

# 2013 Big G



TOMMY WIRKLAND



# ame Report

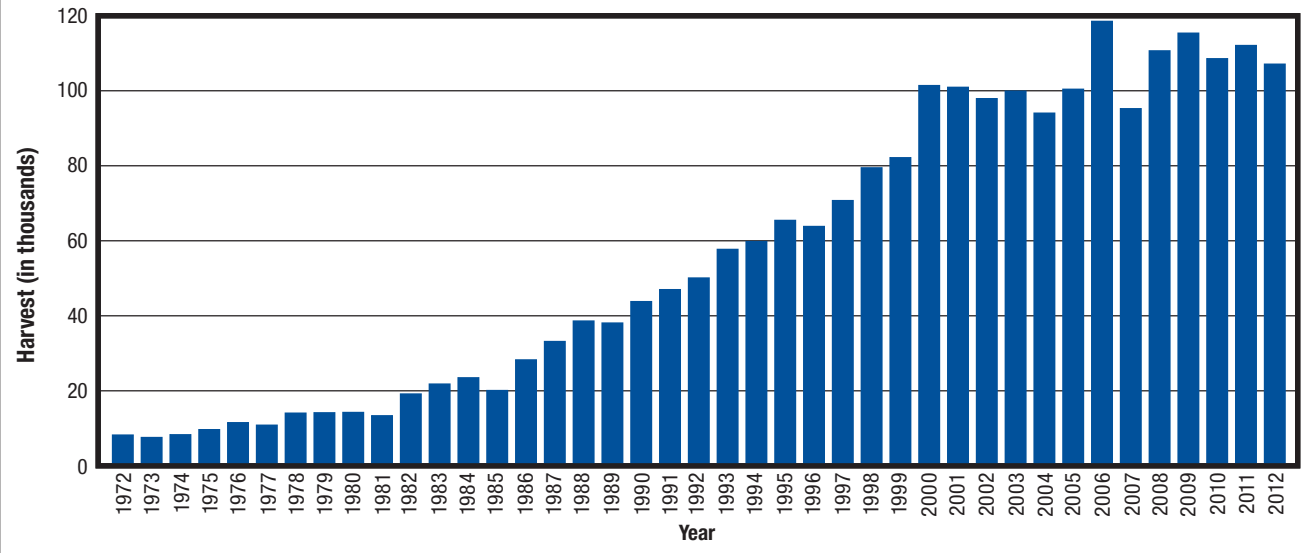
**By: Erik Bartholomew, Big Game Biologist  
and Gary Keller, Wildlife Research Technician**

What a difference a year can make! In travels across the state, one can't help but notice how green things are compared to this time last year. Some parts of the state have been flooded while others are just happy to get a small drink. Regardless, the landscape of Oklahoma is looking better than it has for the last two years for wildlife and their habitats.

I have been working for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for seven years. I started working with private landowners through the Quail Habitat Restoration Initiative developing habitat management plans for landowners interested specifically in quail. In 2010, I transferred to the Furbearer Biologist position and enjoyed working statewide on issues related to furbearers. In July of 2012, I transferred to the Big Game Biologist position and it has been a whirlwind of activity since then! I have enjoyed this first year and look forward to what the future can bring!

Erik Bartholomew, Big Game Biologist, ODWC

**FIGURE 1: Total Deer Harvest**



**2012-13 DEER SEASON**

Though much of the state was gripped in an exceptional drought in 2012, that did not stop Oklahoma deer hunters from getting out there and having a successful season! Once all the deer had been tallied, Oklahoma hunters took home 107,848 deer last year. This number is 5,015 deer less than were taken in the 2011-12 season; a healthy figure when you consider the heat and drought conditions faced last season. As in years past, bucks made up the bulk of the harvest with 64,573 antlered deer being checked. Doe harvest came in at 43,275 making up 40 percent of the total harvest. Table 1 depicts the deer harvest by county, season, and sex. Table 2 is the same infor-

mation but only tallies the deer taken off of the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC).

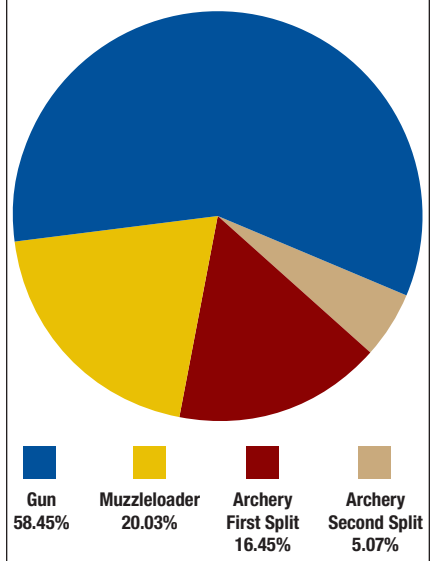
Looking back at deer harvest since 1972, in Figure 1, the 2012 season is the 6th highest. Looking at the buck and doe harvest for the past decade in Figure 2, the 2012 season is higher than the long-term average of 106,900 deer.

Gun hunters again took home the bulk of the harvest at 58 percent. When all gun seasons were combined (general gun, youth, and holiday antlerless), hunters bagged 63,035 deer in 2012. Muzzleloader hunters added 21,605 deer to the total. Similar to 2011, archery hunters har-

vested more deer than muzzleloader hunters, taking home 23,208 deer in 2012. To see the individual seasons and their respective harvests take a look at Figure 3.

Looking at Table 1 you will see a listing of deer harvest by county, perhaps noticing a large disparity in the numbers of deer taken. This is influenced by the size of the county, the amount of suitable deer habitat, hunter access,

**FIGURE 3: 2012 Deer Harvest by Season Type**

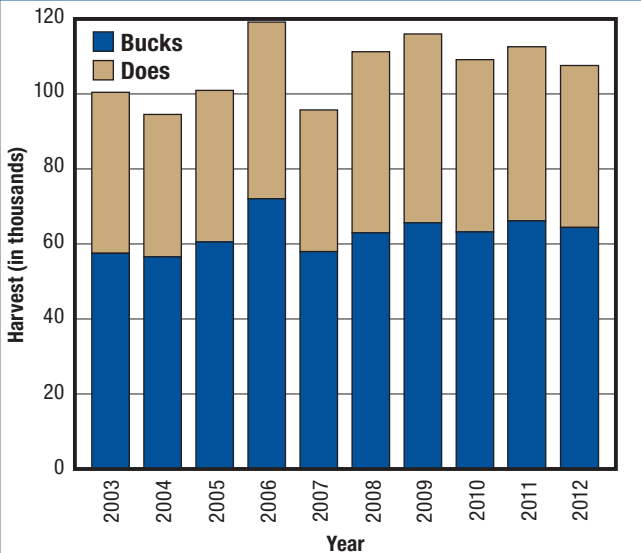


and a multitude of other factors. Some counties have WMAs and others do not, therefore Table 1 reflects deer harvest totals with the WMAs removed. Considering the harsh summer conditions it is no surprise that no counties west of I-35 made the top ten.

