

2006 BIG GAME REPORT

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Hunters this past season harvested a total of 101,111 deer (Table 1). This total exceeds the 2004 season harvest by over 6,400 deer. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the number of bucks and does harvested each year since 1995. Bucks made up a large portion of the harvest increase with 3,975 more bucks being taken in 2005 than in 2004. Total buck harvest for all season types combined totaled 60,629 deer. The management mantra of "Hunters in the Know Take a Doe" continues to hit home with Oklahoma

hunters who bagged 40,842 does this past year. This was an increase of nearly 2,500 does compared to the 2004 harvest.

Gun season continued to be the most popular season and produced the bulk of the harvest. For the third year in a row, gun hunters have enjoyed expanded hunting opportunities with a 16-day season. In addition to the 16-day season, eligible hunters could participate in the youth-only season and the special antlerless seasons. Combining the harvest for these three seasons, hunters brought home 61,740 deer

in 2005. An additional 24,747 deer were taken during the state's 9-day muzzleloader season. The 2005 muzzleloader season was the second most successful in state history, with only the 2001 season having a higher harvest. Archery hunters were not to be left out taking 14,624 deer. The archery season harvest was a mere 15 deer shy of tying the record set by bow hunters in 2004. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of the total harvest by season type.

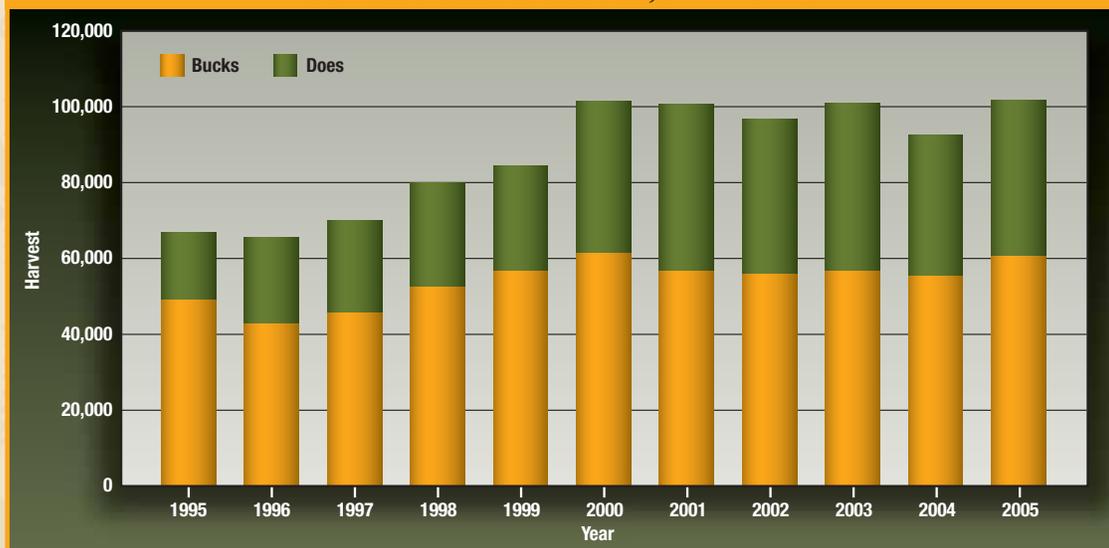
People who follow deer hunting in Oklahoma have gotten used to seeing a short list of counties that, year after year,



JOHN FORD

OKLAHOMA HUNTERS HARVESTED MORE THAN 60,000 BUCKS LAST YEAR INCLUDING SEVERAL TROPHY-CLASS ANIMALS.

FIGURE 1: HARVEST BY SEX, 1995 – 2005



are recorded as some of the state's top deer producers. While all of the state's counties have deer hunting opportunities, these few counties continually produce some of the highest harvest rates in the state. This year continues that trend but sees a few new names added to that list.

Osage County saw the highest harvest in 2005 with 4,600 deer being taken within its borders. Pittsburg County improved upon its 2004 ranking moving up one spot to take the second spot with 3,490 deer. Cherokee County remained one of

the top three producers with 3,108 deer harvested. Other counties included in the top ten list are Atoka (2,743), Sequoyah (2,522), Pushmataha (2,482), Craig (2,237), LeFlore (2,002), Creek (1,957), and Delaware (1,950). In total, 43 counties had harvest totals in excess of 1,000 deer compared to 38 counties in 2004. To help with consistency, any deer taken on Wildlife Management Areas were not included in these harvest totals. A detailed accounting of the 2005 harvest organized by WMA, season, and sex can be found in Table 2.

whitetail producing counties, the top mule deer producers remain relatively unchanged from year to year. Cimarron County continues to top the list with 82 mule deer taken within its borders. The remaining two panhandle counties, Texas and Beaver, were a distant second and third place with 40 and 33 "mulies" respectively. Three other counties, Harper (23), Woodward (19), and Ellis (11), produced harvests of over ten mule deer. Other counties adding to the mule deer harvest were Major, Beckham, and Greer with six each, Roger Mills (5), Woods (4), Harmon (2), and one each from Grant and Alfalfa.

While not as plentiful as their whitetail relatives, mule deer continue to be pursued by Oklahoma hunters seeking unique hunting opportunities. Limited by their habitat preferences, mule deer occupy the deep canyons and short grass prairies of northwestern Oklahoma. In 2005, hunters took 245 mule deer, an increase from the 200 taken in 2004. Similar to the top

Oklahoma's deer management goals continue to favor deer herd health and habitat stability by emphasizing the need to harvest an adequate number of does each year. To assist in achieving that goal, the framework of 10 management zones remained in place for the 2005 seasons. These areas allow for greater flexibility in setting regulations and harvest data analysis. Each of our 77 counties had opportunities for hunters to harvest an antlerless deer. Based on habitat conditions, deer herd health and composition, hunting pressure, and other factors, some areas had limited doe hunting opportunities while others saw more liberal regulations. Depending upon where they chose to hunt, "Hunters In the Know" had the opportunity to take does on specified

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**FIGURE 2:
2005 DEER HARVEST BY SEASON TYPE**

