

FEBRUARY 2022 DEER COUNT REPORT

Background & Purpose

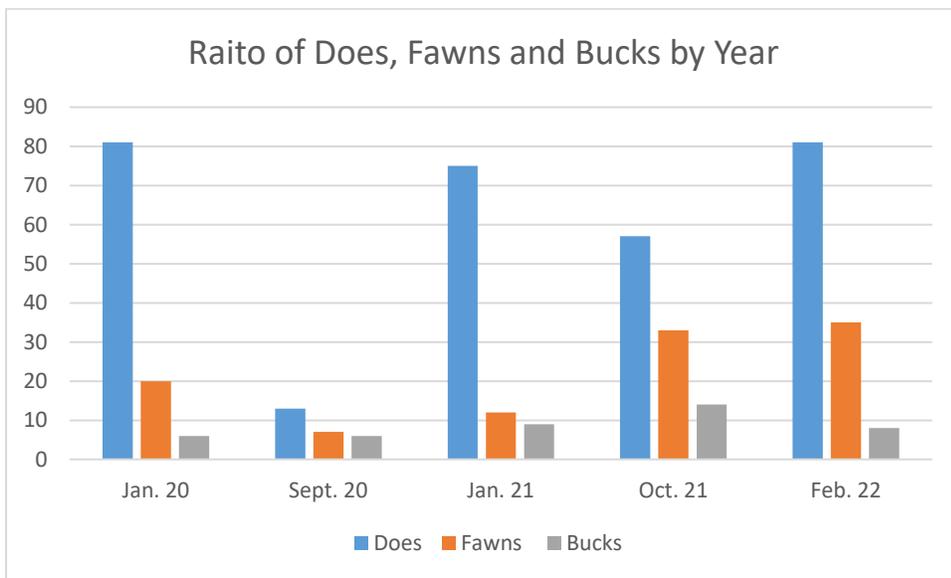
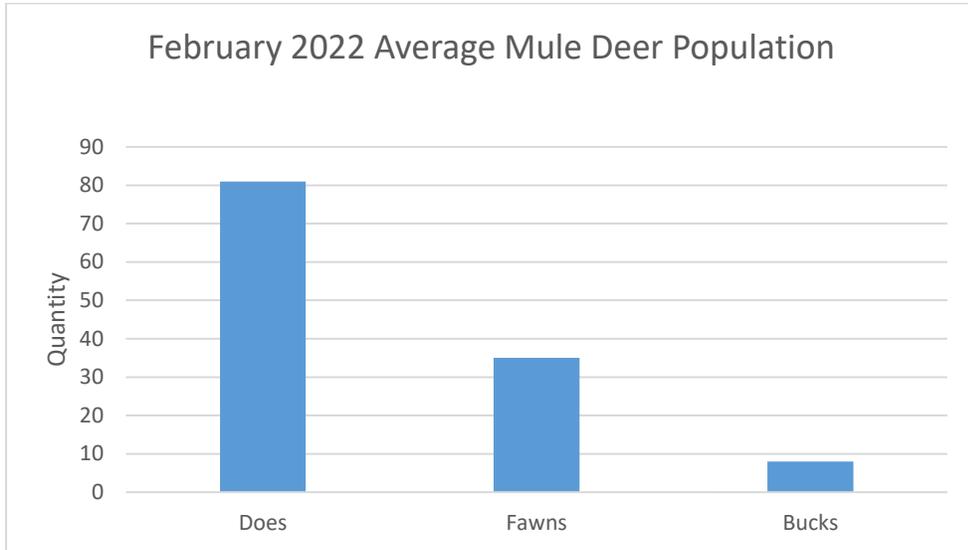
In recent year's urban deer have become a topic of discussion due to safety concerns with vehicles and pedestrians, impacts to vegetation, and the economic implications in managing their populations. The deer counts are completed to monitor their populations and demographics, which will assist the Town in the development of an urban deer action plan.