Osage County leads the top ten with 4,947 deer harvested in 2012. Cherokee County edged out Pittsburg County with 3,499 and 3,148 respectively. The other counties that made the top ten were Creek (3,039), Atoka (2,696), Pushmataha (2,639), Delaware (2,574), Sequoyah (2,491), Craig (2,427), and McCurtain (2,408).

Many people may not realize it but

**FIGURE 2: 10 Year Deer Harvest Trend, 2003-2012 All Seasons Combined**





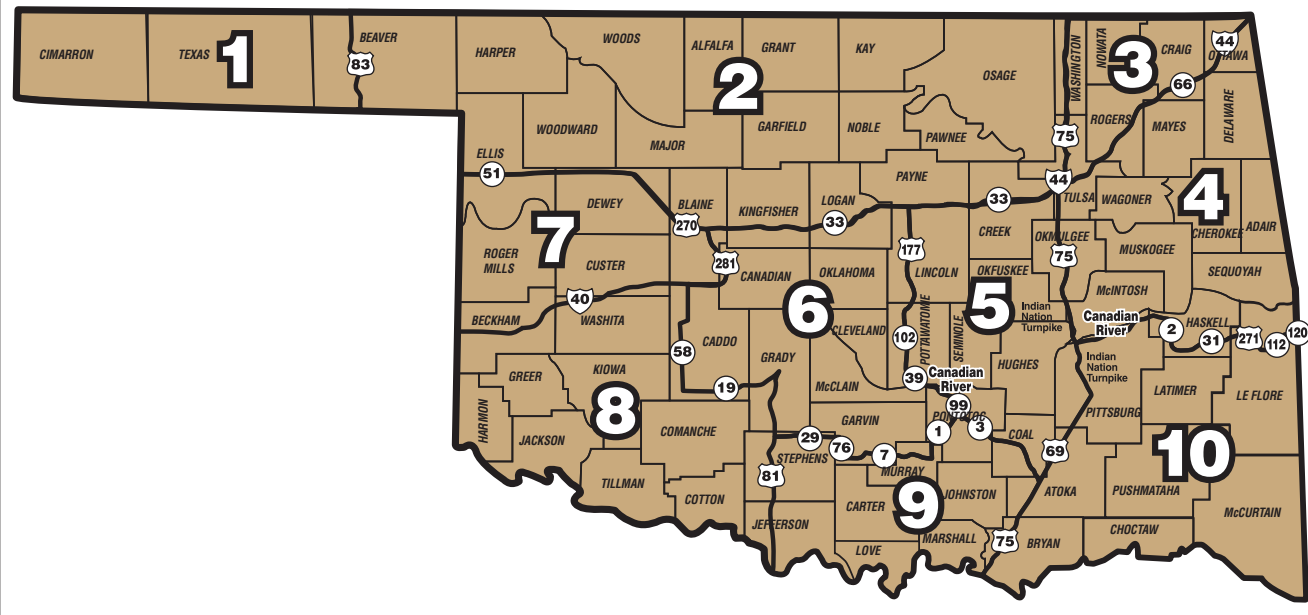
**TABLE 1: 2012 Deer Kill By County, Season, and Sex (WMA's not included in county totals)**

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total Bucks	Total Does	Grand Total
	Bucks	Does	Bucks	Does	Bucks	Does			
Adair	231	190	741	512	430	180	1,402	882	2,284
Alfalfa	154	165	613	500	106	95	873	760	1,633
Atoka	284	350	830	535	510	187	1,624	1,072	2,696
Beaver	36	28	255	96	48	15	339	139	478
Beckham	97	54	430	246	60	42	587	342	929
Blaine	85	76	406	242	55	59	546	377	923
Bryan	167	184	374	199	142	74	683	457	1,140
Caddo	128	140	626	426	155	83	909	649	1,558
Canadian	89	69	289	190	58	31	436	290	726
Carter	151	135	432	281	166	90	749	506	1,255
Cherokee	380	448	968	766	659	278	2,007	1,492	3,499
Choctaw	227	230	495	262	224	120	946	612	1,558
Cimarron	18	4	78	0	10	0	106	4	110
Cleveland	228	241	455	297	193	103	876	641	1,517
Coal	176	153	453	316	251	81	880	550	1,430
Comanche	58	44	210	107	43	22	311	173	484
Cotton	45	38	150	117	28	20	223	175	398
Craig	241	198	878	643	296	171	1,415	1,012	2,427
Creek	338	286	1,073	754	366	222	1,777	1,262	3,039
Custer	45	24	342	134	44	24	431	182	613
Delaware	332	309	792	565	412	164	1,536	1,038	2,574
Dewey	44	42	430	243	46	39	520	324	844
Ellis	52	36	476	257	44	38	572	331	903
Garfield	85	81	419	285	77	49	581	415	996
Garvin	93	67	287	142	117	31	497	240	737
Grady	100	97	473	276	109	68	682	441	1,123
Grant	118	135	707	533	149	115	974	783	1,757
Greer	54	54	254	153	30	39	338	246	584
Harmon	50	66	275	190	33	29	358	285	643
Harper	45	21	296	137	45	13	386	171	557
Haskell	234	194	493	378	329	114	1,056	686	1,742
Hughes	147	146	597	382	258	96	1,002	624	1,626
Jackson	82	53	238	122	49	19	369	194	563
Jefferson	56	38	238	127	62	21	356	186	542
Johnston	116	107	378	291	133	52	627	450	1,077
Kay	114	125	590	443	132	104	836	672	1,508
Kingfisher	70	62	304	181	88	42	462	285	747
Kiowa	46	42	225	156	34	24	305	222	527
Latimer	218	212	542	271	375	161	1,135	644	1,779
LeFlore	298	236	676	381	489	253	1,463	870	2,333
Lincoln	222	190	724	479	244	113	1,190	782	1,972
Logan	191	146	548	381	143	73	882	600	1,482
Love	93	65	200	152	53	41	346	258	604
Major	132	83	561	350	88	69	781	502	1,283
Marshall	100	92	184	126	69	25	353	243	596
Mayes	243	198	568	397	331	150	1,142	745	1,887
McClain	52	44	175	118	59	26	286	188	474
McCurtain	284	259	778	353	516	218	1,578	830	2,408
McIntosh	109	108	347	200	173	74	629	382	1,011
Murray	63	51	229	132	84	27	376	210	586
Muskogee	213	237	517	367	258	120	988	724	1,712
Noble	85	98	391	321	88	62	564	481	1,045
Nowata	177	160	752	408	183	105	1,112	673	1,785
Okfuskee	114	78	394	253	156	83	664	414	1,078
Oklahoma	169	154	209	139	44	34	422	327	749
Okmulgee	140	126	383	234	174	85	697	445	1,142
Osage	444	425	1,960	1,351	440	327	2,844	2,103	4,947
Ottawa	145	146	431	289	187	84	763	519	1,282
Pawnee	87	97	420	327	83	67	590	491	1,081
Payne	138	108	495	309	120	69	753	486	1,239
Pittsburg	425	411	960	497	660	195	2,045	1,103	3,148
Pontotoc	171	162	426	285	201	70	798	517	1,315
Pottawatomie	172	189	544	361	241	120	957	670	1,627
Pushmataha	285	370	704	447	592	241	1,581	1,058	2,639
Roger Mills	107	71	700	449	84	39	891	559	1,450
Rogers	293	247	611	414	216	98	1,120	759	1,879
Seminole	87	102	355	272	171	89	613	463	1,076
Sequoyah	305	316	643	601	445	181	1,393	1,098	2,491
Stephens	113	102	334	204	101	28	548	334	882
Texas	13	14	108	19	28	2	149	35	184
Tillman	52	54	191	149	33	37	276	240	516
Tulsa	105	105	207	121	53	28	365	254	619
Wagoner	115	134	294	260	145	86	554	480	1,034
Washington	80	73	400	222	97	57	577	352	929
Washita	22	26	151	93	19	19	192	138	330
Woods	113	80	574	356	126	65	813	501	1,314
Woodward	106	77	554	316	85	51	745	444	1,189
County Subtotal	11,297	10,578	36,810	23,888	13,645	6,626	61,752	41,092	102,844
WMA Subtotal	665	668	1,433	904	723	611	2,821	2,183	5,004
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11,962</b>	<b>11,246</b>	<b>38,243</b>	<b>24,792</b>	<b>14,368</b>	<b>7,237</b>	<b>64,573</b>	<b>43,275</b>	<b>107,848</b>