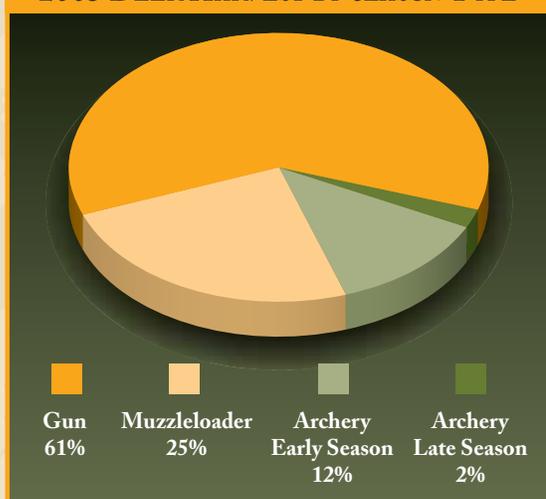


TABLE 1: 2005 COUNTY AND AREA SUMMARY OF DEER KILLS BY HUNT TYPE

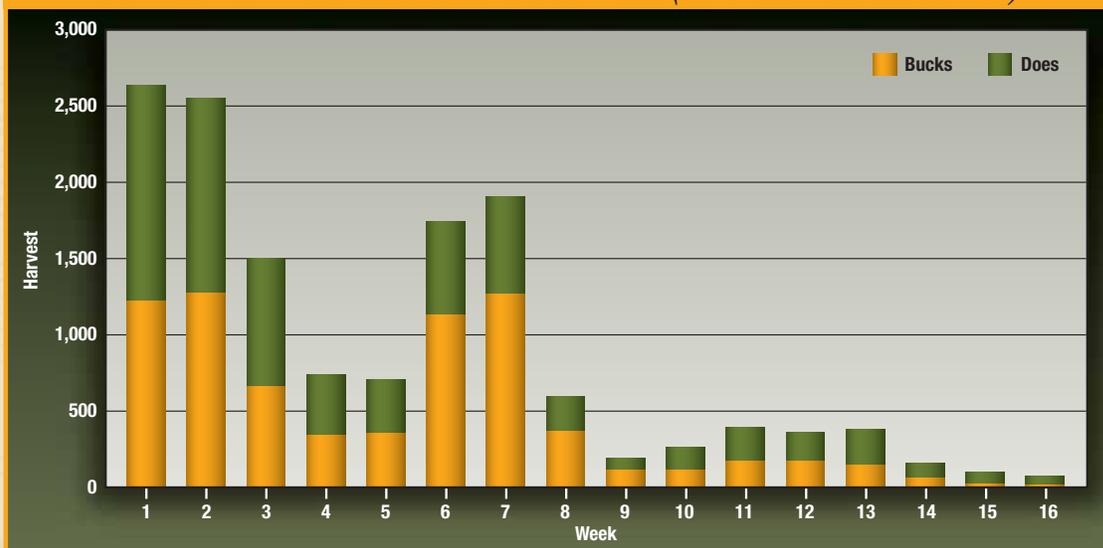
COUNTY	ARCHERY BUCKS	ARCHERY DOES	GUN BUCKS	GUN DOES	MUZZLELOADER BUCKS	MUZZLELOADER DOES	TOTAL BUCKS	TOTAL DOES	GRAND TOTAL
Adair	133	85	457	322	348	179	938	586	1,524
Alfalfa	126	105	593	511	153	129	872	745	1,617
Atoka	197	145	934	487	630	350	1,761	982	2,743
Beaver	30	15	375	224	54	27	459	266	725
Beckham	43	37	443	228	70	44	556	309	865
Blaine	58	53	336	274	67	62	461	389	850
Bryan	92	103	490	228	143	122	725	453	1,178
Caddo	99	84	711	364	182	119	992	567	1,559
Canadian	66	58	272	199	64	63	402	320	722
Carter	70	62	405	154	141	71	616	287	903
Cherokee	286	279	868	687	619	369	1,773	1,335	3,108
Choctaw	84	106	531	204	183	157	798	467	1,265
Cimarron	7	2	104	1	13	-	124	3	127
Cleveland	70	97	209	135	103	75	382	307	689
Coal	69	76	415	226	238	141	722	443	1,165
Comanche	24	29	200	103	52	63	276	195	471
Cotton	45	44	181	106	44	42	270	192	462
Craig	154	170	707	692	259	255	1,120	1,117	2,237
Creek	124	120	747	475	303	188	1,174	783	1,957
Custer	33	41	353	236	66	45	452	322	774
Delaware	199	156	571	410	395	219	1,165	785	1,950
Dewey	30	60	508	354	74	92	612	506	1,118
Ellis	47	47	541	356	88	65	676	468	1,144
Garfield	55	64	346	254	80	65	481	383	864
Garvin	52	49	287	129	93	61	432	239	671
Grady	55	48	400	243	105	104	560	395	955
Grant	101	110	621	555	146	132	868	797	1,665
Greer	35	42	321	177	64	57	420	276	696
Harmon	28	36	272	178	47	56	347	270	617
Harper	40	38	462	254	61	55	563	347	910
Haskell	129	138	580	328	335	207	1,044	673	1,717
Hughes	71	56	495	286	246	116	812	458	1,270
Jackson	45	38	324	178	52	52	421	268	689
Jefferson	23	30	209	83	50	38	282	151	433
Johnston	79	62	442	225	135	103	656	390	1,046
Kay	94	90	497	449	116	128	707	667	1,374
Kingfisher	62	66	354	252	74	65	490	383	873
Kiowa	32	25	247	146	50	52	329	223	552
Latimer	100	71	414	179	330	163	844	413	1,257
LeFlore	187	96	719	337	440	223	1,346	656	2,002
Lincoln	103	97	499	328	208	168	810	593	1,403
Logan	62	68	377	301	122	115	561	484	1,045
Love	44	36	241	124	55	57	340	217	557
Major	69	83	618	510	161	113	848	706	1,554
Marshall	36	55	216	114	59	74	311	243	554
Mayes	141	140	506	366	340	223	987	729	1,716
McClain	35	28	174	110	49	43	258	181	439
McCurain	123	67	492	175	273	144	888	386	1,274
McIntosh	92	77	363	235	186	145	641	457	1,098
Murray	30	22	216	124	72	38	318	184	502
Muskogee	181	162	614	296	289	189	1,084	647	1,731
Noble	67	78	423	378	123	88	613	544	1,157
Nowata	96	79	619	449	213	166	928	694	1,622
Okfuskee	73	46	365	198	142	100	580	344	924
Oklahoma	98	104	145	93	51	31	294	228	522
Okmulgee	96	65	344	182	188	128	628	375	1,003
Osage	258	203	2,047	1,233	485	374	2,790	1,810	4,600
Ottawa	109	82	415	371	229	130	753	583	1,336
Pawnee	80	74	483	400	137	123	700	597	1,297
Payne	83	74	429	356	137	101	649	531	1,180
Pittsburg	312	282	1,214	463	807	412	2,333	1,157	3,490
Pontotoc	82	59	405	173	188	85	675	317	992
Pottawatomie	96	83	419	231	158	134	673	448	1,121
Pushmataha	183	161	978	376	498	286	1,659	823	2,482
Roger Mills	31	62	581	422	87	81	699	565	1,264
Rogers	184	198	611	422	212	197	1,007	817	1,824
Seminole	60	57	334	159	123	78	517	294	811
Sequoyah	253	193	793	481	516	286	1,562	960	2,522
Stephens	66	81	358	121	92	64	516	266	782
Texas	27	28	208	56	44	-	279	84	363
Tillman	41	36	265	128	38	30	344	194	538
Tulsa	69	43	139	105	47	43	255	191	446
Wagoner	140	144	319	234	176	149	635	527	1,162
Washington	70	76	417	240	110	77	597	393	990
Washita	15	21	233	116	30	37	278	174	452
Woods	100	78	743	459	145	106	988	643	1,631
Woodward	66	84	822	524	169	115	1,057	723	1,780
SUBTOTAL	6,945	6,359	36,366	22,282	13,672	9,284	56,983	37,925	94,908

