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Nearly 90,000 Deer Killed Opening Weekend

NOVEMBER 14TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

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JEFFERSON CITY – Hunters checked 89,728 deer during the opening weekend of Missouri’s November firearms deer hunt, a decrease of 8.3 percent from 2010.

In Stoddard County, hunters checked a total of 414 deer. According to a spokeswoman with Southeast Regional Office in Cape Girardeau there were 210 bucks, 65 button bucks and 139 does killed in the county during the opening weekend of firearms deer season.

Resource Scientist Jason Sumners, with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), said weather played a role in this year’s decrease, but attributed a longer declining trend to shrinking deer numbers in some parts of the state.

“There’s no question that the opening-weekend harvest was affected by warm temperatures and high winds,” said Sumners. “However, this isn’t just a one-year decrease. The opening-weekend harvest averaged 118,000 from 2001 through 2005. From 2006 through 2010, the average was 95,401. Those figures reflect a change in regional deer populations.”

Sumners said areas where deer numbers are down include parts of the Kansas City, Northwest, Southwest and Central regions. The opening-weekend harvest in those areas was down between 11 and 18 percent.

The opening-weekend harvest in southeastern Missouri and in the Ozark region was similar to last year's. Sumners said deer numbers are increasing slowly in those areas.

Sumners said the declining trends in deer population and harvest numbers are not cause for concern.

"We have been trying for the better part of a decade to stabilize deer numbers in some areas," said Sumners. "In others we have been working to bring down deer populations to reduce crop damage and deer-vehicle accidents. Now our challenge is finding ways to fine-tune harvest at the local level to balance hunting opportunity with nuisance problems."

Sumners said this could mean future reductions in the availability of antlerless permits in some areas.

According to Sumners, a decrease of 8,000 in the opening-weekend harvest is not likely to have a significant effect on the overall deer harvest but may reflect a general trend of lower deer numbers in many parts of rural Missouri. With 12 days of the November hunting season ahead, followed by a nine-day antlerless deer season, 11 days of muzzleloader hunting and a two-day late youth season, hunters have plenty of time to catch up. Archers have through Jan. 15 to hunt. Sumners said he expects the 2011-2012 deer harvest to be in the neighborhood of 250,000 to 275,000. Top harvest counties during the opening weekend were Howell with 1,702 deer checked, Macon with 1,617 and Texas with 1,588.

MDC recorded one non-fatal, firearms-related hunting incident during the opening weekend.

Photo Above: Dalton Putnam of Dexter killed this deer over the weekend - his first with a bow. (Submitted by SMT reader Shannon Putnam.)

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The ShowMe Times invites area residents to submit photos of deer taken during the opening weekend. Send your photo, with the name of the hunter, information on the deer, and where the deer was taken. Send photos and information to amiller@showmetimes.com

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