

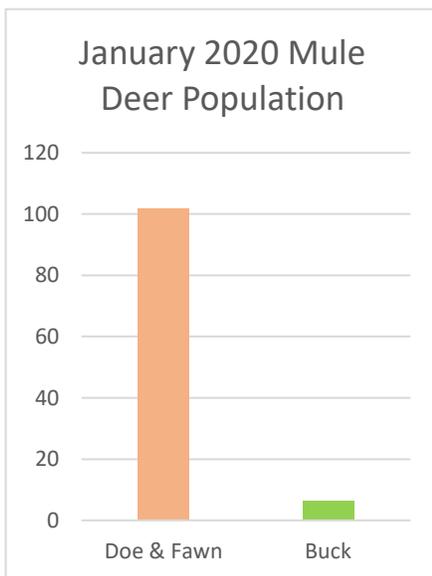
JANUARY 2020 DEER COUNT RESULTS

Background & Purpose

In recent years urban deer have become a topic of discussion due to safety concerns (vehicular or pedestrian), incidents with residents, and economic implications in managing their populations. The deer counts are put in place to monitor their populations and demographics, while the Urban Deer Task Force is to formulate recommendations for council and for the development of an urban deer action strategy.

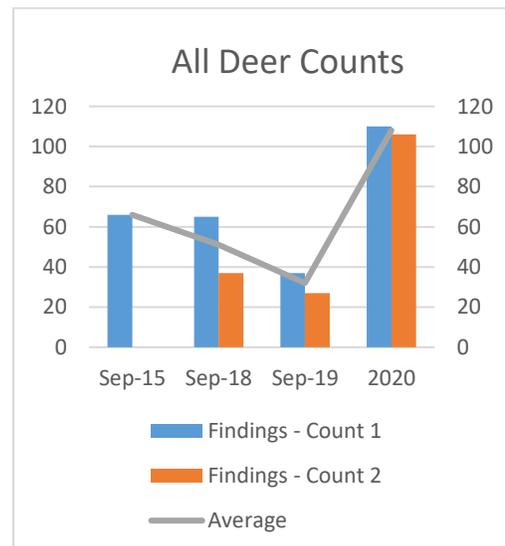
Methods

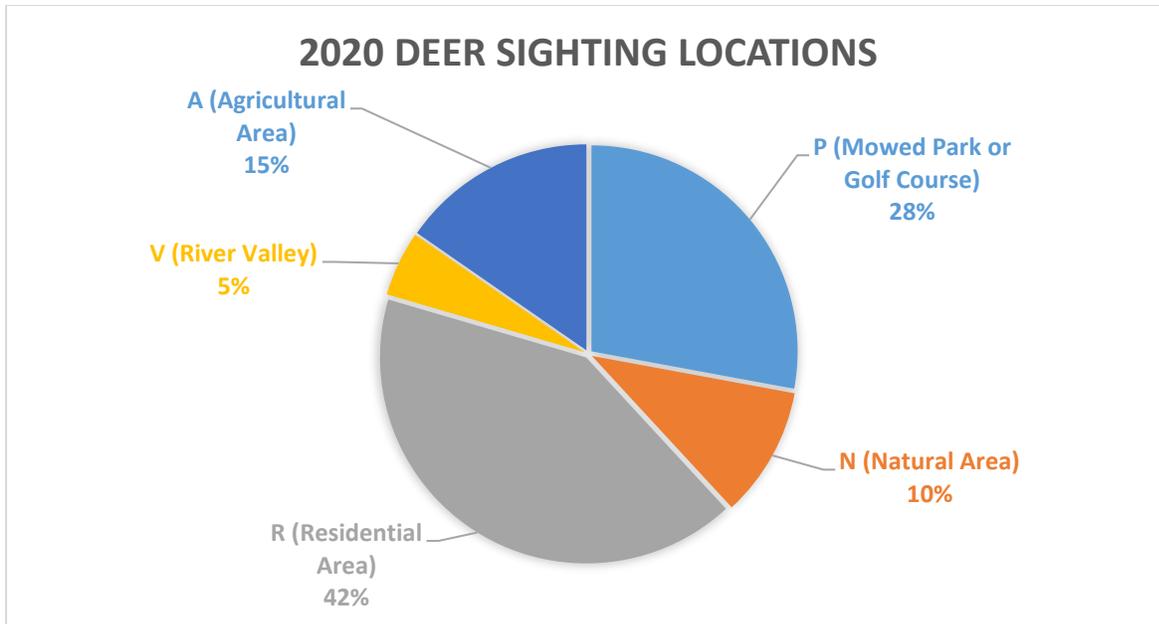
Between 2015 and 2018 several approaches to the deer count were taken. In 2015 a large scale count with 100 volunteers took place in September. This was refined in 2018 by the app 'NatureLynx' which replaced paper method by collecting the data online including geotags and photographs. In 2020 the main intent was to ensure full coverage in town while minimizing necessary resources. On January 22nd & 23rd between 16:30-17:30, a combination of 15 town staff and task force members were given specific routes in town to cover as much area as possible while collecting data. The deer counts were conducted within the urban footprint of the town in 2020, but also looking out along the town boundary. This is consistent with previous counts.



Results

- Based on the 2 counts we found an average of 108 deer within the Town of Okotoks. Of that; 81 Doe, 20 Fawn and 6 Bucks.
- Counts were comparable at **110 deer on January 22nd** and **106 deer on January 23rd**.
- No other deer species were located other than mule deer.
- 2020 data counted more deer, but it hasn't been confirmed whether deer numbers have increased or there is a seasonal distribution difference.





In regards to location of deer in the municipality the major areas are residential areas and maintained parks/golf courses. Deer are more visible in the residential areas and the data reflects this. This data varies from previous counts, where the majority of deer were sited in the river valley and natural areas.

Discussion & Recommendations

As discussed by the Urban Deer Task Force members who have expertise in wildlife, deer are more active at dawn and dusk therefore it was decided that a count at these times would be beneficial, future counts should replicate this for data comparability. To help establish deer population data please also consider the following recommendations for future counts;

1. Continue to complete two consecutive deer counts (within two day period)
2. Complete the September & January counts at dusk
3. Utilize similar methodology

2020 was the first time we completed dusk deer counts in the winter, and we counted a much larger number of deer. Going forward we recommend to conduct dusk counts in September/January to see if there is a seasonal distribution difference so we can compare to previous data.

Resources

- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
- Town of Okotoks – Parks Business Centre
- Urban Deer Task Force

Thank you all for the contributions!