
Mervin*			50

*The Mervin location is not a shooting location and just outside the village boundaries

Deer use: Venison was donated to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, village landowners and hunter consumption.

Average distance of deer travel after lethal hit: 52 yards, range 0-140 (in the previous season it was 50 yards, range 0-150, so extremely similar).

Hunter effort: The greatly reduced number of deer in the village made taking deer more difficult and the success rate varied through the season. Not unexpectedly the effort to shot a deer increased from 2-3 hours in the previous season to 9.5 hours in the 2015 - 2016 nuisance period.

Number of deer hit but not recovered: Of the 33 deer that were hit by an arrow, we lost 5 (15.2%), several of which appeared to have very minor wounds.

Problems encountered: We encountered no problems during our management activities, other than slow deer movement and lack of enthusiasm of participants.

Table 2. Participant effort (hours in stand), deer observations and deer shot at locations between September 2015 and March 2016.

Month	2015-2016		
	Hours in Stand	# Deer seen	Deer Shot
September	16	29	4
October	73	85	8
November	58	69	6
December	16	44	3
January	38	66	4
February	27	32	0
March	35	34	2
Total	263	359	27

Recommendations: The first management period in 2014-15 was a large success in terms of number of deer killed and the distribution of venison to those in need through the Foodbank of the Southern Tier and local churches. The Deer Oversight Committee recommended a continuation of the program, which was approved by The Village Board. Furthermore, public support in the village for the ongoing deer management activities, as voiced by residents during public meetings in January 2015 and 2016 remains high and satisfaction with program management is high.

Aerial surveys in April 2015 showed that a significant deer herd remained in and in the vicinity of the Village of Trumansburg. Furthermore, oak seedling mortality of individuals planted at 4 locations in the village and one just outside of village boundaries was catastrophically high during a 12-month growing period from June 2015 to June 2016 (50-100%, Table 1). Clearly, deer impact reduction, the goal of the deer management program, has not been achieved, despite a significant reduction in the deer herd.

Not surprisingly, efforts in the second season were more difficult due to reduced deer numbers, although >350 deer (not necessarily different individuals) were observed by participants during the operational period 2015-16. Our efforts were further complicated by unpredictable deer movements most likely a result of El Niño influenced weather patterns over the winter. Observations and accounts by village residents indicate that deer are still in high abundance and in large herds in areas of the village that have not been targeted.

The difficulty in placing shooting locations in certain areas was part a problem, as were requirements placed on the program by the DEC. Certain locations, petitioned for the 2nd management period, were not approved by DEC staff in fall 2015, thus limiting our efforts to target local sub herds frequenting the village. In spring 2016, Bernd Blossey had a conference call with regional and state DEC staff to discuss operational and permitting requirements and the outcome was extremely encouraging. The DEC agreed that to successfully manage deer impacts in the village (and elsewhere), deer subherds should be targeted where they move in and out of the village, even if shooting locations may be outside of village boundaries or even the county. The stipulations are that landowners will obviously need to agree to become a shooting location (permits would be filed with the Village application), and locations are within the travel distance of deer. Which locations will qualify for inclusion will need to be determined by the Deer Oversight committee after consultation with landowners, but at a minimum we propose to once again include Smith Woods and 4482 Seneca Road in the permit application, as in 2015 if the respective landowners agree.

Village of Trumansburg

Deer Management Program (TDMP) for 2016-17

Activities on Approved Properties

Draft August 5, 2016

Over many years the Village of Trumansburg has experienced high deer populations (likely over 200 animals) that have resulted in ecological and economic damage. The continued presence of this high deer population puts residents at an increased risk of Lyme disease, causes extensive plant damage, and creates an increased risk of deer-vehicle collisions. Village residents have responded by fencing and applying deterrents to valuable plantings to prevent browse, as well as rubbing damage to planted trees by buck. But the costs associated with fencing and continued and increasing problems have reached a crisis point.