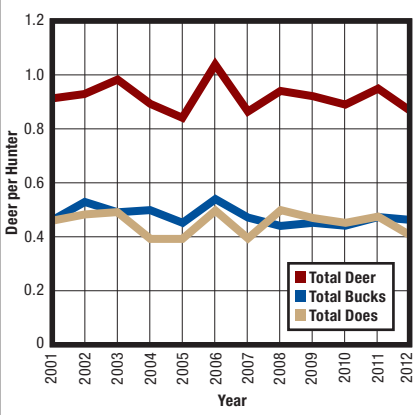
**TABLE 2: 2012 Deer Kill By WMA, Season, and Sex**

WMA	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total Bucks	Total Does	Grand Total
	Bucks	Does	Bucks	Does	Bucks	Does			
Altus-Lugert WMA	4	4	1	0	1	2	6	6	12
Atoka WMA	5	6	24	10	5	1	34	17	51
Beaver River McFarland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Beaver River WMA	2	1	25	0	11	3	38	4	42
Black Kettle WMA	22	23	177	113	27	59	226	195	421
Blue River WMA	1	1	5	0	0	0	6	1	7
Broken Bow WMA	2	1	2	1	5	5	9	7	16
Camp Gruber JMTA	3	5	9	0	12	4	24	9	33
Candy Creek WMA	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	3
Canton WMA	5	11	15	6	10	11	30	28	58
Cherokee GMA	6	4	23	14	0	0	29	18	47
Cherokee PHA	5	4	18	3	19	8	42	15	57
Chickasaw NRA	1	2	0	3	0	3	1	8	9
Chouteau WMA	0	3	3	0	0	1	3	4	7
Cimarron Bluff WMA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Cimarron Hills WMA	0	1	3	2	0	0	3	3	6
Cookson Hills WMA	5	9	22	11	3	7	30	27	57
Cooper WMA	3	2	17	2	1	0	21	4	25
Copan WMA	12	30	27	9	12	10	51	49	100
Cross Timbers WMA	17	24	17	8	10	6	44	38	82
Deep Fork NWR	11	7	4	2	1	0	16	9	25
Deep Fork WMA	5	12	0	1	7	5	12	18	30
Dewey County WMA	7	5	14	6	6	4	27	15	42
Drummond Flat WMA	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2
Ellis County WMA	0	0	20	1	0	3	20	4	24
Eufaula WMA	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	3	4
Fobb Bottom WMA	9	2	14	12	7	4	30	18	48
Fort Cobb SP	0	1	1	5	2	9	3	15	18
Fort Cobb WMA	10	6	3	2	0	0	13	8	21
Fort Gibson WMA	38	43	36	11	36	31	110	85	195
Fort Gibson WR	3	1	0	0	14	9	17	10	27
Fort Sill MR	33	29	73	36	19	21	125	86	211
Fort Supply WMA	14	14	19	4	5	9	38	27	65
Gary Sherrer WMA	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	3	5
Gist WMA	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Grady Co WMA	1	1	2	1	0	0	3	2	5
Grassy Slough WMA	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	2
Gruber WMA	6	6	6	1	10	1	22	8	30
Hackberry Flat WMA	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
Heyburn WMA	3	3	10	8	2	1	15	12	27
Hickory Creek WMA	3	6	20	11	9	8	32	25	57
Honobia Creek WMA	19	7	48	30	49	24	116	61	177
Hugo WMA	18	16	35	18	26	24	79	58	137
Hulah WMA	4	8	39	7	10	16	53	31	84
James Collins WMA	20	25	27	10	0	0	47	35	82
John Dahl WMA	0	0	2	0	2	1	4	1	5
Kaw WMA	23	22	72	74	36	26	131	122	253
Keystone WMA	8	5	10	8	6	9	24	22	46
Lexington WMA	16	8	29	22	25	5	70	35	105
Little River NWR	8	6	17	7	15	6	40	19	59
Little River SP	13	5	0	0	0	0	13	5	18
Love Valley WMA	7	6	25	20	7	6	39	32	71
Lower Illinois River	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
Major County WMA	1	0	2	1	0	1	3	2	5
McAlester AAP	106	86	2	22	0	0	108	108	216
McCurtain Co. WA	0	0	2	0	3	0	5	0	5
McGee Creek WMA	4	9	8	0	13	7	25	16	41
Okmulgee GMA	1	0	15	11	0	0	16	11	27
Okmulgee PHA	1	0	10	0	3	0	14	0	14
Oologah WMA	5	9	47	29	10	8	62	46	108
Optima NWR	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Optima WMA	1	5	8	1	1	0	10	6	16
Osage Rock Creek WMA	2	1	9	0	4	2	15	3	18
Osage W Wall WMA	2	3	2	4	4	0	8	7	15
Ouachita WMA	12	15	38	20	23	12	73	47	120
Ouachita WMA (McCurtain)	3	11	6	3	4	1	13	15	28
Ozark Plateau WMA	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Packsaddle WMA	1	1	45	1	11	21	57	23	80
Pine Creek WMA	9	3	6	7	9	5	24	15	39
Pushmataha WMA	11	8	24	8	12	2	47	18	65
Red Slough WMA	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
Rita Blanca WMA	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
Robbers Cave WMA	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2
Robert S. Kerr WMA	1	3	2	3	3	1	6	7	13
Salt Plains NWR	1	2	22	69	2	17	25	88	113
Sandy Sanders WMA	3	0	6	2	3	0	12	2	14
Schultz WMA	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Sequoyah NWR	0	0	0	0	16	95	16	95	111
Sequoyah SP	2	2	0	0	9	13	11	15	26
Skiatook WMA	3	1	11	3	7	3	21	7	28
Sparrowhawk WMA	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Spavinaw GMA	34	39	22	5	7	5	63	49	112
Spavinaw PHA	0	1	13	6	8	6	21	13	34
Stringtown WMA	1	1	4	7	1	0	6	8	14
Tenkiller WMA	0	2	0	3	2	4	2	9	11
Three Rivers WMA	55	61	149	89	114	49	318	199	517
Tishomingo NWR	1	0	5	28	0	1	6	29	35
Tishomingo WMA	7	2	9	5	2	2	18	9	27
Washita Arm WMA	6	8	9	6	6	0	21	14	35
Washita NWR	0	0	13	75	0	0	13	75	88
Waurika WMA	5	3	1	2	8	3	14	8	22
Webbers Falls WMA	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	3	4
Wichita Mts NWR	0	1	11	9	0	0	11	10	21
Wister WMA	4	2	10	2	7	7	31	11	42
Yourman WMA	1	3	1	0	1	2	3	5	8
WMA SUBTOTAL	665	668	1,433	904	723	611	2,821	2,183	5,004
COUNTY SUBTOTAL	11,297	10,578	36,810	23,888	13,645	6,626	61,752	41,092	102,844
GRAND TOTAL	11,962	11,246	38,243	24,792	14,368	7,237	64,573	43,275	107,848

