

# ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP: DEER REPORT FOR 2023

BY TERRY BONACE

Since 2002, the Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) has contracted an aerial deer count in Beverly Shores, including the area not only within the square mile of the town proper, but in the National Park land to the west, east and south of the town. (Prior to 2002, a group of residents funded the aerial count.) In 2000, the highest deer count showed a total of 412 deer in and around Beverly Shores. Damage to the landscape was extreme, the health of the deer population and the dune ecology was poor, and the frequency of deer/vehicle collisions was high. Since 2000, the deer population has been gradually reduced through annual bow and arrow deer hunts and/or culls. This year's count, taken on February 10, 2023, showed a total of 54 deer within and around Beverly Shores. Below is a photo of the deer distribution taken in early February this year. The red dots each represent a deer.

The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Final White Tailed Deer Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement from April 2012 identifies a number of biological studies demonstrating that the ideal deer population density for the dune ecology, including the plants, birds and insects of the region, is about 10 to 15 deer per square mile. Though this number has never been achieved in Beverly Shores, anyone who lived in Beverly Shores prior to 2003 can testify to the severe damage to vegetation in the area at this time and the improvement that has taken place since then.

Since about 2012, the Indiana Dunes National Park (IDNP) has conducted a deer cull. In each of the past two years, 150 deer have been harvested from within the boundaries of the entire National Park. In February of this year, included in that count of 150, 11 deer were harvested from the west side of the town island and 10 deer from the east side of the town island.

Periodically the Indiana Dunes State Park (IDSP) holds a deer hunt. During the most recent hunt, in the fall of 2021, 30 deer were harvested from the State Park. The efforts of the IDNP, IDSP, and the ERG's own deer hunts and culls, have kept the deer population below the extreme levels found around the turn of the last century.



The regular deer hunting season in Indiana runs only from October 1 to January 7. The "Deer Reduction Zone" bow and arrow hunting season runs from September 15 to January 31 each year. According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, a deer reduction zones (DRZ) is a target area with a high deer populations and high human density or use, resulting in concerns about the local ecology, deer-vehicle collisions, and personal property damage. Beverly Shores falls in a DRZ. A bow and arrow hunt conducted in Beverly Shores in a few isolated properties this past season resulted in the harvest of 7 deer: 3 on the east end of town and 4 in the west.

## ERG DEER REPORT 2023, CONT'D.

If you would like to see numbers on previous years' aerial deer counts or read more about the history of deer and deer hunting in Beverly Shores, see <https://www.bserg.org/deer.html> at the ERG's web site. The complete IDNP deer management plan environmental impact statement can be found at <http://npshistory.com/publications/indu/white-tailed-deer-mp-feis-2002.pdf>.

As always, the Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) will be glad to help identify plants for you and make suggestions for removal of invasives and for native plants to use as replacements. Don't hesitate to contact Terry Bonace ([tbonace@gmail.com](mailto:tbonace@gmail.com)) or Candice Smith ([candicepeter-sonsmith@gmail.com](mailto:candicepeter-sonsmith@gmail.com)) for assistance. Also please visit our website at [www.bserg.org](http://www.bserg.org) for information on native and non-native plants.

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