TABLE 2: 2005 WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SUMMARY OF DEER KILLS BY HUNT TYPE

COUNTY	ARCHERY BUCKS	ARCHERY DOES	GUN BUCKS	GUN DOES	MUZZLELOADER BUCKS	MUZZLELOADER DOES	TOTAL BUCKS	TOTAL DOES	GRAND TOTAL
Altus-Lugert WMA	-	-	2	-	-	1	2	1	3
Atoka WMA	6	11	46	20	14	15	66	46	112
Beaver River WMA	2	2	37	11	14	-	53	13	66
Black Kettle WMA	26	18	146	95	37	38	209	151	360
Blue River WMA	5	1	2	-	-	-	7	1	8
Canton WMA	27	63	69	21	15	12	111	96	207
Cherokee GMA	3	3	58	29	31	8	92	40	132
Cherokee PHA	44	50	72	33	63	61	179	144	323
Chickasaw NRA	5	2	12	16	8	7	25	25	50
Chouteau WMA	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cookson Hills WMA	11	6	27	17	8	6	46	29	75
Cooper WMA	5	3	21	3	4	-	30	6	36
Copan WMA	15	10	27	1	11	13	53	24	77
Deep Fork NWR	4	2	-	-	-	-	4	2	6
Deep Fork WMA	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	3
Ellis County WMA	3	4	18	2	4	8	25	14	39
Eufaula WMA	-	-	2	3	1	2	3	5	8
Fobb Bottom WMA	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	1	3
Fort Cobb SP	-	-	6	31	-	-	6	31	37
Fort Cobb WMA	12	14	10	5	-	-	22	19	41
Fort Gibson WMA	12	14	20	6	9	14	41	34	75
Fort Gibson WR	4	5	1	2	25	17	30	24	54
Fort Sill MR	33	29	97	60	41	40	171	129	300
Fort Supply WMA	8	12	22	10	6	-	36	22	58
Gruber WMA	9	12	23	1	4	12	36	25	61
Heyburn WMA	1	3	4	1	4	2	9	6	15
Hickory Creek WMA	-	2	24	13	3	4	27	19	46
Honobia Creek WMA	24	10	170	62	100	54	294	126	420
Hugo WMA	14	19	84	49	48	19	146	87	233
Hulah WMA	7	16	52	3	29	33	88	52	140
James Collins WMA	43	42	17	14	-	-	60	56	116
John Dahl WMA	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	2
Kaw WMA	13	21	56	68	34	42	103	131	234
Keystone WMA	9	10	31	26	11	13	52	49	101
Lexington WMA	7	2	29	21	20	4	56	27	83
Little River SP	7	13	-	-	-	-	7	13	20
Love Valley WMA	-	1	22	10	5	2	27	13	40
McAlester AAP	81	133	1	9	-	-	82	142	224
McCurtain Co. WA	1	-	-	4	9	4	10	8	18
McGee Creek WMA	6	6	9	5	8	6	23	17	40
Okmulgee GMA	-	2	20	16	1	-	21	18	39
Okmulgee PHA	1	1	2	-	2	-	5	1	6
Oologah WMA	4	8	30	25	14	10	48	43	91
Optima NWR	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Optima WMA	3	4	9	1	-	-	12	5	17
Osage-Rock Creek WMA	3	-	7	2	9	2	19	4	23
Osage-W. Wall WMA	3	3	2	2	4	4	9	9	18
Ouachita WMA	25	21	53	33	104	77	182	131	313
Ouachita WMA McCurtain Unit	4	4	28	3	9	2	41	9	50
Packsaddle WMA	2	3	42	10	5	-	49	13	62
Pine Creek WMA	5	-	6	6	3	2	14	8	22
Pushmataha WMA	15	25	13	16	24	23	52	64	116
Rita Blanca WMA	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Salt Plains NWR	1	5	35	69	6	7	42	81	123
Sandy Sanders WMA	3	-	5	9	1	2	9	11	20
Sequoyah NWR	-	-	-	-	46	54	46	54	100
Skiatook WMA	3	-	12	8	5	3	20	11	31
Spavinaw GMA	28	26	20	19	5	4	53	49	102
Spavinaw PHA	-	1	-	1	5	2	5	4	9
Stringtown WMA	4	1	3	1	4	8	11	10	21
Three Rivers WMA	85	24	397	130	211	112	693	266	959
Tishomingo NWR	-	-	9	15	-	-	9	15	24
Tishomingo WMA	2	4	-	-	-	-	2	4	6
Washita Arm WMA	-	1	7	2	2	4	9	7	16
Washita NWR	-	-	22	77	-	-	22	77	99
Waurika WMA	2	4	-	3	-	-	2	7	9
Wichita Mts NWR	-	-	24	19	-	-	24	19	43
Wister WMA	1	-	6	2	4	2	11	4	15
SUBTOTAL	641	679	1,971	1,121	1,034	757	3,646	2,557	6,203
GRAND TOTAL	7,586	7,038	38,337	23,403	14,706	10,041	60,629	40,482	101,111



FIGURE 3: 2005 ARCHERY HARVEST BY WEEK (INCLUDES SPECIAL HUNTS)



antlerless days during the muzzleloader and gun seasons. Additional opportunity existed during the special antlerless seasons, and if the hunter met the age requirements, during the October youth-only season.

Hunters continue to take advantage of the liberal antlerless opportunities. A total of 40,482 does were harvested in 2005. This number represents 40 percent of the total deer harvest. Although the 2005 doe harvest increased by nearly

2,500 deer over 2004 levels, we must remain diligent about achieving an adequate doe harvest, and maintaining healthy buck:doe ratios and population growth rates if we want to continue to enjoy quality deer hunting in Oklahoma.

ARCHERY SEASON

Once again bow hunters took to the woods in earnest, taking a near record number of deer in 2005. Only 15 deer separated the 2005 harvest of 14,624 deer from the 14,639 deer record set only last year. Archers enjoy the longest deer season available in Oklahoma with the season beginning October 1 and continuing, without interruption, until January 15. Coupled to that long season are very liberal bag limits. Bow hunters were allowed a limit of four deer total, of which no more than two could have been antlered. The final

fifteen days of the season were restricted to antlerless hunting only.

In order to compare the data collected from this year to that of years past, the archery season was divided into two sessions. The first session was from October 1 through November 19, the opening day of gun season. This first hunt period accounted for 85 percent of the total archery harvest in 2005-06. Information gathered in the annual Game Harvest Telephone Survey, combined with annual license sales information indicated that 82,635 hunters participated in archery deer hunting in 2005-06. In total, 14,624 deer were taken by bowhunters, a 18 percent success rate. A breakdown of the harvest by season, sex, county and wildlife management area is shown in Tables 1 and 2. Figure 3 shows the number of bucks and does harvested during each week of the archery season.

MUZZLELOADER SEASON

Muzzleloader season continues to be very popular with Oklahoma deer hunters. Data indicated 107,678 hunters went afield with these weapons in 2005. A total of 24,747 deer were taken by muzzleloaders this past year. The 2005 muzzleloader season began on October 22 and continued for 9 days, ending on the 30th of October. Hunters in possession of the appropriate tags were allowed one antlered and one antlerless deer.

