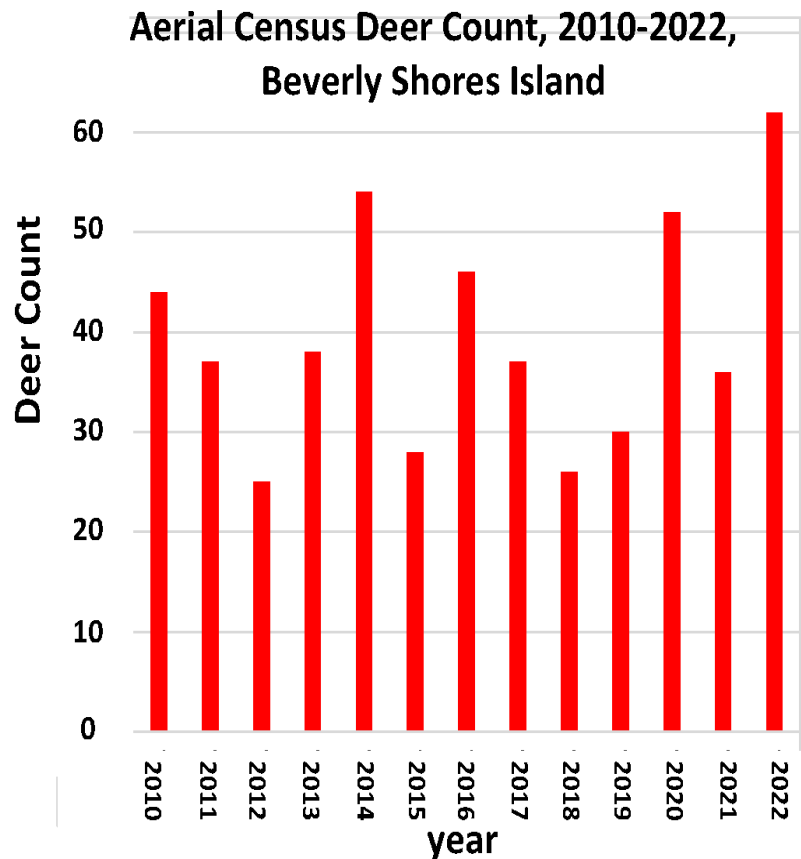


# ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP DEER REPORT FOR 2022

**BY HOWARD P. MARVEL**

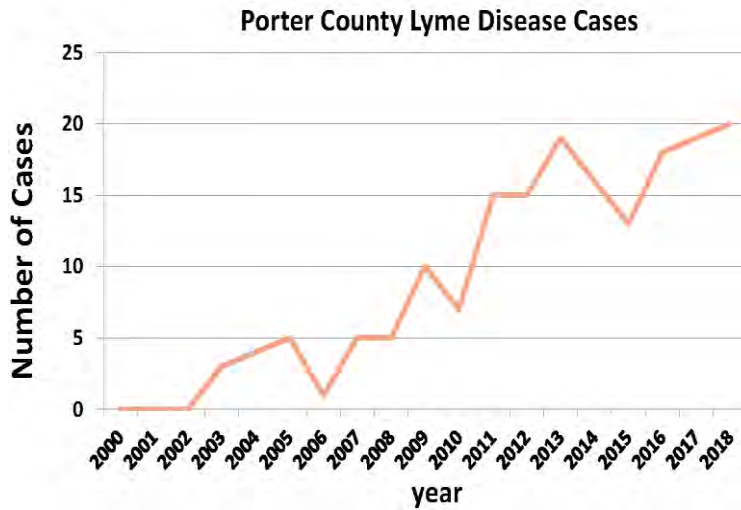
The annual aerial census of the Beverly Shores area deer population carried out on January 30, 2022, revealed the largest number of deer in our town in at least a decade. Sixty-two deer were counted in the Beverly Shores “Island” (the lakefront to Beverly Drive, from Drake and Montana Avenues west to Derby Ditch). In 2022, a total of 107 deer (62 in the island and 45 in the rest of Beverly Shores) were counted, up from a total of 41 (36 in the island and five in the rest of Beverly Shores) in 2021. When combined with anecdotal reports of more frequent resident deer encounters, reports of increased plant damage, and worries about disease, the elevated count is a source of concern.

	Island	IDNP Beverly Shores	Total
2010	44	51	95
2011	37	39	76
2012	25	19	44
2013	38	68	106
2014	54	30	84
2015	28	27	55
2016	46	55	101
2017	37	55	92
2018	26	38	64
2019	30	21	51
2020	52	57	109
2021	36	5	41
2022	62	45	107



The Indiana Dunes National Park (IDNP) remains troubled by the deer population, which is well in excess of the 15 animals per square mile, that park biologists consider consistent with a healthy forest and dune land. With grant funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, IDNP commissioned a hunt by sharpshooters from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The APHIS hunters harvested 150 deer from across the entire park. Thirty-five animals came from the Dune Ridge area (IDNP park property in Beverly Shores surrounding the Island). Of these animals, seven were taken to the west of Derby Ditch and the remaining 28 were from Drake and Montana Avenues east to County Line Road.

This year’s deer problems included a deer-vehicle collision on Beverly Drive, increased community reports of plant damage, and elevated concerns about deer and disease. Deer are an important part of the life cycle of the deer ticks that carry Lyme disease, which is a growing threat. In 2018, the most recent year for which data are available, Porter County recorded 20 cases of Lyme disease, the most on record.



A new concern is that deer may harbor Covid. Citing concerns over new coronavirus variants that are mutating in American wildlife and could spread back to humans, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is now urging health authorities to ramp up their efforts to regularly track the spread of the virus in animals. As the CDC reports, “In January, blood *collected from white-tailed deer* by the APHIS in four states — Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania — turned up antibodies to the virus in at least a third of their samples.”

A third disease concern is that chronic wasting disease (CWD) is spreading through deer populations, including those in neighboring Illinois and Michigan. IDNP is concerned that increased deer density will contribute to the spread of this cruel disease. The good news is that the deer taken by APHIS hunters this winter in IDNP tested negative for CWD.

On the right is a map showing the locations of the 62 deer observed in the Island this year (*cf.*, also front page). As usual, deer tend to avoid the Great Marsh. We cannot determine whether the Island’s deer population could have been lowered by deer harvested in adjacent IDNP property or, alternatively, increased by deer seeking shelter from the hunt.

ERG is quite concerned about the elevated deer population and will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