Over the past two winters the Trumansburg Board of Trustees, in conjunction with Cornell's Integrated Deer Research and Management Program, the Village's Nuisance Wildlife Committee and Village's DMP Oversight Committee, has developed and implemented the Trumansburg Deer Management Program. The program has successfully removed over 90 deer in the first season (2014-2015) deer and an additional 27 in the second season (2015-2016). The village program is serving as a model for several other communities in New York state that have similar deer issues.

On April 1, 2015 an aerial deer count survey was completed by Davis Aviation and found the following: There were between 44 and 50 deer present in the Village, and 90 deer just outside the Village, that likely move in and out of the Village. With these numbers along with an estimate of about 150 new fawns born this spring (based on 75% of the deer being female and the average doe having 1.5 fawns), we estimated that the deer population was now around 285 deer in and in close proximity to the Village in fall 2016. The Board approved the 2015-2016 nuisance program, which resulted in the removal of 27 deer. The problems that were encountered was reduced participation and unpredictable and slow deer movement due to an unusual winter weather pattern. In 260 observational hours by participants >360 deer were observed, but we do not know the true abundance of deer in the village, particularly in areas that have no shooting locations

Many residents have once again commented and been thankful that the number of deer is significantly lower and there has been less plant damage than in previous years. However, there are continue to reports of Lyme disease in the Village and surveys of planted oak seedlings indicate massive mortality due to deer browse. Clearly, oak recruitment will not be possible even at these reduced deer numbers, and the goals of the village deer management program have not

yet been achieved. Based on the positive experience in deer reduction we had in the first two years of the program, over 10 years of experience of the Cornell Program on Cornell lands, input from the villages of Lansing and Cayuga Heights on their deer management programs, and discussions with the NYSDEC Region 7, what follows is what we believe to be the best approach to continue to significantly reduce the deer population and negative impacts of the high deer level in the Village of Trumansburg.

Based on input from the Nuisance Wildlife Committee, Cornell's program, participants in last year's program and the Oversight Committee, the use of New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC) approved Deer Depredation Permits (DDPs) – also known as nuisance permits – is again recommended to further reduce deer numbers. This approach is not considered regular hunting. This preferred method is using proficient bow hunters at baited locations with activities in the evening and using supplemental lights (until 11PM).

We anticipate using 11 properties that were used last year, but we also plan to add several new sites in other strategic locations in and adjacent to the Village to begin implementation of the deer management program starting September 1, 2016 continuing no longer than March 31, 2016. Once the final list of sites is determined, a map showing the locations will be available at the Village Office and will be posted on the Village's website. The deer management oversight committee will review properties across the village that are ideal locations given their size, expected deer traffic, availability of trees and cover. What follows is detailed information on the TDMP.

1. Activities are anticipated to occur from September 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017. The Village of Trumansburg Deer Management Oversight Committee will review the success of the program and will reduce or expand activities as needed based on deer harvests. All landowners will be kept informed about management activities (including who the participants are on their property) in regular updates. It is anticipated that generally Friday, Saturday and a few Sunday evenings will be used followed by a four to five-day resting period.
2. Tree stands will be placed (no screw in steps, ladder stands are preferred) at landowner approved locations in mid-August. A few branches may need to be trimmed to improve shooting lanes. Shooting from elevated positions directs arrows into the ground after passing through a deer. Seven to ten days before activities are to begin, bait (corn) will be placed 15 to 20 yards away from tree stands to attract deer to these locations. Trail monitoring cameras may be installed to capture deer activity. If needed, locations may need to be shifted slightly or abandoned. Each landowner will be informed about any activities on their properties, as indicated by landowner preferences. If an elevated position cannot be used and the area is found to hold deer the use of a ground blind can be implemented