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FIGURE 4: 2005 MUZZLELOADER HARVEST BY DAY (INCLUDES SPECIAL HUNTS)

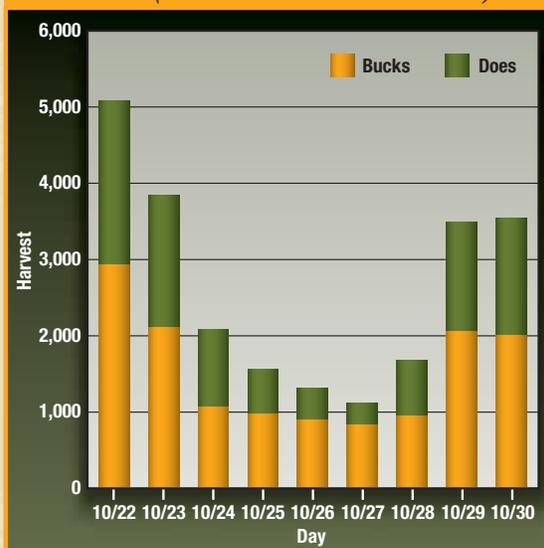


Figure 4 details the muzzleloader season harvest by date.

Contrary to the overall trend of decreasing numbers of hunters each year, the muzzleloading season saw an increase in the estimated number of participants. With technology continuing to blur the line between muzzleloaders and center-fire rifles, more and more hunters are taking advantage of this season to increase their time in the woods. Not only have muzzleloading hunter numbers increased, the percentage of the hunters bagging a

deer with these rifles is also on the rise. Nearly 1 out of 4 hunters (23 percent) afield with muzzleloading firearms bagged a deer in 2005.

GUN SEASON

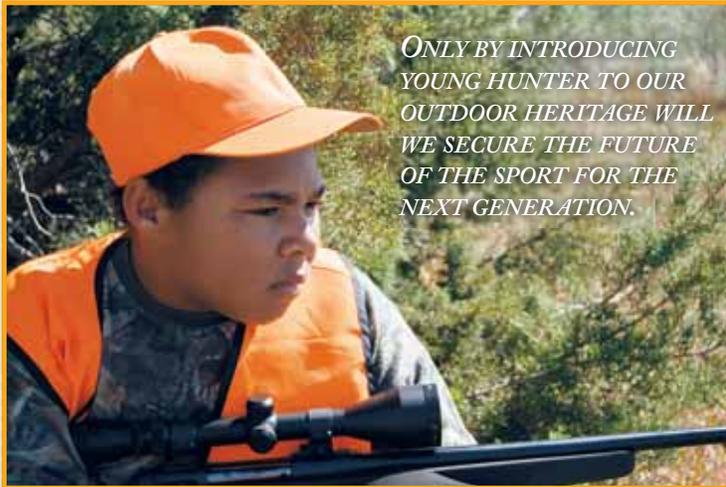
The 2005 deer gun season remained at 16 days for the third year in a row. Gun season opened on November 19 and closed December 4th. The rationale for the longer season is to provide increased opportunity for hunters to be afield, and to mitigate any negative impacts of bad

weather during the season. A secondary objective of offering more time afield is to promote hunter selectivity in hopes of reducing the harvest of immature bucks. Progress continues to be made towards this goal with a smaller percentage of the buck harvest coming from the yearling segment of the herd in 2005. The "Data Collection and Analysis" portion of this report details other changes to the state's deer herd demographics.

An estimated 158,219 hunters took to the field during the 2005 gun season. Hunters participating in the 16-day gun season had a general bag limit of one antlered deer. However, antlerless deer were legal on certain days in designated areas, giving a combined bag limit of one antlered and one antlerless deer with appropriate tags. The hunter success rate for rifle season was quite high with 39 percent of the hunters tagging a deer for a total gun harvest of 61,740 deer, a little over 3,000 deer above last year's gun season total.

Even with the additional week of hunting opportunity, harvest patterns continue to show that the majority of the antlered buck harvest occurs during the opening weekend of the season. Hunters bagged 25 percent of the entire 16-day buck total on the first Saturday of the season. The first Sunday accounted for

DAVON SPRINGER



*ONLY BY INTRODUCING
YOUNG HUNTER TO OUR
OUTDOOR HERITAGE WILL
WE SECURE THE FUTURE
OF THE SPORT FOR THE
NEXT GENERATION.*

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF ANTLERED GUN BUCK HARVEST BY DATE, 2005 (INCLUDES SPECIAL HUNTS)

