

MARYLAND EDUCATIONAL CAMERA SURVEYS

The central section of Maryland has an ever increasing problem with Urban Deer populations. With many areas restricted from recreational hunting, there is a need to manage the deer population. This issue has created many problems with over browsing by over populated deer in urban sprawl areas as well in parks and other public areas.

We have found the educational efforts are needed to address these problems by sponsoring seminars and other educational events while supporting local agencies. The QDMA (Quality Deer Management Association) Maryland State chapter and the Bachman Valley Branch will be assisting with these camera survey programs and others to help with the effort to educate the public and hunters.

The most asked questions are “how many deer is in this area?” and “how can we estimate the numbers and what can we do to help?” These questions and many others were asked by the students in the Environmental Science class of Sharyn Denbow, teacher of the at C. Milton Wright High School which is located in Harford County, Bel Air, Maryland. These seniors had conducted the QDMA “Living with the Whitetail Deer” DVD Program and wanted more hands-on activities. The students were very anxious to learn more about deer, methods of accurate population counts, and management strategies. All they needed was a location to do a camera survey study.

In July of 2007, E.W. Grimes was asked to attend and conduct a Deer Browse Seminar and hands-on evaluation with students at the Center for Action Investigation Program at Harford Glen. This program is part of the Gifted and Talented Students Program. Harford Glen is an Outdoor/ Environmental Education Center for Harford County Schools and perfect location for the camera survey. Karen Cifranick, naturalist of Harford Glen was contacted and very willing to conduct the survey. With the Center being close to the school and with the student’s enthusiasm, the date and time was set for the field trip to the Harford Glen. The text that the students would be using is from the Quality Whitetails journal published by QDMA. The journal would provide articles by Jason Snavely on infrared triggered cameras and Do-it-Yourself Deer Surveys. The QDMA website www.qdma.com was also used to research additional information. The students completed their research, next would be the field trip to Harford Glen.



A cold December 19th, 2007, students, teacher and EW met Karen Cifranick and Steve News at Harford Glen. Aerial photo maps were provided by Karen. Harford Glen is approximately 320 acres of which 75 acres are lake. Two camera sites would be set up. While walking to proposed locations, deer browse and signs were identified as well as seeing several deer. Locations away from well used public trails were decided upon.

GPS units were used by student to pinpoint camera sites so the exact locations would be recorded for repeat studies by future students.



The cameras had not been pre-tested and this gave the students the opportunity to install and pre-test the cameras themselves. Using Jason Snavely's article (Basic camera set-up tips) corn was placed at the camera sites. Seven days of pre-baiting was performed and cameras were tested. The fourteen day survey produced 1,323 photos. The photo data was collected and recorded on CDs then sent to the class room for evaluation by students.

On February 4th the students from Kim Moyer's class at Century High School started their camera study at Piney Run Park with only one camera site. Hashawha Environmental Area which has over 300 acres had three camera sites. Students from North Carroll High School, Hannah McHett's class will be conducting their survey using the NE site. Gena Felter's students from two classes at Francis Scott Key High School will conduct their survey using NW site. Emily Condon's Westminster High School students will conduct their survey by using the center site. Over 130 students have participated in these surveys and 3,000+ photos reviewed from cameras. The survey program will increase the student's knowledge of whitetail deer. Along with the Living with Whitetail Deer multi-media activity, students discover, research, debate and resolve community whitetail deer management issues while at the same time providing the parks with a much needed estimated population count. This camera study can be repeated annually by new students and compare trends with the previous estimates. In fact, season-to-season trends with this kind of hands-on data are more valuable than actual population estimates in any given year.



This camera survey technique was developed and refined by Mississippi State University researchers Dr. Stephen Demarais, William McKinley and Dr. Harry Jacobson. This technique can provide a great deal of useful information on the parks deer herd. Research has shown that camera surveys provide sufficient reliability data to make sound management decisions.

The QDMA primary focus has always been on education, research and on-the-

ground management. The Maryland State Chapter and the Bachman Valley Branch of QDMA would like to thank the local schools, park managers and naturalists Karen Cifranick, Melissa Boyle, and Kelly Vogiol for providing locations to conduct these surveys. These surveys would NOT have been possible without the support of Bowman's Feed & Pet of Westminster and Warner Feed of Lineboro for supplying the corn for baiting. Cameras were supplied by Bass Pro Shop, Arundel Mills and Outdoor Essentials, Millington, Maryland.



Most of all, we want to thank the public school students that participated. Their hands-on desire to expand their knowledge of white-tail deer while exploring community deer management and biodiversity issues is what will continue to keep this program so successful for years to come.

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