3. Last year's small group of proficient participants has agreed to do it again and several new ones will need to be added to assure that locations are used effectively. Participants will be using compound bows or cross bows exclusively. The activities are jointly coordinated by Merritt Compton (local but internationally renowned bow hunting expert), Bernd Blossey (also coordinator of the Village of Lansing deer management program and chair of the Cornell Deer Management Committee), and Phil Carubia as part of the Village of Trumansburg Deer Management Oversight Committee.
4. Activities will occur only in the evenings starting about 1-2 hours before sunset and continuing until after dark (until 11PM, as per NYSDEC regulations) depending on deer use patterns. Based on our first two years, this approach captures high deer activity periods. Use of supplemental lights after dark will allow for safe, highly accurate shots at very close range. All of our participants are experienced in using this approach and any new ones will be trained. Deer use patterns at bait will be monitored using infrared trail cameras to target the best possible times to utilize locations. We did find some sites with early morning activity and thus some sites may be used on Saturday or Sunday mornings.
5. All participants are required to follow all Village and State laws, or expressed landowner preferences. It is the right of each landowner to restrict the number of individuals on their property, the times or dates participants are allowed on properties, stand location, parking locations or access routes as desired. The agreement to use properties can be terminated by landowners at any time by notifying the Village Clerk.
6. Which days and stands will be used cannot be predicted in advance, as this will depend on individual time schedules, wind direction, weather and previous use of stand locations. To prevent overuse, the use of resting periods of 1-2 weeks between activity periods will allow deer to fall back into their usual use patterns. Baiting will likely continue during the resting periods.
7. Participants will be in trees using camouflage and will use flashlights to locate shot deer or to walk out of the woods; therefore landowners may notice a slow moving flashlight. If deer can't be readily retrieved due to poor blood trails, approved tracking dogs are available to help in locating wounded deer. In very rare circumstances tracking may occur the next morning with better light. Landowners will be alerted to any of these possibilities and will have access to cell phone numbers of participants.
8. Occasionally a mortally wounded deer may run beyond property boundaries. All participants will have information about property boundaries when afield. This information will include phone numbers of landowners and neighbors who need to be notified if a search extends beyond the approved properties. If necessary, a Village Trustee, Village Police or the participant will call and ask permission to retrieve a deer unless we have pre-authorization to retrieve deer from a property. An attempt will be made to inform all immediate neighbors of these activities, regardless of whether a deer ever leaves an approved property.

9. Participants will keep track of and report all arrows shot using a secure website. Arrows usually pass through deer and fall close to the spot where a deer was hit, but occasionally will remain in the deer. Every effort will be made to retrieve arrows (they are expensive), aided with the help of a metal detector when needed. Based on results of the last two years almost every arrow was recovered.
10. All shot deer will be removed discretely and not be field dressed on properties. Samples of internal organs and blood may be submitted to the Animal Health Diagnostic Center, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, to assist in various research projects.
11. All harvested deer will be consumed by participants or donated. We will again drop off as many deer as we can to an approved venison donation processor for distribution to local food banks and pantries and to families that can benefit from the meat.
12. In most instances, landowners and neighbors will not even notice activities or the killing of a deer because it happens quietly and fast. However, despite all precautions and skills, deer may be wounded, may not expire immediately, collapse on neighboring properties or may not be found. We will make every attempt possible (including the use of a trained dog) to recover all animals or assure that they will be fine (superficial arrow wounds heal quickly).
13. The Village Deer Management Oversight Committee will review activities and success in regular intervals (weekly) and determine if activities should continue or be terminated based on activities and number of deer harvested.
14. The Deer Management Oversight Committee will provide regular updates to the Village Board, including the number of deer harvested, which will also be posted on the Village website.
15. The goal is to reduce deer numbers to levels where forest regeneration and survival of browse sensitive plants within the Village of Trumansburg is once again possible. In addition, we aim to reduce or maintain deer tick populations at levels where Lyme disease risks are minimized (5-8 deer per square kilometer according to recent studies in CT). With assistance from Cornell Universities Department of Natural Resources the ecological success of deer reductions in the Village will be assessed using oak sentinels, a method developed by Bernd Blossey. To assess tick populations we will use standardized tick sampling using drag cloths. We will also assess tick loads on harvested deer.
16. Given the high deer densities and the articulated ecological and health goals, we propose to target both antlered and antlerless deer. This requires approval by the DEC. Participants shooting bucks will be required to saw off antlers and antlers will be delivered to the DEC.

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