**Figure 4: 2012 Deer Management Zones**



**FIGURE 5: Average Annual Deer Harvest per Hunter, 2001-2012**



Oklahoma is home to another deer species. Mule deer prefer wide open spaces found in western portions of Oklahoma. As with white-tailed deer, one county tops the list every year. This year was no exception with Cimarron County topping off the list with 66. Beaver County was next with 34 and Texas County rounded out the panhandle coming in third with 21. Other counties that recorded mulies in their harvest total were Ellis (5), Woodward and Harper had 4 each, Roger Mills and Jackson each had 3, Custer (2), while Woods, Beckham, Alfalfa, Dewey, and Grant each had 1. In total, 147 of these unique deer were harvested in Oklahoma in 2012.

If you have ever taken I-40 entering Oklahoma just west of Fort Smith, Arkansas you notice that eastern Oklahoma's mountains are covered in oak and hickory

mixed with pine. As you continue traveling west, you transition to a more open post oak and blackjack woodland on the rolling hills of the cross timbers. Continuing past Oklahoma City, little bluestem, big bluestem, Indian grass, open spaces and flat plains begin to dominate in the mixed grass prairie. Finally as you exit the state west of Sayre you see the start of the short grass prairie dominated by buffalo grass and grama grasses. It is safe to say Oklahoma is very diverse and a "one-size-fits-all" approach to managing wildlife does not always fit. For this and many other reasons the state is broken up into 10 separate management zones (Figure 4). These areas of similar herd and habitat variables allow for greater flexibility in setting regulations. Even with the differences between the 10 separate management zones, they are all managed with a continued emphasis on achieving and maintaining an adequate harvest of antlerless deer balanced with the conditions found within each zone.

All parts of Oklahoma are open to antlerless deer harvest to one degree or another. Some areas had liberal "doe days" while others offered a more conservative approach. Depending upon the management zone hunted, sportsmen and women had the chance to harvest antlerless deer during archery, muzzleloader, and rifle seasons. Again in 2012, October youth hunters under 18 accompanied by an adult were allowed to harvest antlerless deer and a special holiday antlerless season was offered in December.

**Safety Tip:**



**Two-handed Carry**

*Hold the grip in one hand and the gun's forearm in the other hand. This carry provides the best muzzle control.*

*There are several safe methods of carrying your rifle or shotgun when you are hunting. The method you choose will depend upon the type of animal you are hunting and the conditions of the environment. Always be conservative and choose the safest method possible.*

*All hunting situations are different and most of them could easily change at any given time. You must remember, when carrying a gun the most important thing is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. If a firearm is pointed in a safe direction and it went off, no one would get injured.*

# Hunters in the Know... Let Young Bucks Grow!

## DEER MANAGEMENT IS MORE THAN ANTLERLESS HARVEST



TOMMY KERLAND

"Hunters in the know let young bucks grow" outlines the Wildlife Department's new education initiatives to remind sportsmen that deer management means more than just harvesting does. It's also about helping to create the most healthy age structure in the state's deer herd. That involves passing on young bucks when possible to help more bucks reach mature age classes.

Oklahoma hunters already are doing a great job at putting these principles to work. In addition to continuing to participate in a generous range of antlerless deer hunting opportunities, Oklahoma deer hunters also are harvesting increasingly greater numbers of older bucks

while voluntarily letting more and more young bucks walk, according to data collected in recent years.

The Quality Deer Management Association issued a report this year analyzing 2011 buck harvest data from states that provided information to the project. Oklahoma was in the top five states with the highest harvest of bucks age 3.5 years old and older.

In Oklahoma, 51 percent of the deer jaw bones aged from the 2011 buck harvest was comprised of deer that were 3.5 years old or older. In comparison, the national average of states from which QDMA was able to collect harvest data is about 33 percent.

Additionally, officials with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation say the percent of yearlings in the total buck harvest has

continually decreased as well, from nearly 70 percent in the late 1980s to just 25 percent in 2011. "The Department encourages hunters to continue thinking about the bucks they are harvesting each year. Ask yourself each time you see a buck, 'Is he the one I want?'" and look for opportunities to pass on younger bucks in order to wait for an older one."

"I think that Oklahoma has done a tremendous job protecting yearling bucks and improving the age structure of their deer herd," said Kip Adams, director of education and outreach and certified wildlife biologist for the Quality Deer Management Association, a national deer conservation

organization based out of Bogart, Ga. "This is very positive for the deer population and especially for Oklahoma's hunters."

According to Erik Bartholomew, big game biologist for the Wildlife Department, the fact that more older bucks and fewer younger are getting harvested means Oklahoma hunters have good hunting opportunities and recognize they are deer managers when they are hunting. He believes there are several reasons for Oklahoma's success.

"We are living in the best time to be a deer hunter in the history of our state," Bartholomew said. "We have archery, muzzleloader and modern firearms seasons, a youth season, liberal antlerless hunting opportunities, liberal harvest limits, and literally 100 days out of the year that hunters can be out there looking to harvest a deer if they want to. Hunters are better educated and they are being more selective about what they harvest."

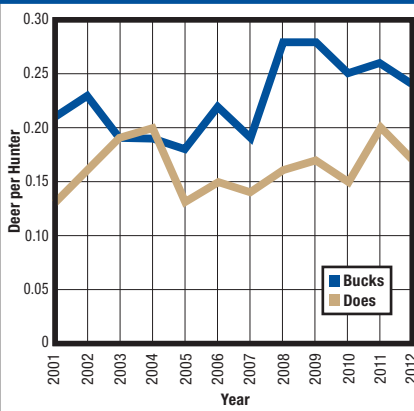
Still, Bartholomew said the Wildlife Department and the state's hunters can continue to improve the health and structure of its deer population by working together.

"Hunters should continue to take advantage of antlerless deer hunting opportunities, and they should strive to keep up the good work of introducing youth to deer hunting," he said.

There are more than 250,000 deer hunters in Oklahoma, and deer hunting is the most popular type of hunting in Oklahoma and one of the most popular outdoor activities in the state. Hunters not only enjoy the recreation of hunting but also play a critical role in the conservation of Oklahoma's deer and other wildlife. The Wildlife Department receives no general state tax appropriations and is funded primarily by hunters and anglers through their purchase of hunting and fishing licenses and excise taxes paid on certain sporting goods. 🌿



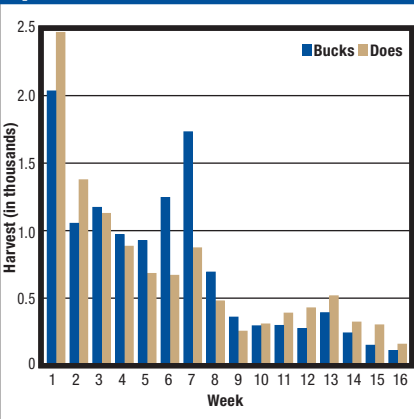
**FIGURE 6: Average Annual Harvest per Hunter, Archery Season 2001-2012**



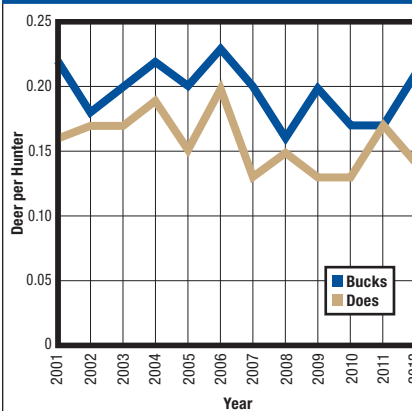
Hunters continue to take advantage of the antlerless opportunities available to them. This past year, 44,454 antlerless deer (including button bucks) were taken from our state. While this is less than the 2011 total, it is important to note that the harvest of antlerless deer has remained above 40 percent for the past 5 years. Hunters must remain diligent in their doe harvest efforts. Sport hunting remains the single best method available for managing population growth, maintaining healthy ratios, and safeguarding herd and habitat health.

The combined season limit for all deer archery, muzzleloader, gun and youth-only seasons was no more than 6 deer per individual. Of the 6 deer allowed, no more than 2 of them could be antlered bucks. Any deer taken by hunters participating in the special holiday antlerless season or deer taken through the ODWC controlled hunts process were considered “bonus deer” and would not count towards the hunter’s limit of 6 deer.

**FIGURE 12: 2012 Archery Harvest by Week**



**FIGURE 7: Average Annual Harvest per Hunter, Muzzleloader Season 2001-2012**

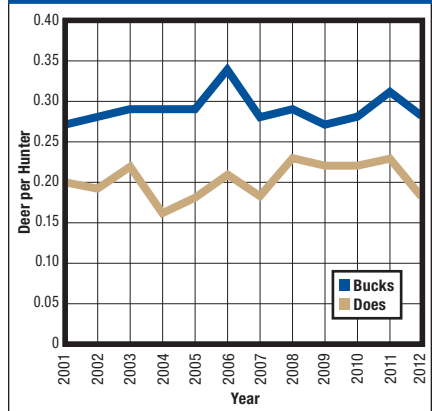


## ARCHERY SEASON

Archery continues to be a favorite way for hunters to pursue the wily whitetail. According to the Game Harvest Survey (GHS) 89,227 hunters headed to their stand during archery season this past year. While this number is down 2,352 hunters from last year, it is still the 3rd highest ever. During the 2012-13 season, archers took home 23,208 deer. This number is down 1,700 deer from the 2011 tally. This trend can be clearly seen in Figure 11, while Figure 12 shows the buck and doe harvest each week of the season. Figure 13 shows the percent success by season type. Archers still had a high rate of success at 26 percent this past season. The average individual archer’s harvest rate is shown on Figure 6.

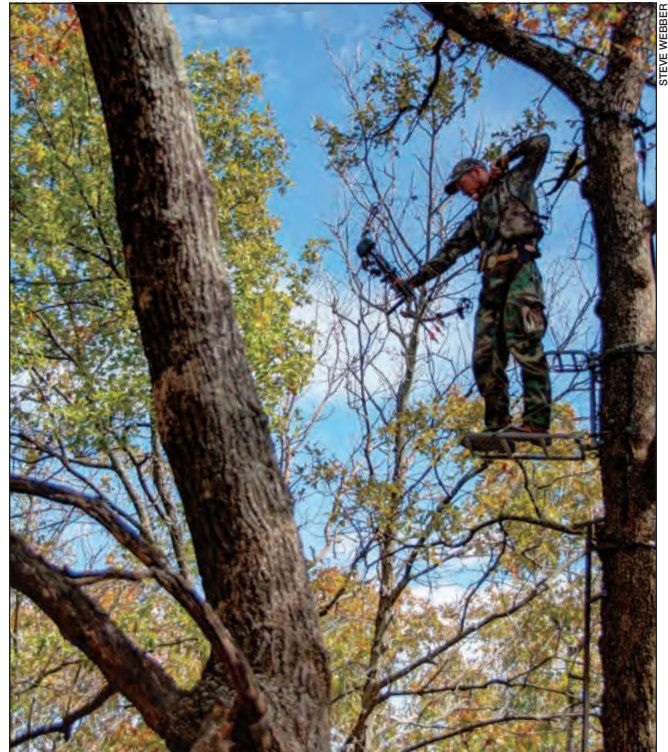
The archery season opened October 1st and continued uninterrupted until January 15th. The bag limit was 6 deer, which could include no more than 2 bucks. To keep with tradition, the archery season harvest is shown in two segments in Figure 3. The first “split” of the season ran from opening day to November 16th. The second segment was from November 17th to the end of the season.

**FIGURE 8: Average Annual Harvest per Hunter, Gun Season 2001-2012**



## MUZZLELOADER SEASON

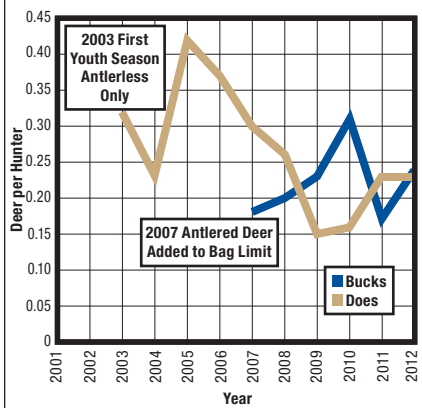
In 2012, muzzleloader season began on October 27th and continued through November 4th state-wide, with no changes in the bag limit or antlerless opportunities from the 2011 season. According to the GHS, 90,560 muzzleloader hunters took to the fields (Figure 14). While this was down slightly with 195 fewer hunters participating, the success rate at 24 percent was the highest it has been since 2009 (Figure 13). The total muzzleloader



Almost 90,000 hunters headed to their stands during archery season last year, according to the Game Harvest Survey taken by the Wildlife Department. It’s a popular way to hunt, and practicing with the bow and arrow can be almost as fun as hunting with them.



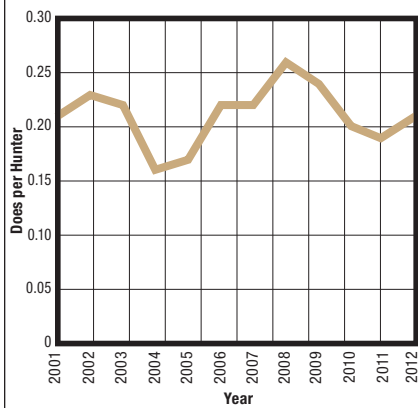
**FIGURE 9: Average Annual Harvest per Hunter, Youth Season 2001-2012**



harvest was up 10.5 percent from last year at 21,605. The average individual muzzleloader hunter success rate is shown in Figure 7.

The bag limit and antlerless opportunity remained unchanged from 2011. Hunters

**FIGURE 10: Average Annual Harvest per Hunter, Holiday Season 2001-2012**



could kill one antlered and two antlerless deer provided at least one of the antlerless deer came from Management Zone 2, 7, or 8. Figure 15 charts the muzzleloader harvest by day and sex.

**FIGURE 11: Archery Season Hunter Numbers and Harvest, 2003-2012**

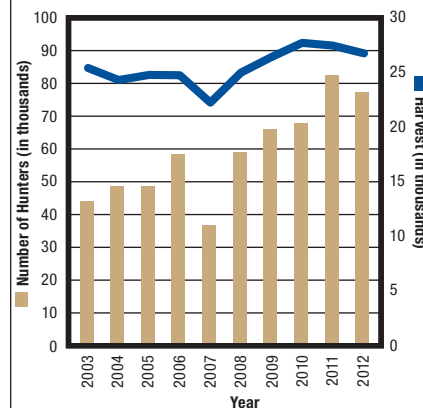


Figure 13 shows hunter success rates were down this past year.

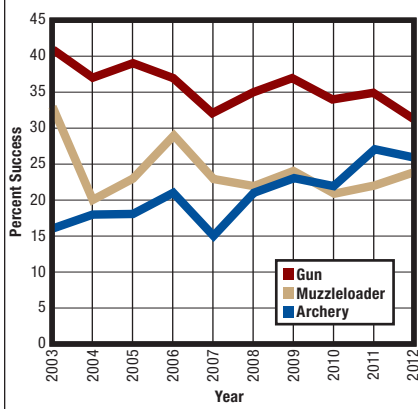
Youth hunters had the first chance at deer with a rifle during youth season and 11,176 hunters under the age of 18 took to the woods taking 4,759 deer, a 43 percent success rate. Youth season started October 19th and ran through the weekend, ending on the 21st. With more and more opportunities available for youth with the apprentice license, reduced license and permit costs, and a special youth season, it is no surprise that 2,869 more youth were out this fall compared to last year. The season was open statewide and had a bag limit of one antlered and one antlerless deer.

The next chance for hunters to pursue deer with a modern rifle started November 17th, the Saturday before Thanksgiving, and ran uninterrupted for 16 days, ending on December 2nd. In 2012, data indicates 155,246 hunters headed to their stand for the modern gun season. Opening weekend had the highest participation again this year (Figure 17) with 29 percent of the 63,035 deer harvest-

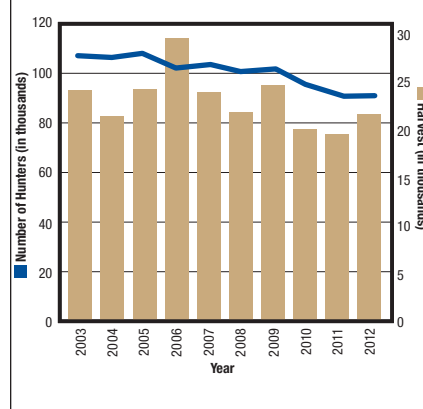
## GUN SEASONS

As is the norm, more hunters go afield with a modern rifle than with any other harvest method. This was no different in November of 2012. Combining all the opportunities for hunters to use a center-fire rifle (youth, general gun, and holiday antlerless), a total of 201,454 hunters went to the woods with a rifle. Looking at Figure 16, more hunters were afield this year than last year, yet harvest was down slightly. Reports from the field noted many hunters weren't seeing deer while on stand but had pictures on trail cameras that were taken at night. The hot weather during gun season likely reduced daytime deer movement and made staying on stands difficult for hunters. With more hunters afield and fewer deer harvested it makes sense that

**FIGURE 13: Percent Success by Season Type, 2003-2012**



**FIGURE 14: Muzzleloader Season Hunter Numbers and Harvest, 2003-2012**



### Trail Carry

Hold the stock with one hand, and make sure the muzzle is pointed at the ground.

There are several safe methods of carrying your rifle or shotgun when you are hunting. The method you choose will depend upon the type of animal you are hunting and the conditions of the environment. Always be conservative and choose the safest method possible.

All hunting situations are different and most of them could easily change at any given time. You must remember, when carrying a gun the most important thing is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. If a firearm is pointed in a safe direction and it went off, no one would get injured.



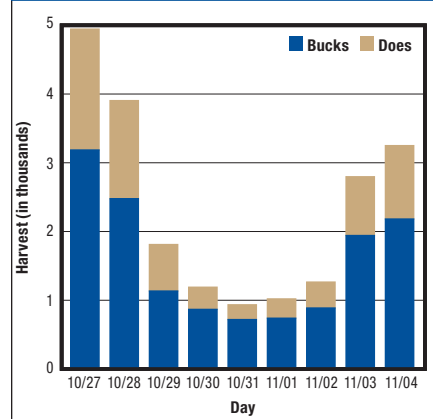


*By far, antlerless deer offer the most liberal big game hunting season limits in all of Oklahoma. They are plentiful, but nothing short of a trophy to any hunter that appreciates spending time outdoors and having fresh, quality venison in the freezer. This past year, over 44,000 antlerless deer were harvested in Oklahoma. With such plentiful availability of antlerless deer hunting opportunities, 2013 might be your year to harvest a doe (bag limit allows up to 6 antlerless deer).*





**FIGURE 15: 2012 Muzzleloader Harvest by Day\***



\*Graph depicts deer taken during the 9-day season. Additional deer were taken with ML equipment but are not included in this graph.

put some meat in the freezer, taking 4,385 deer, a 13 percent success rate. The bag limit remained at 1 antlerless deer. As an added incentive to participate in the season, this deer did not count against the hunters combined season bag limit of 6 deer. Figure 10 illustrates the average annual harvest for hunters participating in this popular season.