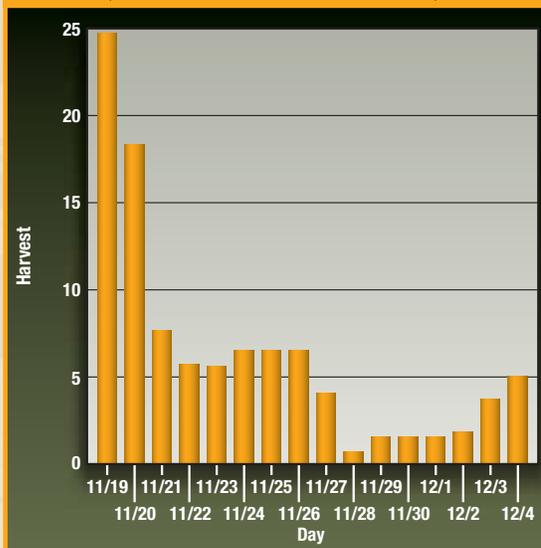
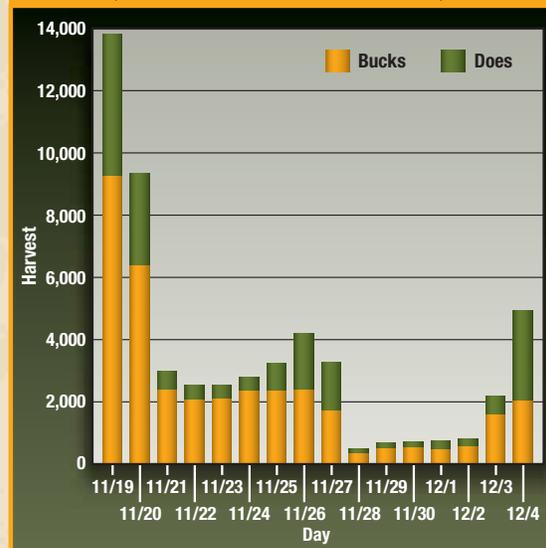
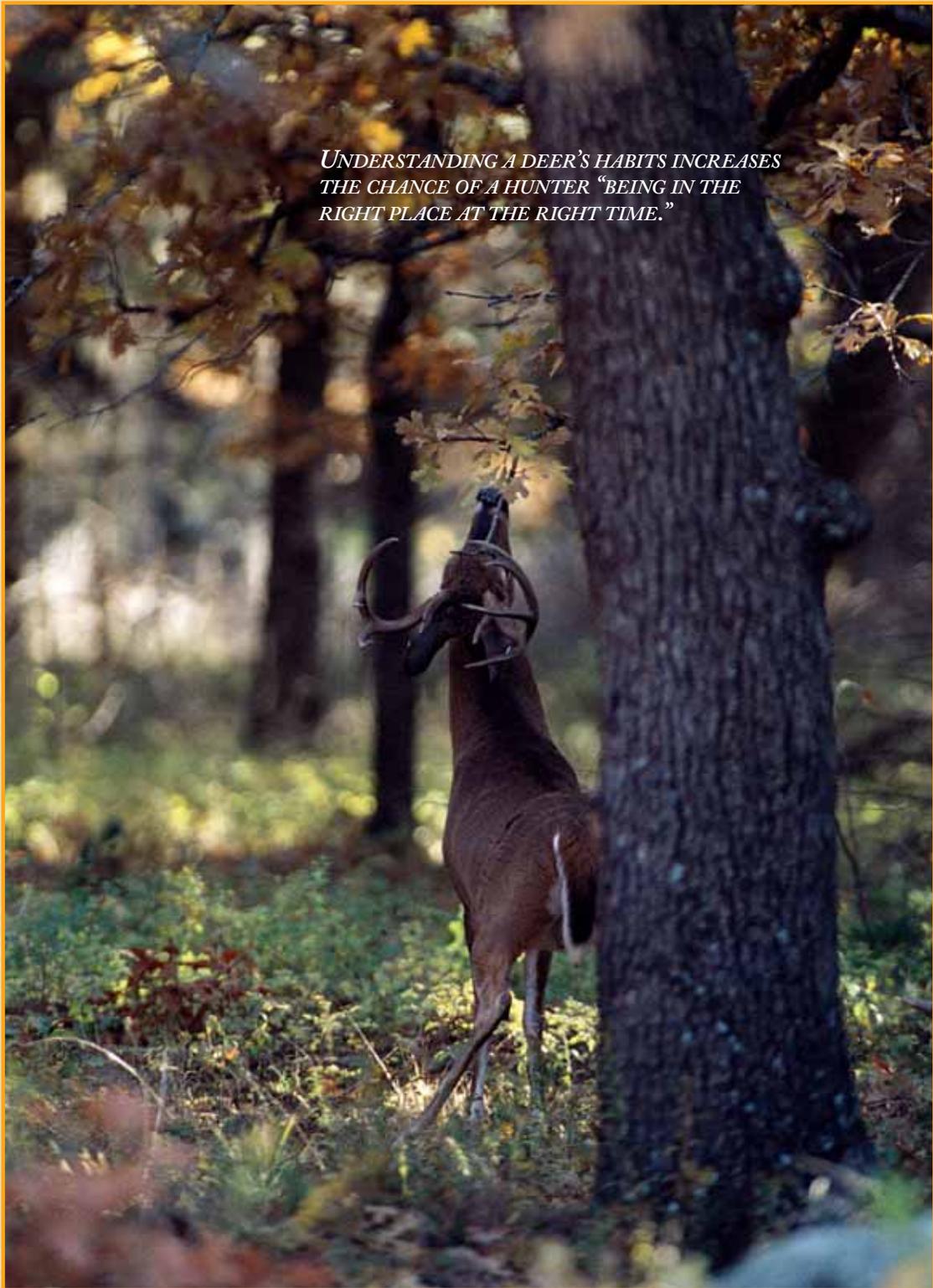


FIGURE 6: 2005 GUN HARVEST BY DAY (INCLUDES SPECIAL HUNTS)





KENNY SEALS

*UNDERSTANDING A DEER'S HABITS INCREASES
THE CHANCE OF A HUNTER "BEING IN THE
RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME."*





an additional 17 percent of the harvest for a total of 42 percent of the entire gun buck harvest occurring the opening weekend. Daily buck harvest declined during the week but increased as the weekend arrived, with 11 percent of the total occurring during the second weekend. Harvest data indicate that a greater percentage of the buck harvest occurred during the seven day extended season than had occurred in its initial year. The final seven days of gun season added an additional 5,557 bucks to the harvest or 15 percent of the total. Figure 5 charts the adult buck harvest by day for the entire 16-day season. A breakdown of bucks and does harvested during the gun season is shown in Figure 6.

Hunters in the majority of the state were afforded a special antlerless season during the month of December. Survey data indicate 37,963 hunters participated in this antlerless-only season. Respondents to the Wildlife Department's annual Game Harvest Survey indicated that of those hunters, approximately 7 percent harvested an antlerless deer. A total of 2,809 antlerless deer were taken, over 1,000 fewer than were harvested in 2004.

ELK HUNTS

Oklahoma hunters continue to have the opportunity to enjoy a "once in a lifetime" experience hunting elk within our state's borders. A total of 236 permits from three separate areas were available for hunters through the Wildlife Department's controlled hunt drawing process. Cookson Hills WMA and Pushmataha WMA each offered one cow permit, and the two hunters that participated both went home with their elk.

Through an agreement with the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, 234 permits were made available. Eighty-one bull permits and 153 cow tags were up for grabs in 2005. All 81 of the selected bull hunters and 131 of the cow hunters made the trip to the Refuge to participate in the hunts. Fifty percent of the cow hunters were rewarded with an elk while 81 percent of the bull hunters filled their tag.

Additional elk hunting opportunities were available for hunters on private lands in Caddo, Comanche, and Kiowa counties after securing written landowner permission and presenting this to offi-

cial at the ODWC's Lawton Office. The seasons remained a split 10-day archery hunt followed by 4 days of rifle hunting. Thirty-four elk were taken during the private lands hunts. An additional 33 elk were taken on the Fort Sill Military Reservation bringing the total elk harvest to 201 in 2005.