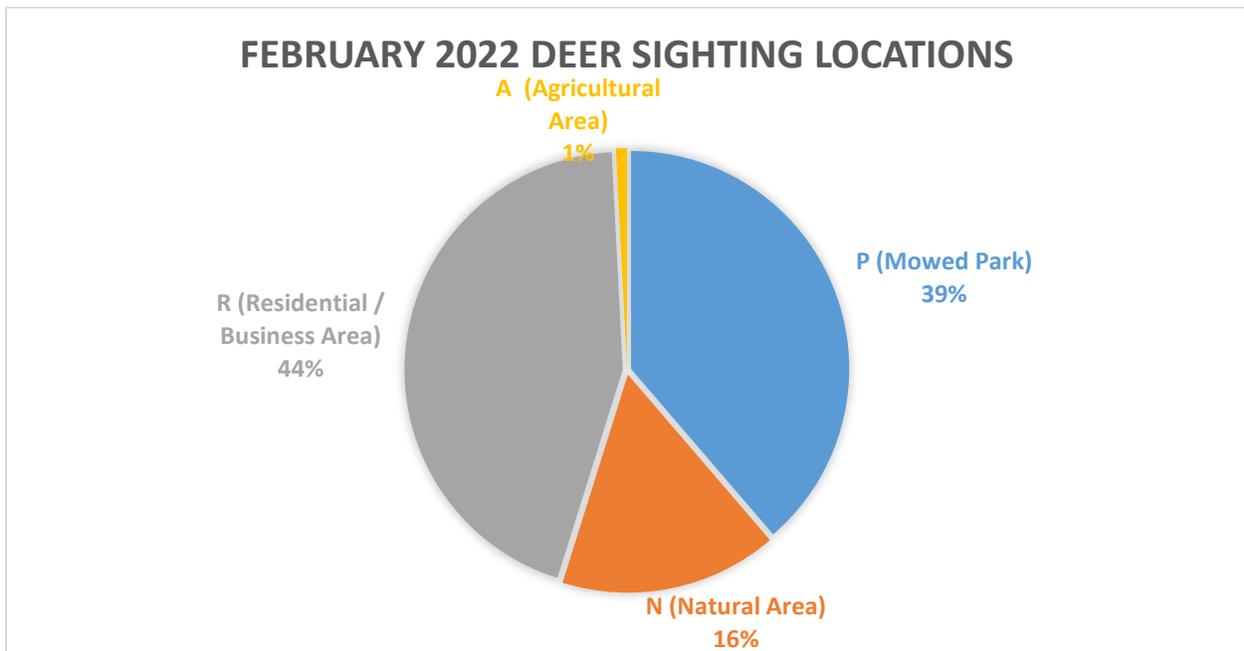
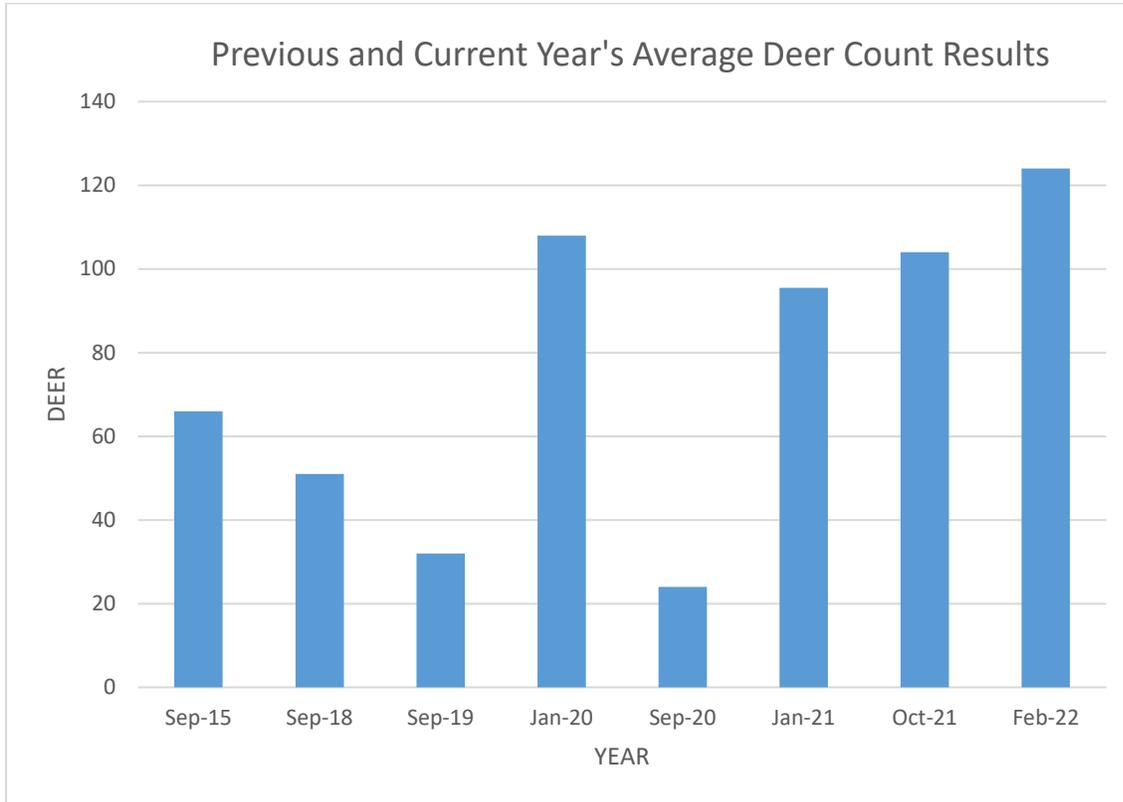
Methods