## ELK

Oklahoma elk hunting is mostly restricted to those fortunate enough to draw a permit through the Department's controlled hunts process. The majority of the permits issued through the draw process are for the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Oklahoma. Again this year, permit numbers were reduced as a result of compounding fac-



### Elbow Carry

Hold the grip of the gun over your elbow, let the stock rest against the back of your upper arm. The muzzle of the gun should be pointing down. Using this carry gives the handler the least control.

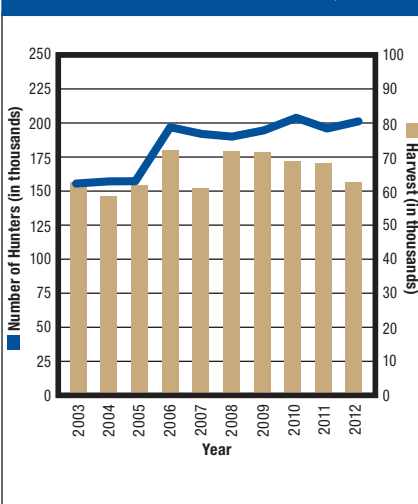
There are several safe methods of carrying your rifle or shotgun when you are hunting. The method you choose will depend upon the type of animal you are hunting and the conditions of the environment. Always be conservative and choose the safest method possible.

All hunting situations are different and most of them could easily change at any given time. You must remember, when carrying a gun the most important thing is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. If a firearm is pointed in a safe direction and it went off, no one would get injured.

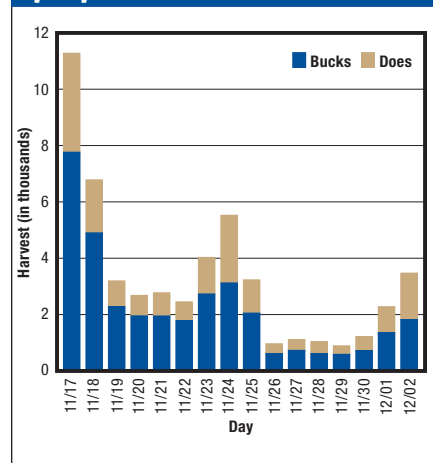
ed with a modern firearms falling on the first two days of the season. Overall success for the general gun season was 34 percent. Bag limits remained unchanged from the 2011 season with hunters having the chance to harvest 3 deer, with no more than 1 antlered and two antlerless per hunter. If taking two antlerless, one had to have been taken from Management Zones 2, 7, or 8.

The special holiday antlerless season rounded out the chance for hunters to pursue whitetails with a gun in 8 of the 10 Management Zones. The holiday season opened December 21st and ran for 10 days — closing on December 30th. This year 35,032 hunters took advantage of this one last chance to

**FIGURE 16: Gun Season Hunter and Harvest 2003-2012 (includes Holiday Antlerless and Youth Seasons)**



**FIGURE 17: 2012 Gun Harvest by Day\***



\* Graph depicts only deer taken during the 16-day regular rifle season. Additional deer were taken with firearms but not included in this graphic



Most elk hunting permits in Oklahoma are issued through the Wildlife Department's controlled hunts program, though there are some parts of the state that offer private lands hunting in both southwest and northeast portions of the state. In total, 152 elk were taken during 2012. To learn more about the popular elk hunting opportunities offered through the controlled hunts program, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

tors from an ice storm several years ago, continued drought, and major wildfires through most of the elk range. This year

37 hunters with a coveted bull tag harvested 28 branch-antlered bulls, while 47 cow hunters took home 18 females. The overall

success rate for Wichita Mountains elk hunters was 54 percent. Other controlled hunt permits were available on two ODWC areas, the Pushmataha WMA and the Cookson WMA. Both permits were either-sex. Both hunters bagged nice bull elk on their WMA controlled hunt. While the majority of elk permits are issued through the draw, some parts of the state also offer the opportunity to pursue elk on private lands. Those hunters with landowner permission can hunt elk in the rolling hills north of the Wichita Mountains in Caddo, Comanche, and Kiowa counties. To effectively manage the elk in this part of the state, two hunting zones were established. The Granite Hills/West Zone was located west of State Highway 115. The bag limit for this zone was established at 1 elk of either sex. On the opposite side of the highway, hunters were allowed 2 elk (one of which must have been antlerless) in the Slick Hills/East zone. Including elk taken off the Fort Sill military installation, 45 males and 4 females were taken by archers with an additional 20 males and 32 females being killed by gun hunters. This brought the southwest region total, including the Wichita Mountains NWR harvest, to 147 total elk in 2012.

Oklahoma also has an elk hunting zone



LANCE WIECK

**Shoulder Carry**

*Rest the forearm on the top of your shoulder by holding the grip.*

*There are several safe methods of carrying your rifle or shotgun when you are hunting. The method you choose will depend upon the type of animal you are hunting and the conditions of the environment. Always*

*be conservative and choose the safest method possible. All hunting situations are different and most of them could easily change at any given time. You must remember, when carrying a gun the most important thing is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. If a firearm is pointed in a safe direction and it went off, no one would get injured.*





in the northeast portion of the state in Adair, Cherokee, Delaware, Mayes, Muskogee, and Sequoyah counties. The seasons ran concurrent with the established deer seasons and had a 1 elk bag limit. Five elk were checked in in this region. Two males were killed by archers and 3 males were killed by gun hunters.

The combined elk limit was set at 2 elk for all elk zones combined. In total, 152 elk were taken during the 2012 seasons.

## PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

With the panhandle in an exceptional drought the last two years, pronghorn populations have been impacted. These “speed goats” of the prairies need rainfall to produce the resources they need to survive and reproduce. With reduced populations available to hunters, harvest was also down. Over-the-counter archery hunters harvested 16 (13 bucks and 3 does) of these unique animals which is half of the number harvested last year.

Those hunters lucky enough to draw a once-in-a-lifetime pronghorn permit through the Department’s controlled hunt process harvested 45 bucks and 91 does. The remaining pronghorn harvested this year were through landowner permits with an additional 26 bucks and 70 does harvested, bringing the total number of animals harvested in 2012 to 248.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Each year for the past few decades, natural resource students are hired from selected state universities to collect deer jaws at different locations across the state. This data, coupled with jaws collected from cooperators enrolled in the Department’s Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), and deer harvested on select Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), provide the herd age structure that is needed for informed

management decisions. During the 2012 season, 3,568 individual jaws were removed and analyzed using the tooth wear and eruption method to determine the age of the deer at the time of harvest. This sample size is 3.3 percent of the total number of deer harvested in 2012. This valuable data, collected at deer processors across the state, is summarized in Figures 19 and 20. The ages given in these figures are divided into half-year increments. While this might seem odd, if you remember that fawns are born in the spring, when hunting season arrives, that deer is 6 months or ½ of a year old.

Yearling bucks (those that are 1.5 years old) are especially good barometers of a herd’s physical condition. Their high vulnerability to harvest usually insures a large sample size, and, more importantly, these young bucks have the burden of growing their first set of antlers when body growth is not complete. This makes them especially sensitive to prevailing range conditions. When yearlings have well-developed antlers with many points



### Cradle Carry

*Cradle the gun’s forearm in the bend of one arm. Hunting situations change often. You should always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. This can change depending on the location of other members of your party.*

*There are several safe methods of carrying your rifle or shotgun when you are hunting. The method you choose will depend upon the type of animal you are hunting and the conditions of the environment. Always be conservative and choose the safest method possible.*

*All hunting situations are different and most of them could easily change at any given time. You must remember, when carrying a gun the most important thing is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. If a firearm is pointed in a safe direction and it went off, no one would get injured.*



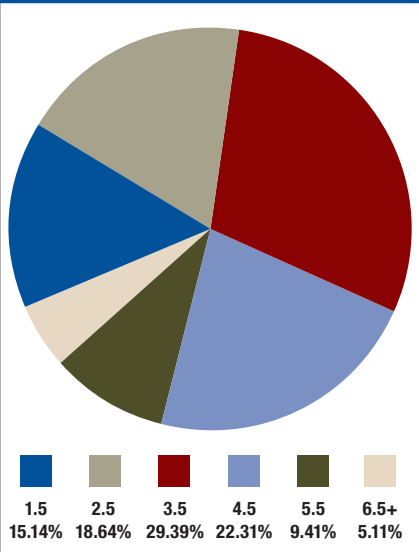
A pronghorn in Cimarron County. Drought has had an impact on the “speed goats” of the Panhandle, with fewer harvested last season than normal. A total of 248 were harvested in 2012.



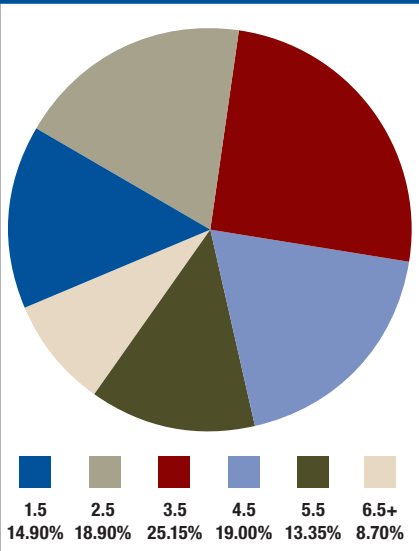
and large beam diameters, the herd can be considered healthy. Of the 169 yearling bucks examined in 2012, 55 percent had four or more points (Figure 18). This is a decrease from the 2011 season. However, this is expected with range conditions being so poor with the drought conditions Oklahoma has been experiencing.

Figure 19 shows the 2012 adult buck age structure. While the number of yearling bucks decreased considerably from 2011 levels (15.14 percent), it is important to note that our overall sample size from student pulled jaws was smaller this year and may account for the change. Another explanation could be with recruitment low in the very hot summer of 2011 we simply do not have as many 1.5 year old deer out

**FIGURE 19: 2012 Adult Buck Age Distribution**



**FIGURE 20: 2012 Adult Doe Age Distribution**



there. Only time will tell as we progress through the coming years, any trends in that age class should become apparent in subsequent harvest data.

The age structure for adult antlerless deer is shown in Figure 20. The doe harvest is a telling sign of our herd structure. Since does do not have antlers, the harvest pressure on does is fairly level across the board. As mentioned above, our sample size for deer jaws was not as high as in years past, however, the proportion of yearling does (aged 1.5) is reduced from previous years. While the remaining age classes are similar to years previous, again this will be something to watch as we progress through the next few hunting seasons.

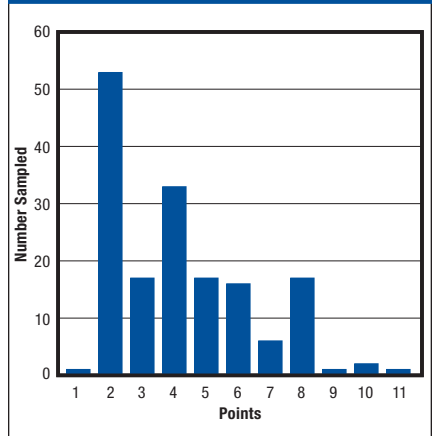
## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Department managed lands might account for only 3 percent of the state's land mass but they were responsible for producing 4.6 percent of the 2012 harvest. Hunters continue to take advantage of these public lands. Some of the areas are open to hunting the same as the general statewide dates and bag limits, some have special regulations to help manage hunter numbers and deer populations, and some are only available to hunters fortunate enough to draw a permit through the ODWC controlled hunt process. This past year 5,004 deer were taken from these Department managed properties. Of the deer taken, 43.6 percent were does. Table 2 represents a harvest summary for each area by season and sex.

## AWARDS PROGRAM DEER

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife has its own deer recognition program designed to offer official acknowledgment to hunters fortunate enough to harvest a large-antlered deer from within our borders. The Cy Curtis Awards Program was established in 1975 in honor of the man most responsible for re-establishing white-tailed deer throughout the state. Many Oklahoma hunters are unaware of the dire state our deer herds faced in the not so distant past. In the early 1900 the total statewide white-tailed deer population was estimated to be fewer than 500 animals. Cy Curtis was the spearhead for the "trap and

**FIGURE 18: Yearling Buck Antler Point Distribution, 2012**



transplant" effort that moved deer from well-populated areas to those with suitable habitat, but lacking in deer. His efforts formed the groundwork for the deer hunting that Oklahomans enjoy today.

At the end of the recording period in June, 60 deer had been added to the Cy Curtis record book. Figure 21 shows the number of entries added to the book each year since the program began in 1972.

## CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 season, while not a record breaking season, still saw hunters having a fair amount of success. One explanation for the overall reduced harvest from last year was the weather during the hunting season. Hunters generally don't want to sit on their stand when they are sweating and those that do often are winded by a deer's sensitive nose. Archery and gun seasons in particular were unseasonably warm and the harvest trend shows that success for those two seasons was down. However, muzzleloader hunters did have more success when compared to the last two years. More youth hunters are taking advantage of youth season every year. This year 34 percent more youth took advantage of this opportunity and headed to the fields this past season.

The deer herd, while impacted by the heat and drought, weathered the tough conditions the past two years. Deer are resilient and adaptable animals. Oklahoma has experienced droughts before and they will happen again. The good news is that this spring and early summer have seen cooler than normal temperatures and a dramatic increase in rainfall setting Oklahoma up for a great hunting season in the fall of 2013!



You may have heard of the terms “typical” and “non-typical” to describe a buck’s antlers. That is a reference to how normally or abnormally arranged the points are on the antlers. In this photo, it’s easy to tell which deer would be considered to display a more “typical” set of antlers - the one on the right because of the extra abnormal points on the right side of his antlers.

**FIGURE 21: Total Cy Curtis Entries per Year**