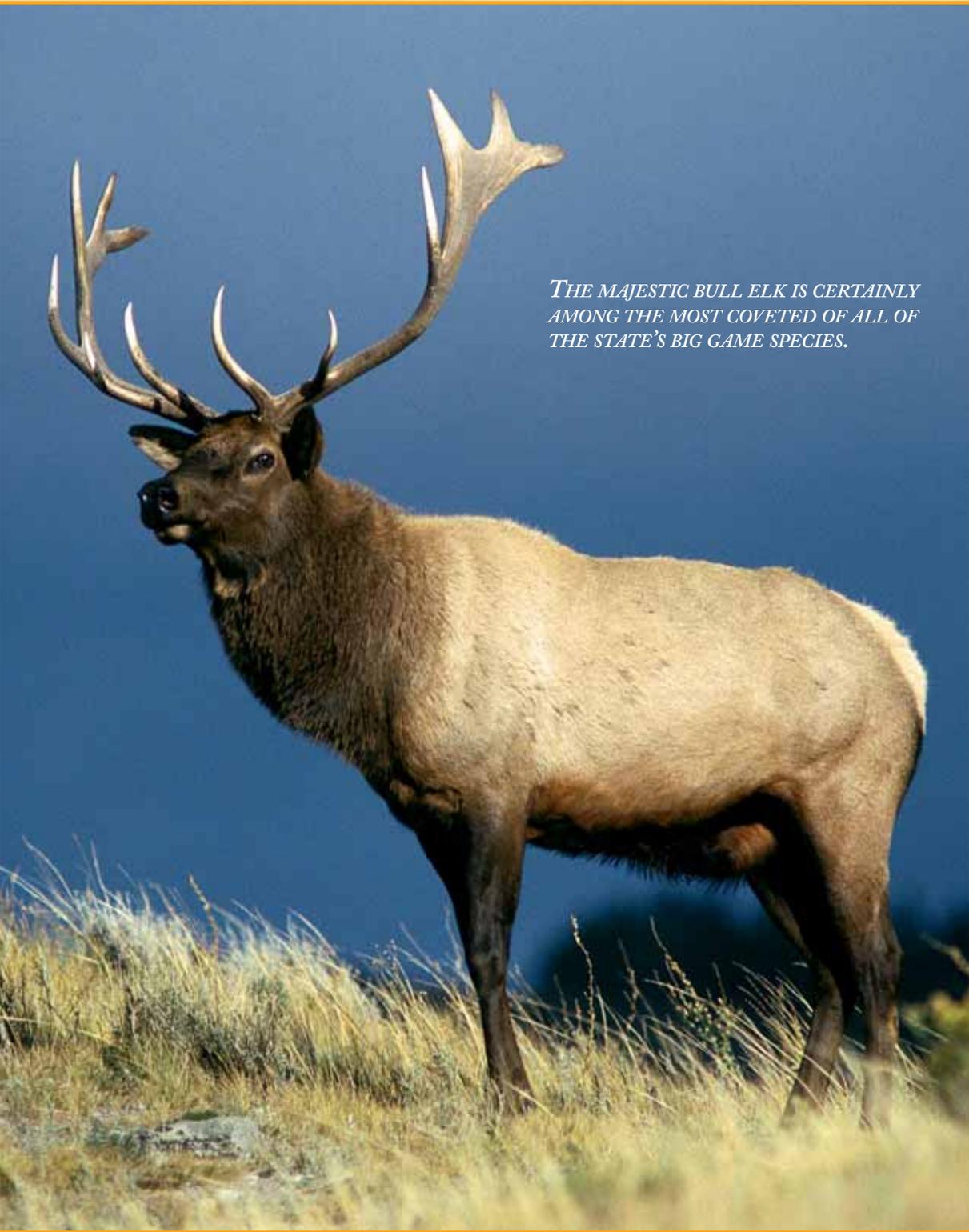
ANTELOPE HUNTS

A thriving antelope herd in Cimarron County continues to provide limited hunting opportunities for individuals fortunate to draw a permit through the Department's controlled hunts program. During the 2005 antelope season, 50 buck and 50 doe permits were available through public drawing. An additional 25 either-sex permits were made available to landowners in the area. Fifty-eight hunters participated in the two 4-day hunts, taking 57 antelope (38 bucks and 19 does).



THE 2006 HUNTING SEASON WILL MARK THE FIRST TIME HUNTERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE PRONGHORNS IN TEXAS COUNTY.





WARREN WILLIAMS

THE MAJESTIC BULL ELK IS CERTAINLY AMONG THE MOST COVETED OF ALL OF THE STATE'S BIG GAME SPECIES.



DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Oklahoma's landscape is more varied than that of many other states. Perhaps only Texas is comparable in terms of the variety and diversity of deer habitat available within its borders. A deer hunter's choices could include the cypress swamps of the far southeastern coastal plain, the mixed hardwood-pine forests of the Ouachita mountains, expansive tall grass prairies in the northeast counties, wheat and alfalfa fields in the northwest, the mesa country of the panhandle, mesquite scrub of the southwest, or the extensive post oak-blackjack Crosstimbers which dominates the central interior of the state.

In addition to influencing the tactics and techniques a hunter must use in pursuing Oklahoma whitetail and mule deer, these major differences in habitat exert an overwhelming influence on the number of deer the land can support as well as the physical characteristics of the animals themselves.

Although information collected at the county level is often useful to sportsmen, biologists are more concerned with tabulation and analysis of deer kills in small areas called Deer Kill Location Units or "DKLs" and aggregations of these DKLs known "Harvest Units" (Figure 8). Harvest Units are regions that, by virtue of similar habitat and herd conditions, lend themselves to being managed as separate units with

specific management objectives. Harvest Units with similar habitats have the inherent capability of supporting deer populations of similar qualities and densities. Trends in weight and antler characteristics can be examined to determine which units are most likely to produce the density or quality of animals desired.

Yearling bucks are especially good barometers of a herd's physical condition. Their high vulnerability to harvest usually insures a large sample to examine, and these deer 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 and large beam diameters, the herd can be considered healthy. Of the 885 yearling bucks examined in 2005, 70.3 percent had four or more points (Figure 7), an improvement over last year. Differences in biological potential, range condition, and deer density are reflected in Table 3. The trend of certain harvest units producing larger and better-nourished deer continued in 2005. Units in western Oklahoma are typified by deep, fertile soils and plenty of agricultural crops upon which deer can feed. As a result, the deer from Units 1-5 continue the trend of heavier yearlings and slightly better antler development than other Units. In contrast to the fertile soils and quality habitat of Units 1-5, Harvest

these areas generally produce yearlings with lighter weights, smaller antlers, and a greater percentage of spikes than the western Units.

As hunter success rates increase, more and more hunters are beginning to shift their focus to selecting for quality or trophy bucks. While many different factors influence deer antler development, one of the most important is buck age. Older deer will typically have larger racks than younger deer if the amount and quality of forage are equal. Additionally, age data about the doe segment of the herd can provide much needed information about herd status and hunting pressure. For these reasons, natural resources students are hired from selected state universities to collect deer jaws at different check stations across the state. Together with data collected from cooperators enrolled in the Department's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), and deer harvested on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), the student-pulled jaws provide the herd age structure data that is needed for management decisions.

During the 2005 seasons, 5.6 percent of the deer harvested had one side of their lower jaw removed for aging purposes. The tooth wear and eruption method was used to determine the deer's age at harvest. In total, 5,696 deer jaws were collected and analyzed statewide. The statewide distribution of adult deer ages are shown in the following figures. An earlier section of this report mentioned a reduction in the number of the deer. As a result, young bucks harvested was one of the

