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Administrative Office | 13000 High Ridge Drive, Brighton MI 48114-9058 | 810-227-2757 | metroparks.com

Metroparks Deer Management Program – 2021 Update Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Program Overview/History

The Metroparks Natural Resources Department's focus is to responsibly manage populations of both animal and plant species, including ensuring healthy, thriving deer herds within our 13 unique parks.

The deer management program at the Metroparks began in 1999 in response to an observed decline in the overall health of the deer herds and the loss of more than 70 species of native plants.

Third-party wildlife biologist experts completed health studies on the park deer populations and concluded that, "data indicates herd stress due to lack of nutrition."

Maintaining a healthy balance between herbivores and native plants equates to a Michigan Department of Natural Resources-recommended deer population density of 15-20 deer per square mile.

Regular aerial surveys are used to help determine herd sizes and if any deer culls may be needed in a specific year at a specific park.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When is the 2021 deer cull taking place?

A: The Michigan DNR has provided a Wildlife Damage Investigation and Control permit through February 28, 2021.

Kensington Metropark

A February 2021 cull did not and will not take place at Kensington Metropark due to timing constraints of the investigation into earlier threats of violence. Though Kensington's deer population has grown far beyond the recommended carrying capacity of the 4,500-acre natural area, the Metroparks will not request a permit extension beyond the current Feb. 28 end date due to deer gestation cycles.

Adjoined Oakwoods/Willow Metroparks

The deer management program was completed as planned at the adjoined Oakwoods/Willow Metroparks with a final winter 2021 cull that took place Feb. 25 between the hours of 4 p.m. and midnight.

Q: How many deer will be culled?

A: 51 total deer were harvested at the adjoined Oakwoods/Willow Metroparks to help bring the 210 total estimated herd population closer to wildlife biologist recommended densities for deer and ecosystem health across the combined 5.1 square mile parks.

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Q: Why was the February deer cull cancelled at Kensington?

A: The deer cull originally scheduled on Feb. 4 at Kensington Metropark was cancelled as threats of violence were made and deemed credible that endangered park staff and the community. We always work to ensure the utmost transparency, but to help ensure public and staff safety and a thorough investigation, we were not at liberty to share those specific details until now. We thank the Royal Oak Police Department and the Livingston County Prosecutor's Office for their expedient, diligent work on this front.

Q: Will any of the white deer be culled?

A: There are no known white or "albino" deer in the Oakwoods/Willow Metroparks, and there will be no winter 2021 Kensington Metropark cull due to timing constraints and delays. Adjustments will continue to be made to hunting zones to greatly minimize the chance of encountering any of these known deer during future culls. While state law does not specifically protect these deer, Metroparks staff understand that this unique animal is enjoyed by many visitors, photographers and wildlife enthusiasts and are taking all possible precautions to avoid it during culls.

Q: Why must the deer be culled rather than transferred or population control using other alternate methods?

A: While all available data and research at this time indicates that this cull is the most effective, humane way to protect the health and welfare of the deer population as well as the ecosystem which sustains them, Metroparks will be conducting a comprehensive review of best practices and alternative methods across the state and country in 2021. Similar reviews will also take place about every three years.

This work will help ensure we are continually evaluating the program and doing everything possible to humanely address overpopulation and be home to a healthy, thriving herd that also protects our diverse flora and fauna.

Q: Why aren't licensed deer hunters being used in the cull process?

A: Metroparks has an existing police force already trained in this work.

Q: What will happen to the culled deer?

A: All animals removed from the population will be processed for meat and donated to local food banks to help feed hungry families across Southeast Michigan.

Q: Is there any concern about PFAS chemicals within the Kensington Metropark deer herd?

A: Per a study conducted by both the DNR and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, there are no concerns about the safe consumption of deer from the area. Refer to update article from December 2018 [here](#).

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Q: What will the Metroparks do to maintain appropriate grazing resources and restoration of the native plants that have been lost at the Metroparks?

A: Prior surveys have shown the loss of over 70 species of native plants, and 40 species, once classified as common, being reclassified as uncommon. Since the deer management program began in 1999, the Metroparks have made significant headway in reestablishing and maintaining many of those plants. Additionally, staff conduct vegetation surveys each spring. That work continues.

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