Between 2015 and 2018, different 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 supports paper methods by collecting the data online including geotags and photographs. In 2020, the main intent was to ensure full coverage in town while being efficient with resources. The second count of 2021 was changed from previous year's daytime count in September. Performing the count at the same time of year and same time of day is important to bring more meaning to the comparison from year to year. However, the fall count was moved to October for two main reasons. Firstly, there is less foliage on trees and shrubs which aids in sightings. Secondly, the time of the count is at dawn, which is a more active period of day. Therefore, comparisons from previous fall counts are quite lower due to the timing of the count. This February 2022 count was conducted at dawn. Only one count took place due to snow removal duties and extreme cold. Thirteen Town staff were given specific routes in town to cover as much area as possible while collecting data. The deer count was conducted within the urban footprint of the town, but deer were also counted on the edge of this footprint in adjacent agricultural areas. This is consistent with previous counts; however, it will be necessary to expand the number of routes in the future as the Town expands in area. The total count was adjusted due to duplicate reporting which was determined by sightings in the same proximate location within a close timeframe. There were 12 duplicate sightings in this February 2022 count.

RESULTS

- The total count on February 3rd was **124 deer**. This a bit higher than previous counts done at this time of year (January 2021 – 96 and January 2020 – 108).
- There were 81 does, 35 fawns and 8 bucks.
- Number of deer per acre is approximately 0.03.
- Mule deer was the only species identified.
- The ratio of does to fawns and bucks fluctuates between counts but visually there does not appear to be a significant statistical difference.





- Residential areas and manicured parks were the major areas deer were located in this February 2022 count. Natural areas was the third highest area occupied. More deer in residential areas and parks during dawn may suggest these areas are a good food source as this is when deer tend to feed more actively. This data varies from previous years fall counts, where the majority of deer were sited in the natural areas. This could reflect the time of day previous counts were done. Deer may be more likely to be bedded down in natural areas during the day, which is when our fall counts took place in previous years.

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 and 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 a fall / winter count for comparisons from previous years
2. Complete the counts at dawn when deer are more active and staff are available during normal working hours.

January 2020 was the first time it was completed at dusk in the winter and deer counts were significantly higher than previous counts in September during the day. January 2021 count had similar results as January 2020 count.

Resources

- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
- Town of Okotoks – Parks and Sustainability Business Centres