FIGURE 7:
2005 YEARLING BUCK ANTLER POINTS

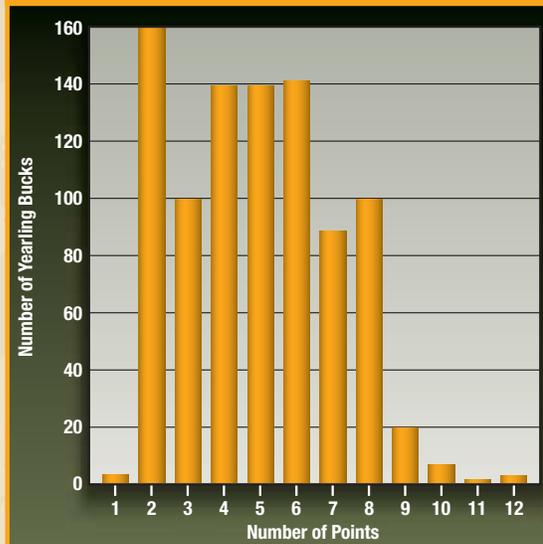
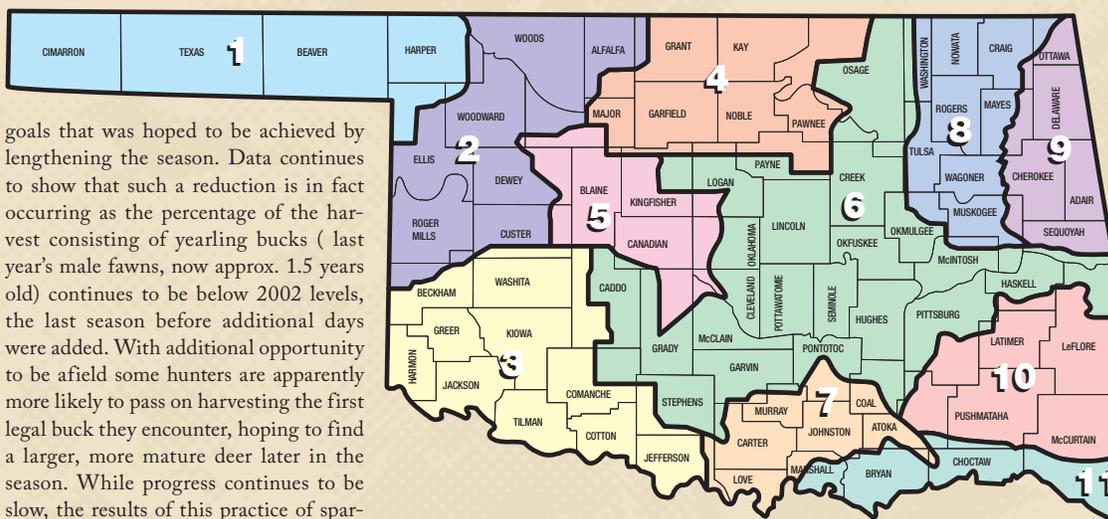


TABLE 3: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF YEARLING AND ADULT DEER BY HARVEST UNIT (INCLUDES WMA STATISTICS)

Harvest Unit	Yearling Bucks			Adult Bucks		Adult Does	
	Weight (n)	Antler Points	Percent Spikes	Weight (n)	Average Age	Weight (n)	Average Age
1	108 (8)	5.1	0.0	141 (40)	3.2	102 (66)	3.6
2	104 (15)	5.0	20.0	136 (95)	3.0	97 (107)	3.8
3	108 (13)	5.8	7.7	135 (36)	3.2	98 (65)	2.9
4	106 (98)	5.0	16.3	128 (261)	2.5	95 (232)	3.2
5	99 (25)	5.5	12.0	116 (51)	2.3	91 (54)	3.3
6	93 (222)	5.4	12.6	108 (518)	2.4	87 (454)	3.2
7	91 (89)	5.8	6.7	112 (260)	2.6	84 (290)	3.1
8	96 (132)	4.3	22.0	111 (284)	2.3	86 (328)	3.0
9	77 (144)	4.0	32.6	93 (371)	2.5	73 (292)	3.3
10	81 (112)	4.9	17.0	102 (376)	2.9	75 (311)	3.7
11	96 (27)	5.9	7.4	111 (64)	2.3	83 (70)	3.0

FIGURE 8: OKLAHOMA DEER HARVEST UNITS



goals that was hoped to be achieved by lengthening the season. Data continues to show that such a reduction is in fact occurring as the percentage of the harvest consisting of yearling bucks (last year's male fawns, now approx. 1.5 years old) continues to be below 2002 levels, the last season before additional days were added. With additional opportunity to be afield some hunters are apparently more likely to pass on harvesting the first legal buck they encounter, hoping to find a larger, more mature deer later in the season. While progress continues to be slow, the results of this practice of sparing younger bucks will continue the constructive trend towards a more mature, better balanced herd structure.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The demands placed on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) continues to grow. Ninety five percent of Oklahoma's land area is under private ownership. Approximately 3 percent of the state, or roughly 1.6 million acres, is owned or managed by the Department.

With such limited lands and the great demand for public access hunting, deer herds on many WMAs are managed by the Department but made accessible with hunter access gained through a drawing process for permits, commonly referred to as "controlled hunts." Some benefits of the controlled hunts process are protection from over-harvest, control over which sex of deer may be harvested, improved deer quality and herd health, and a safer, higher quality hunt for the participants.

During the 2005 deer seasons, 20 WMAs were managed partially or

completely through the controlled hunt drawing process. Lands not managed by the Department but made accessible via cooperative agreements administered under the controlled hunts process were the Corps of Engineers lands at Waurika Lake, Hugo, Oologah, Tenkiller, Ft. Gibson, Keystone, and Texoma. The Wichita Mountains, Deep Fork, Salt Plains, Little River, Tishomingo, and Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuges, McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, and Ft. Cobb, Eufaula and Walnut Creek State Parks also allowed hunter

FIGURE 9: 2005 ADULT BUCK AGE DISTRIBUTION

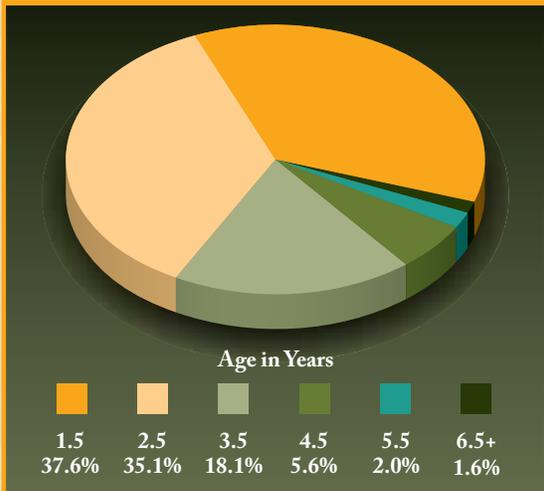
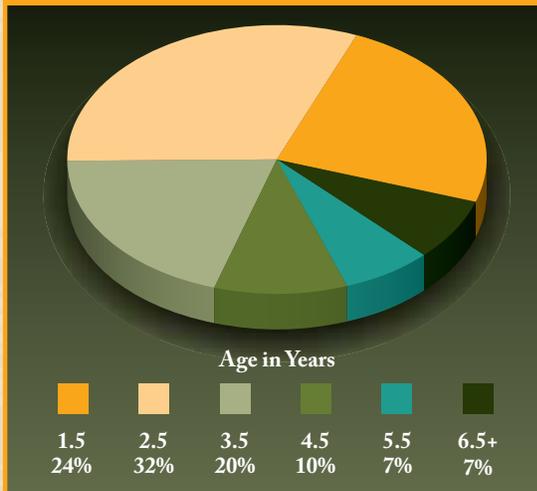


FIGURE 10: 2005 ADULT DOE AGE DISTRIBUTION



access to successful controlled hunt applicants. Additionally, the USDA Grazing Lands Research Laboratory and Four Canyon Preserve allowed hunter access through agreements with the ODWC. There were 131 different big game hunts offered through the ODWC controlled hunts program in 2005. Many additional WMA's were open to deer hunters under regulations that were the same as the statewide seasons.

While only 3 percent of the state is Department managed public lands, these areas produced 6 percent (6,203 deer) of the total statewide harvest. Of the deer taken off WMAs, 41 percent were female. Table 2 presents a harvest breakdown for each area by season and sex.

TROPHY DEER

The distinction of what classifies any deer as a trophy can be very difficult to define. Just as "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," trophy status can depend on many factors. A hunter's first deer, the doe taken at the end of a long stalk, a buck taken with Granddad's old rifle...all can be considered "trophies" In addition to those personal trophy deer, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has an official recognition program to showcase the many large-racked bucks taken in our state.

The Cy Curtis Trophy Award Program was established in 1975 in honor of the man most responsible for reestablishing whitetail deer throughout the state. In an effort to boost the state's deer herd, Curtis was instrumental in the establishment and management of the trap and transplant efforts which laid the groundwork for the deer hunting that Oklahomans enjoy today.

To qualify for a Cy Curtis Award the buck must be measured by an Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation employee or an official measurer of the Boone and Crockett or Pope and Young program. The Boone and Crockett system of measurement is used to judge the antlers. All deer legally harvested within Oklahoma from 1972 to the present are eligible. The minimum score for entry into the typical whitetail deer category is 135 points and non-typical deer must score at least 150 points to be eligible.

Minimum entry score for a typical mule deer is 155. Non-typical mule deer must score at least 185 points.

During the 2005-06 scoring period, over 222 deer met the requirements for entry into Oklahoma's trophy listing. As of the end of June 2006, a total of 4,165 whitetail and mule deer have been recorded in the Cy Curtis record book. Pushmataha County continues to lead the state with 206 typical whitetail deer recorded. Pittsburg County is second with 157 bucks listed. Woods County is running a close third with 145 typical trophies listed. Other counties with over 100 entries in the typical whitetail category are Osage (140) and Hughes (106). Looking at the number of non-typical whitetail deer, Hughes County remains on top for another year with 35 entries. Pushmataha is a close second with 33, while Pittsburg and Woods counties each list 30 entries.

Of great interest to many Oklahoma hunters was the scoring of an enormous non-typical rack that occurred at the ODWC Wildlife Expo held last August. At the Expo, a panel of three judges certified the Tillman County buck as the largest non-typical whitetail deer to ever be entered into the

CY CURTIS TROPHY AWARDS PROGRAM

Typical White Tailed Deer (135 Minimum)

Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
185 6/8	Bryan	8	8	20 7/8	Archery
181 6/8	Jackson	8	7	18 5/8	Gun
179 6/8	Oklahoma	8	8	16 7/8	Archery
179 2/8	Blaine	6	6	19 4/8	Gun
177 7/8	Harper	6	5	18 5/8	Archery

Non-Typical White Tailed Deer (150 Minimum)

Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
248 6/8	Tillman	12	12	22 1/8	Gun
240 3/8	Hughes	19	10	17 4	Gun
238 7/8	Wagoner	18	20	16 4/8	Gun
238 2/8	Delaware	16	19	18 0/8	Muzzleloader
232 6/8	Alfalfa	12	11	20 2/8	Gun

Typical Mule Deer (155 Minimum)

Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
180 1/8	Cimarron	5	5	24 1/8	Gun
178 6/8	Texas	5	5	23 6/8	Muzzleloader
178 4/8	Beaver	5	5	24 6/8	Gun
171 4/8	Texas	5	5	23 6/8	Gun
170 5/8	Cimarron	4	5	24 1/8	Gun

Non-Typical Mule Deer (185 Minimum)

Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
215 0/8	Woodward	9	7	24 1/8	Gun
213 4/8	Woods	10	9	22 2/8	Gun
197 7/8	Cimarron	11	10	19 4/8	Gun
189 0/8	Cimarron	8	6	20 1/8	Gun

BOONE AND CROCKETT AWARDS

Boone and Crockett Typical White-Tailed Deer (160 Minimum)

Hunter	Hometown	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Score
			Left	Right	
P. Rhoades	Sallisaw	Woods	5-5	18 0/8	174 6/8
D. Anderson	Texas	Lincoln	7-7	18 6/8	167 3/8
R. Keylon	Beaver	LeFlore	7-8	18 0/8	167 2/8
K. Goodin	Texas	Beaver	5-6	17 2/8	166 2/8
L. Pennington	OKC	Coal	7-7	17 5/8	163 5/8
T. Bartling	Countyline	Stephens	5-5	15 5/8	162 5/8
L. McPeak	Ponca City	Kay	5-6	16 7/8	160 3/8

Boone and Crockett Non-Typical White-Tailed Deer (185 Minimum)

Hunter	Hometown	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Score
			Left	Right	
M. Crossland	Grandfield	Tillman	12-12	22 1/8	248 6/8
S. Resinger	Ardmore	Carter	14-13	15 6/8	231 1/8
R. Morris	Elmore City	Pushmataha	14-18	13 0/8	225 7/8
W. Hann	Davis	Garvin	7-11	17 4/8	206 2/8
W. Johnson	Sallisaw	Lincoln	17-16	16 2/8	196 1/8
J. Hillaker II	Collinsville	Alfalfa	6-7	17 0/8	185 7/8

Cy Curtis program. The final score was determined to be 248 6/8 points, surpassing the previous mark by over eight points.

The top five Cy Curtis deer from each category are listed above. With the exception the new non-typical record atop the listing, these charts remain unchanged from last year. While a number of great deer were scored during the past scoring

period, only one was able to move into the "Top Five." For a complete listing of all the Cy Curtis award recipients, pick up a copy of the current Cy Curtis Awards Record Book, available from the ODWC Information and Education Division.

BOONE AND CROCKETT AWARDS

In addition to adding over 220 bucks to the state's Cy Curtis program, Oklahoma also produced 13 deer which qualified for national recognition in the Boone and Crockett Awards Record Book. The preceding tables list details about these fantastic deer and the hunters who tagged them.

CONCLUSIONS

Deer hunters in Oklahoma continue to have much to be happy about. This past year was loaded with notable achievements. We harvested the second highest number of deer ever taken in our state. Archery season provided a near record harvest, falling only 15 deer shy of the 2004 record. The number of muzzleloader season hunters continues to rise, as does their success. Gun season provided a new Cy Curtis non-typical record for whitetail deer.

Less obvious to most, but perhaps more important in terms of long term deer herd health and production in

Oklahoma, is the continued increase in the average age of the bucks harvested each year. By continuing to pass on shooting immature bucks we are establishing a more natural, healthy age structure. Combining restraint in immature buck harvest with success in educating hunters about the importance of doe harvest, buck:doe ratios will continue to improve. Together with proper stewardship of the habitat, better balanced, more natural herd demographics will continue to reward Oklahoma hunters with a healthy, thriving deer population for years to come! 🌿



JERRY OWENS

IN GOOD HABITAT WHITETAIL DOES OFTEN RAISE A PAIR OF FAWNS IN THE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER.