



2022-23
Big Game Harvest Report

CARLON MERRIMAN BRIGGS/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2020

**LAST YEAR'S DEER TALLY
LEAPS TO NEW RECORD**

By Dallas Barber, Wildlife Biologist

It's easy to imagine this scenario: A couple of old hunters are sitting around the fireplace, telling tales of grand trips afield, remembering the years in the early-2020s and saying, "Those were the good ol' days of big game hunting in Oklahoma."

It's easy to imagine because this past season, Oklahoma's big game hunters set several harvest records — again!

A new mark was set for overall deer harvest in the state; hunters reported taking 134,158 combined in all 2022-23 deer seasons. This total blew away the previous high total of 126,290 set just two years ago.

Oklahoma's deer populations enjoyed growing numbers and good habitat conditions across much of the state last year, factors contributing to the record harvest. But also contributing was the willingness of Oklahoma hunters to help the state's deer management plan by taking more antlerless deer.

Antlerless harvest made up 45 percent of the total harvest, falling right in line

with the statewide management goals that are resulting in healthier populations overall.

See Figure 1 for the total deer harvest from 2004 to this past season.

Gun seasons (the 16-day modern firearms season, youth gun season, and holiday antlerless deer gun season) continue to lead the harvest numbers. A total of 80,956 deer were taken in gun seasons last year.

Muzzleloader hunters took 11,715 deer during the nine-day season.

Archery hunters continued their string of consecutive-year record harvests, with 41,487 deer with bowhunting equipment.

See Figure 2 for a look at the success rates among the various hunting methods. Figure 3

Figure 2: Success by Method from 2004-Current

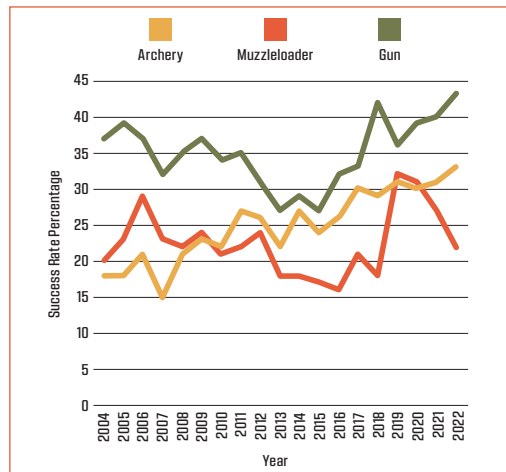


Figure 3: 2022-23 Harvest by Method

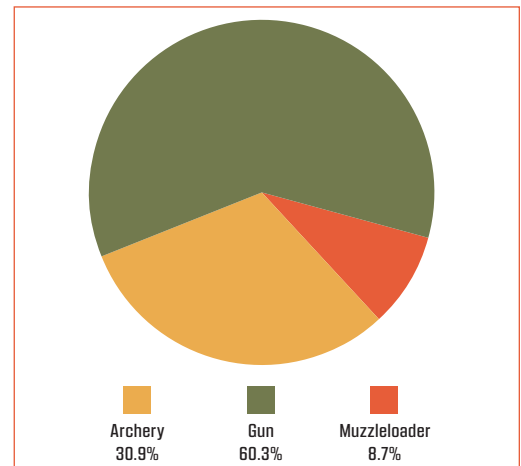
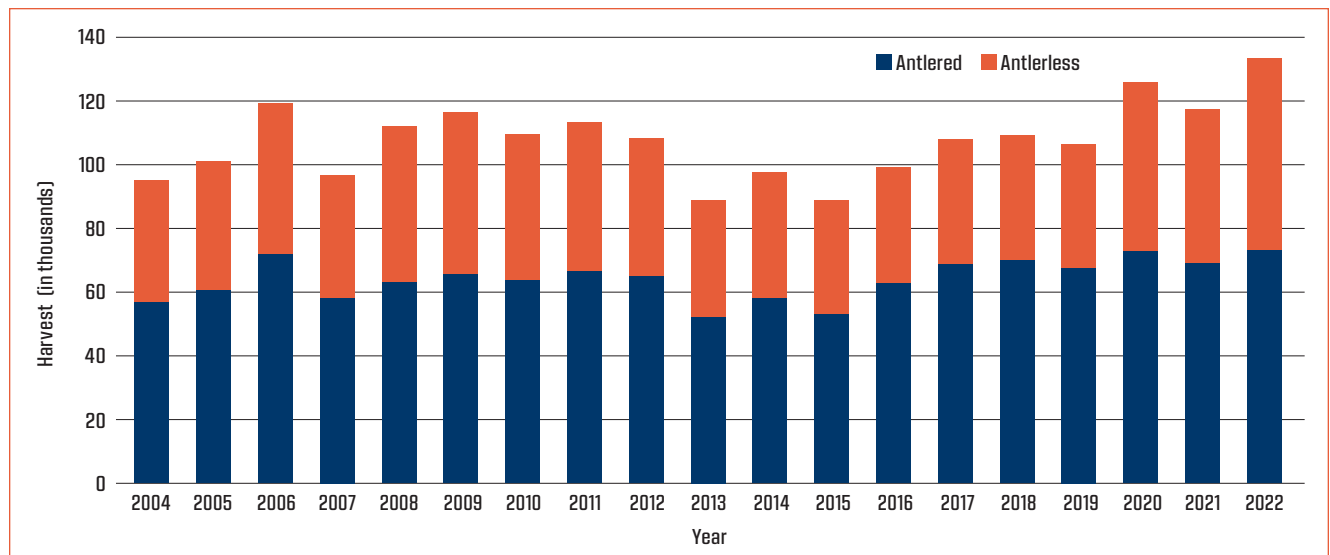


Figure 1: Total Harvest from 2004 to Current



shows each individual method and that method's percentage of the 2022-23 total harvest.

One challenge that deer hunters face in Oklahoma is the diversity in habitat. Oklahoma's greatly variable landscapes offer different levels of quality deer populations and deer habitat. While some counties offer vast amounts of public property, other counties offer no public areas in which to hunt.

To represent the hunting access variables, Table 1 shows deer harvest by county with all

wildlife management areas and other public lands removed.

The top three deer-harvest counties were Osage County, where hunters bagged 5,409 deer; Pittsburg County, with a harvest of 4,662 deer, and Creek County, at 3,390 deer harvested.

WMAs and other public lands managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation make up only about 3 percent of Oklahoma's land mass. But it's important to

note that this small percentage of public land actually accounts for 7.5 percent of the state's total deer harvest. For details on those public land harvests, see Table 2.

Oklahoma hunters also have the opportunity to take a mule deer in western portions of the state. These deer frequent the Panhandle and are slowly rebounding from poor habitat conditions that have affected the western one-third of the main body of Oklahoma.

Fragmented populations and habitat conditions make bagging this species a difficult task. But still, Oklahoma deer hunters managed to harvest 209 mule deer during the 2022-23 seasons. See Table 3 to learn about the mule deer harvest by county, sex and method.



LORE BROCK/READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2018

Table 1: Harvest by County, Sex, and Method

County	Muzzleloader		Gun		Archery		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	
Adair	73	162	336	444	163	169	1,347
Alfalfa	50	35	383	474	142	175	1,259
Atoka	121	242	849	946	539	494	3,191
Beaver	6	19	90	259	15	43	432
Beckham	33	38	449	605	96	158	1,379
Blaine	25	20	207	391	55	95	793
Bryan	55	64	436	550	344	328	1,777
Caddo	60	95	626	907	195	275	2,158
Canadian	29	45	303	409	136	173	1,095
Carter	42	56	408	613	198	269	1,586
Cherokee	85	171	591	728	421	404	2,400
Choctaw	104	121	442	550	286	308	1,811
Cimarron		8	6	84	4	3	105
Cleveland	46	70	296	354	250	259	1,275
Coal	73	86	510	574	324	309	1,876
Comanche	29	31	220	313	92	134	819
Cotton	13	18	186	235	57	83	592
Craig	52	64	499	622	263	244	1,744
Creek	104	139	973	1,068	548	558	3,390
Custer	22	28	236	411	54	72	823
Delaware	67	123	433	582	331	371	1,907
Dewey	38	28	315	519	76	116	1,092
Ellis	21	24	217	436	69	89	856
Garfield	36	30	318	467	93	145	1,089
Garvin	43	77	465	654	194	253	1,686
Grady	75	62	642	801	269	318	2,167
Grant	76	56	737	649	175	220	1,913
Greer	14	24	203	337	58	89	725
Harmon	14	16	162	208	63	53	516
Harper	7	23	127	302	21	46	526
Haskell	105	102	446	568	274	318	1,813
Hughes	85	111	588	746	350	321	2,201
Jackson	21	20	232	307	132	149	861
Jefferson	24	34	271	347	142	177	995
Johnston	30	53	357	479	169	219	1,307
Kay	57	41	423	507	123	152	1,303
Kingfisher	33	34	378	458	110	142	1,155
Kiowa	23	21	242	353	69	107	815
Latimer	72	128	333	445	257	280	1,515
Le Flore	159	232	717	736	434	379	2,657
Lincoln	92	112	722	989	347	411	2,673
Logan	65	71	542	691	252	358	1,979
Love	22	18	169	287	160	201	857
Major	38	41	384	557	96	133	1,249
Marshall	12	19	107	174	67	82	461
Mayes	82	106	480	584	362	321	1,935
McClain	36	43	276	373	145	166	1,039
McCurtain	211	230	1,049	917	528	418	3,353
McIntosh	52	55	346	491	199	245	1,388
Murray	22	34	168	300	92	127	743
Muskogee	71	66	396	579	275	292	1,679
Noble	53	42	442	545	131	159	1,372
Nowata	35	57	521	653	173	192	1,631
Okfuskee	69	73	379	578	166	218	1,483
Oklahoma	30	52	283	385	301	416	1,467
Okmulgee	64	80	438	567	239	269	1,657
Osage	175	208	1,539	1,967	732	788	5,409
Ottawa	66	73	423	499	222	254	1,537
Pawnee	76	51	648	736	299	260	2,070
Payne	60	76	767	760	255	344	2,262
Pittsburg	170	362	1,123	1,312	870	825	4,662
Pontotoc	56	98	506	681	262	392	1,995
Pottawatomie	100	115	591	817	350	429	2,402
Pushmataha	157	240	774	877	573	503	3,124
Roger Mills	16	60	363	626	59	102	1,226
Rogers	99	99	885	832	607	659	3,181
Seminole	79	103	477	616	221	257	1,753
Sequoyah	119	184	649	720	393	393	2,458
Stephens	57	70	502	613	238	270	1,750
Texas	0	10	8	90	15	7	130
Tillman	12	16	245	271	101	114	759
Tulsa	31	28	261	313	257	284	1,174
Wagoner	61	70	509	530	374	298	1,842
Washington	36	41	461	537	218	243	1,536
Washita	8	20	160	244	46	68	546
Woods	21	66	317	541	101	197	1,243
Woodward	23	35	304	505	74	168	1,109
County Total	4,398	5,875	33,866	43,195	17,391	19,360	124,085
OLAP Total	0	0	0	0	709	644	1,353
WMA Total	897	545	1,863	2,032	1,906	1,477	8,720
Grand Total	5,295	6,420	35,729	45,227	20,006	21,481	134,158

Table 2: WMA Harvest by,Sex and Method

WMA Name	Muzzleloader		Gun		Archery		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlered	Antlered	
Arcadia CEA/Edmond	0	0	0	0	31	12	43
Altus-Lugert WMA	2	2	1	6	22	20	53
Arbuckle Springs WMA	0	0	10	2	12	11	35
Atoka PHA	3	5	11	10	6	3	38
Atoka WMA	1	3	10	10	31	18	73
Bamberger WMA	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Barren Fork WMA	0	1	2	1	2	2	8
Beaver River (McFarland Unit)	0	1	2	5	3	6	17
Beaver River WMA	3	12	2	10	2	4	33
Beavers Bend SP (Golf Course)	0	0	3	0	2	1	6
Beavers Bend SP (River Bend)	0	1	1	4	2	1	9
Black Kettle WMA	42	20	121	153	27	20	383
Blue River PHFA	0	0	4	8	4	7	23
Broken Bow WMA	1	1	5	5	7	3	22
Burtschi PFA	0	0	0	0	1	4	5
Candy Creek WMA	1	1	4	0	10	10	26
Canton WMA	25	8	14	50	41	15	153
Cherokee WMA (GMA Portion)	1	0	24	30	29	27	111
Cherokee WMA (PHA Portion)	32	14	5	58	32	20	161
Chickasaw National Recreation Area	8	1	17	18	24	12	80
Cimarron Bluff WMA	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Cimarron Hills WMA	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
Cookson WMA	4	0	7	5	22	27	65
Cooper WMA	2	2	0	45	3	1	53
Copan COE (Parks)	0	0	4	5	4	3	16
Copan WMA	12	5	53	51	44	25	190
Cross Timbers WMA	0	0	36	9	45	46	136
Deep Fork NWR	12	6	0	4	19	23	64
Deep Fork WMA	8	5	38	27	4	21	103
Dewey County WMA	2	0	1	0	0	1	4
Drummond Flats WMA	0	0	1	0	7	5	13
Ellis County WMA	6	8	6	25	1	3	49
Eufaula WMA	18	20	59	56	51	46	250
Fobb Bottoms WMA	1	0	6	15	10	4	36
Fort Cobb State Park	10	0	1	4	3	3	21
Fort Cobb WMA	5	3	12	9	28	9	66
Fort Gibson Waterfowl Refuge	27	6	0	7	8	6	54
Fort Gibson WMA	44	27	26	77	101	82	357
Fort Sill	25	20	57	63	47	35	247
Fort Supply WMA	6	3	0	16	17	13	55
Four Canyon Preserve	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fort Gibson WRP	3	0	12	13	8	9	45
Gary Sherrer WMA (Bolen Hollow)	5	1	1	0	0	1	8
Gist WMA	0	1	0	1	1	3	6
Grady Co. WMA	0	1	0	1	2	2	6
Grassy Slough WMA	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Great Salt Plains State Park	3	1	9	4	2	2	21
Gruber (CGTC)	56	27	12	77	12	10	194
Hackberry Flat WMA	4	10	0	0	1	3	18
Heyburn COE	0	0	2	3	2	3	10
Heyburn WMA	9	1	23	12	15	5	65
Hickory Creek WMA	0	2	4	16	7	4	33
Honobia WMA	17	21	47	37	21	23	166
Hugo Lake COE	5	5	15	11	30	11	77
Hugo WMA	14	17	44	32	42	34	183
Hulah WMA	42	16	82	87	55	37	319
James Collins WMA	0	0	13	5	85	69	172
Jap Beaver PFA	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
John Dahl WMA (Osage)	0	0	12	3	0	1	16
Kaw Lake COE	3	2	15	23	16	15	74
Kaw WMA	68	23	126	101	64	50	432
Keystone COE	2	0	24	11	17	14	68
Keystone SP	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Keystone WMA	21	7	67	55	74	46	270
Lake Thunderbird State Park	1	0	1	1	37	25	65
Lexington WMA	18	21	67	25	24	27	182
Little River NWR	0	0	12	23	4	5	44
Love Valley WMA	2	2	19	26	0	7	56
Lower Illinois River WMA	0	1	5	1	2	1	10
Major County WMA	0	0	1	3	0	1	5
McAlester Army Ammunition Plant	0	0	16	0	98	74	188
McClellan-Kerr WMA	11	4	31	29	27	24	126
McCurtain Co. WA	6	2	17	12	4	6	47
McGee Creek WMA	4	3	3	7	22	16	55
Mountain Park WMA	8	2	0	0	7	3	20
Neosho WMA	0	2	2	1	8	6	19
Okmulgee WMA (GMA Portion)	0	0	8	9	5	6	28
Okmulgee WMA (PHA Portion)	2	5	4	9	6	2	28
Oologah Lake COE	8	3	23	35	19	11	99
Oologah WMA	20	9	77	86	60	30	282
Optima National Wildlife Refuge	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Optima WMA	0	3	0	15	2	4	24

Table 2: WMA Harvest by Sex and Method (continued)

WMA Name	Muzzleloader		Gun		Archery		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlered	Antlered	
Osage WMA - Rock Creek	3	1	6	9	5	1	25
Osage WMA - Western Wall	1	1	3	4	34	31	74
Ouachita WMA (Cucumber Creek)	0	1	2	5	0	0	8
Ouachita WMA (McCurtain Unit)	15	24	32	25	18	13	127
Ouachita WMA Le Flore	28	21	36	41	14	12	152
Ozark Plateau WMA	0	0	2	3	0	0	5
Packsaddle WMA	9	4	4	39	3	4	63
Pine Creek COE	0	1	2	3	0	1	7
Pine Creek WMA	5	4	8	12	7	2	38
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	0	0	10	2	0	0	12
Pushmataha WMA	14	11	18	14	34	22	113
Red Slough WMA	1	0	0	1	20	16	38
Rita Blanca WMA	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Robbers Cave WMA	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge	19	3	44	17	0	2	85
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	0	0	9	4	0	0	13
San Bois WMA	1	2	1	1	5	4	14
Sandhills WMA	0	2	0	0	7	8	17
Sandy Sanders WMA	2	1	1	4	4	9	21
Schultz WMA	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Sequoyah NWR	22	4	2	0	6	7	41
Sequoyah NWR (Refuge Island)	21	1	0	0	2	1	25
Sequoyah Resort Park	10	4	0	0	5	1	20
Shorb WMA	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Skiatook COE	0	0	5	8	2	0	15
Skiatook WMA	6	1	24	16	5	5	57
Sparrow Hawk WMA	0	1	1	2	0	2	6
Spavinaw WMA (GMA Portion)	1	6	9	15	17	28	76
Spavinaw WMA (PHA Portion)	4	3	11	5	0	0	23
Stringtown WMA	2	2	1	4	3	4	16
Tenkiller COE	1	3	8	15	6	2	35
Tenkiller-Big Cabin WMA	0	0	3	8	1	1	13
Texoma COE	5	1	17	24	27	16	90
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	0	0	4	1	7	9	21
Texoma COE (Lakeside)	0	0	7	3	15	9	34
Texoma/Washita Arm WMA	2	5	9	19	7	12	54
Three Rivers WMA	47	41	132	97	65	32	414
Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge	1	0	24	7	1	1	34
Tishomingo WMA	0	0	3	4	5	8	20
USDA Grazinglands RL	0	0	20	12	0	0	32
Vanderwork PFA	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Washita County WMA	1	0	1	4	1	1	8
Washita NWR	0	0	16	3	0	0	19
Waurika Lake COE	3	0	1	0	11	10	25
Waurika WMA	11	5	2	1	51	32	102
Webbers Fall WMA	5	0	4	1	2	1	13
Whitegrass Flats WMA	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Wichita Mts NWR	0	1	2	3	0	0	6
Wister WMA	20	18	33	25	26	17	139
Wister WRP	2	3	3	1	0	1	10
Yourman WMA	0	0	3	2	1	1	7
WMA Total	895	544	1,863	2,032	1,908	1,478	8,720
County Total	4,398	5,875	33,866	43,195	17,391	19,360	124,085
OLAP Total	0	0	0	0	709	644	1,353
Grand Total	5,293	6,419	35,729	45,227	20,008	21,482	134,158

Table 3: Mule Deer Harvest by County, Sex, and Method

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	
Alfalfa					1	0	1
Beaver	2	6	0	40	0	7	55
Beckham			0	1			1
Cimarron	3	2	0	55	0	7	67
Dewey			1	1			2
Ellis	0	4	0	8	0	3	15
Grant					0	1	1
Greer	1	0					1
Harper	0	1	0	12			13
Roger Mills			0	2	0	1	3
Texas	0	4	0	35	0	7	46
Woods	0	1					1
Woodward			0	3			3
Grand Total	6	18	1	157	1	26	209

Archery Season

Again archery hunters set another harvest record during the 2022-23 season. Harvest totaled 41,487 deer, making up almost 31 percent of the total harvest.

More impressive: Of the total harvest, 48 percent were antlerless deer.

The annual Game Harvest Survey (GHS), a scientific survey conducted by ODWC, has

been tasked with tracking hunter participation metrics for decades. The GHS estimated that 102,116 hunters went afield with archery gear in hand. This is lower than in some years past, but this year's estimate does not include the tribal compact licenses issued in previous years. That is now the case for each method's estimate of hunter numbers.

Figure 4: 2022-23 Archery Harvest by Week

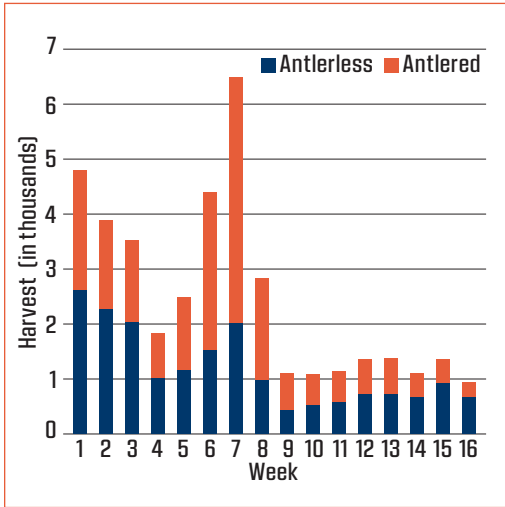
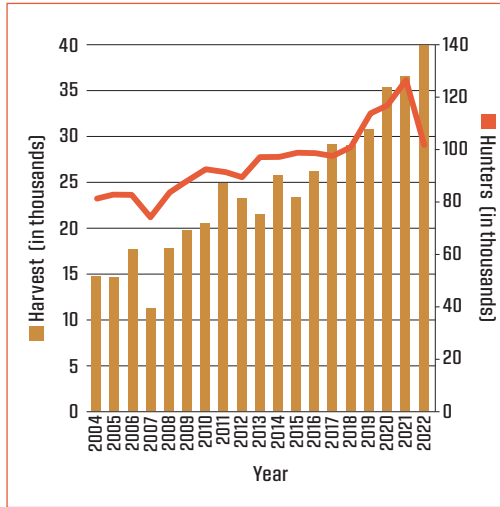


Figure 5: Archery Hunter Numbers and Harvest Count



Archery season in 2022-23 remained unchanged, running uninterrupted from Oct. 1 to Jan. 15. Hunters could choose to harvest a total of six deer, with no more than two being antlered deer. See Figure 4 for the archery deer harvest by week. Figure 5 shows harvest and hunter trends over the years.



Muzzleloader Season

Muzzleloader hunters had a nine-day season from Oct. 22-30. Bag limits remained unchanged; hunters could take four deer, with only one of those being antlered.

Continued encouragement of antlerless harvest was represented by liberal antlerless bag limits in various antlerless deer zones, which can be seen in Figure 11.

The GHS estimated 11,578 hunters went afield for this very underused method of harvest. A total of 11,715 deer were taken, with 45 percent of those being antlerless. Figure 6 shows muzzleloader season harvest on each day of the season.

Figure 7 shows muzzleloader harvest trends since 2004.



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Figure 6: 2022 Muzzleloader Season by Day

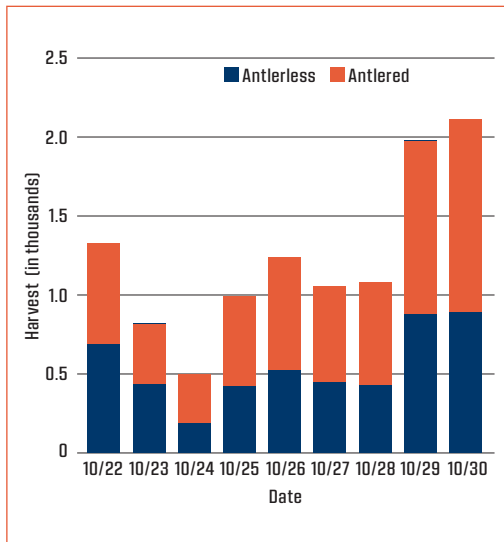
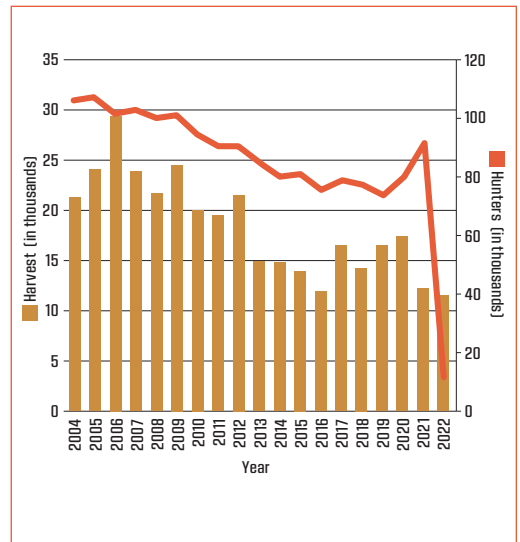


Figure 7: Muzzleloader Season Harvest and Hunter Numbers



Gun Season

Oklahoma's traditional 16-day gun season ran from Nov. 19 through Dec. 4, and bag limits were unchanged from previous years. Hunters could take four deer, with no more than one being antlered.

A record harvest of 80,956 deer fell during the combined gun seasons of youth, regular, and holiday antlerless seasons, 44 percent of which was antlerless. That harvest was achieved by a GHS-estimated 136,768 hunters. Youth deer gun season accounted for 4,058, while holiday antlerless gun sea-

Figure 8: 2022 Gun Season by Day

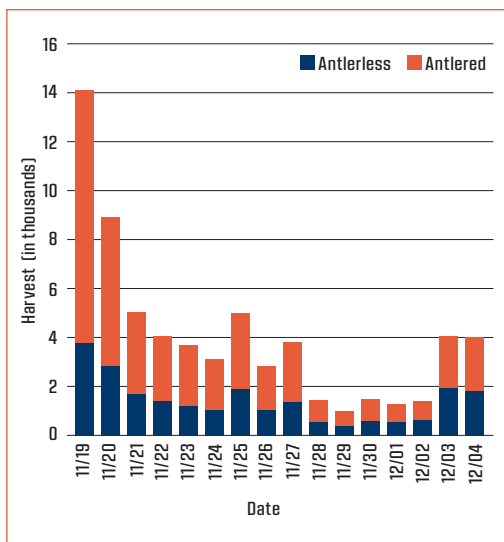


Figure 9: Gun Seasons Harvest and Hunter Numbers

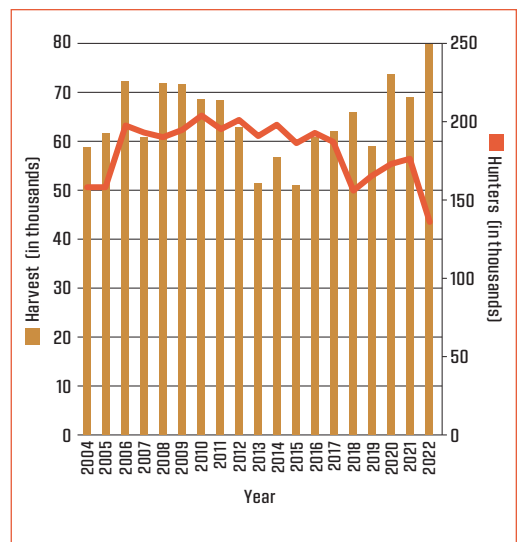
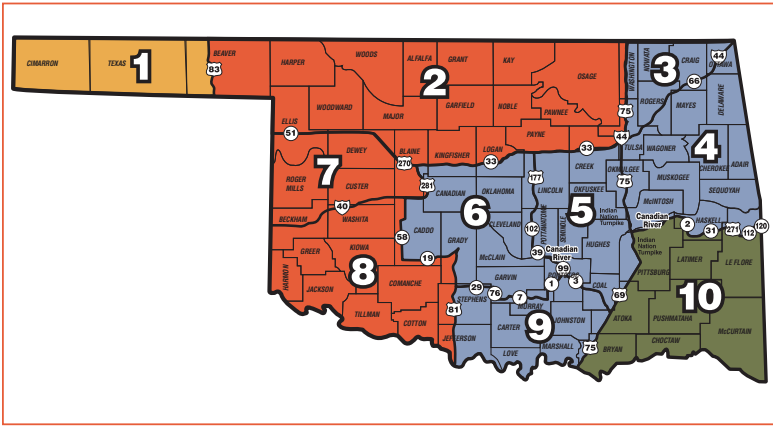


Figure 11: Deer Antlerless Zones



DEER, ELK HUNTERS: EXPECT MORE CWD INFO

The upcoming 2023-24 deer and elk hunting seasons will be the first since **chronic wasting disease** has been confirmed among wild deer within the physical borders of Oklahoma.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is an always-fatal neurological disease that affects the brains of deer, elk, moose, and other members of the cervid family, creating holes resembling those in sponges. It was first discovered in the 1960s in Colorado.

In June 2023, Oklahoma's first case of CWD was confirmed in a free-ranging wild deer in **Texas County**, prompting the activation of the second stage of the state's CWD Response Strategy jointly produced by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

About a month later, a second wild white-tailed deer located east of Mooreland in **Woodward County** was confirmed infected with CWD.

In last year's deer hunting season, a CWD Special Surveillance Area (SSA) was put in place in the far southwestern corner of the Oklahoma Panhandle after ODWC was notified by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department of a road-killed deer positive for CWD that was found 2.5 miles south of the Oklahoma-Texas border near Felt, Okla., in southwestern **Cimarron County**.

"We will be working through our response plan, implementing surveillance efforts and steps to monitor and slow the potential spread of this disease. Our ultimate goal is to ensure healthy and well-managed deer with as little impact to either the resource or our constituents as possible," said Jerry Shaw, Wildlife Programs Supervisor with ODWC.

CWD transmission from wild animals to people or to livestock has never been documented.

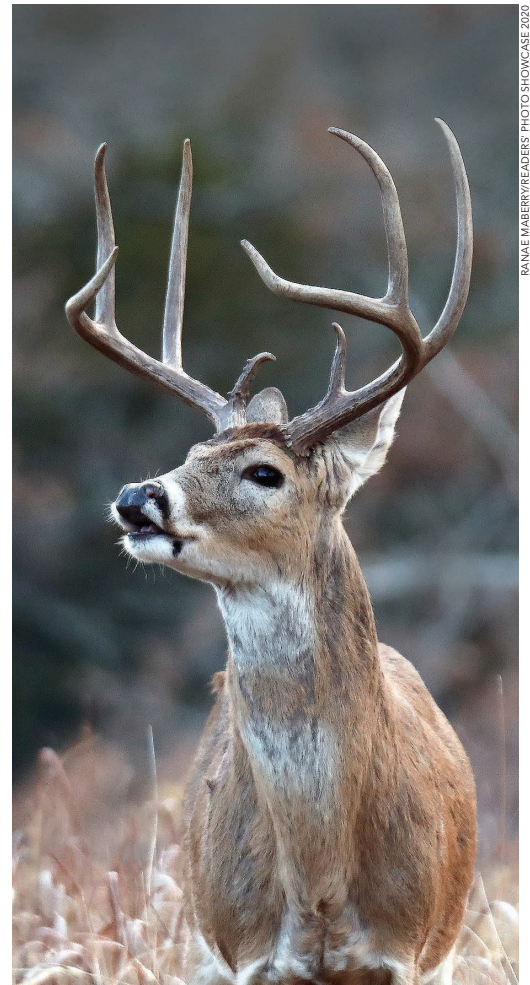
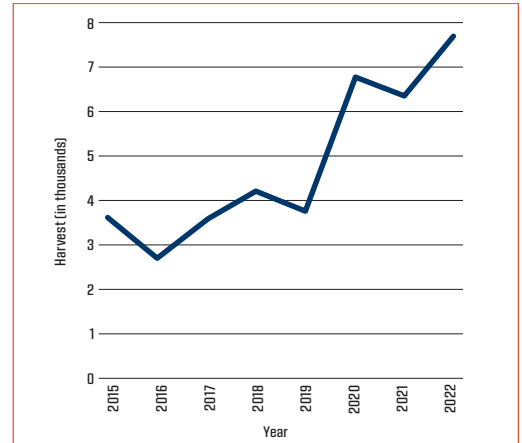
The Wildlife Department will continue monitoring for evidence of CWD within Oklahoma's borders and will release additional information, including ways deer and elk hunters can help with detection and mitigation, as hunting seasons approach.

For more information, scan the code:



son shows continued participation and success. Those participating in the holiday season managed to harvest 7,705 deer, an increase from last year's total of 6,362. Figures 8 and 9 break down gun harvest, both by day during the 16-day season, and trends over the years. Figure 10 shows holiday antlerless season harvest since 2015.

Figure 10: Holiday Antlerless





Elk

Elk populations continue to expand across much of the state. Some areas boast well-established herds, while other parts of the state are seeing more transient individuals. Private-land hunting with written permission during statewide elk seasons offer hunters an opportunity to harvest an elk, along with controlled elk hunt drawings

conducted by ODWC.

Hunters took 549 elk during the 2022-23 season. Most of those elk were taken in the Special Southwest Zone consisting of Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo counties.

Of the 549 elk harvested, 322 were antlerless. A breakdown of harvest by county, sex, and method can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Elk Harvest by County, Sex, and Method

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	
Beckham	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Caddo	1	6	29	15	0	0	51
Carter	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Cherokee	1		1	1	0	0	3
Cimarron	0	7	4	10	1	3	25
Coal	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Comanche	25	28	214	105	6	4	382
Dewey	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Garfield		0	0	1	0	0	1
Johnston	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Kingfisher	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Kiowa	0	3	29	24	0	0	56
Muskogee	0	0	4	3	0	0	7
Pushmataha	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Roger Mills	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Texas	1	1	2	2		1	7
Tillman	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Washita	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	29	54	286	163	7	10	549



Pronghorn

Found amid the rolling shortgrass prairies of Oklahoma’s Panhandle is one of the state’s most unusual big game animals: the pronghorn antelope.

While Oklahoma lies on the easternmost fringes of this creature’s suitable habitat, hunters still have opportunities to harvest North America’s fastest land animal. These opportunities present themselves in the form of ODWC controlled hunt permits, landowner permits,

and over-the-counter archery permits.

Total harvest in 2022 amounted to 150 pronghorn. Cimarron County yielded 107, and the remaining 43 came from Texas County. See Table 5 for a closer look at pronghorn harvest by county, method and sex.

(P.S.: Pronghorns are not true antelopes. It is the only example of its species left on Earth, and is more closely related to giraffes and camels.)

Table 5: Pronghorn Harvest by County, Method, and Sex

County	Archery		Gun		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Cimarron	1	14	52	40	107
Texas	0	3	24	16	43
Grand Total	1	17	76	56	150

Age Structure

ODWC works with multiple sources each year to obtain age data from the state's deer harvest. Those sources include cooperators enrolled in ODWC's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), local meat processors, taxidermists, ODWC's controlled hunts participants, and ODWC's online "Age My Deer" portal.

All of this age data provide biologists with information pertaining to age structure and overall health within Oklahoma's deer herd. Figure 12 and Figure 13 represent age at harvest for both antlered and antlerless deer.

The drum will continue to beat for healthy deer herds, which is achieved through adequate antlerless harvest and letting younger age-class bucks walk.

I have full faith that our hunters have heard

Figure 12: 2022-23 Antlered Age at Harvest

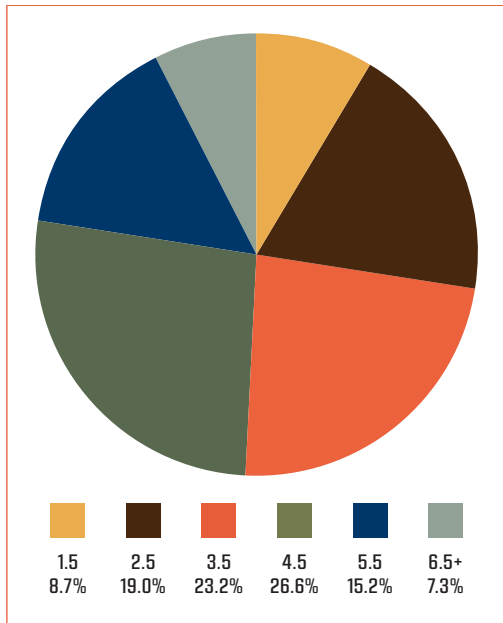
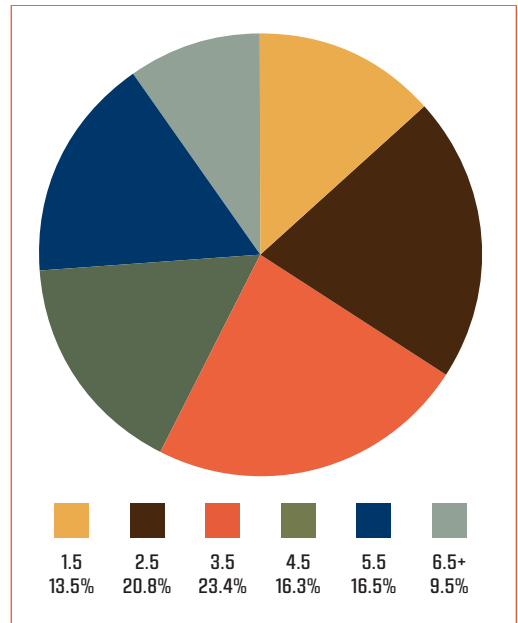


Figure 13: 2022-23 Antlerless Age at Harvest



Conclusions

It was a record-setting big game season for 2022-23 in many ways! Records were set for total harvest, archery harvest, and gun harvest.

It is encouraging that Oklahoma deer hunters continue to act as deer managers by making efforts to manage statewide deer herds through adequate antlerless harvest, and selecting for age instead of antlers when it comes to antlered deer.

This can be seen in age at harvest data which has been collected for going on four decades now. In 1989, 1.5-year-old bucks made up 66 percent of overall harvest. Fast-forward to the 2022-23 season, and those yearlings are making up only 8 percent of total harvest.

That change merits huge kudos to the state's deer hunters. The effort continues to provide trophy potential in every part of the state, all while allowing for hunters to have a quality hunt.

that message over the past few seasons and will continue to say, "The proof is in the pudding."

The 2023-24 season is right around the corner, and habitat conditions are looking up across much of the state. Areas that were plagued with historical droughts have received much-needed rainfall, and at a perfect time for nursing fawns and growing antlers.

This coming season, make it a goal to take someone new in order to pass on this great tradition. And remember that every time you release an arrow or squeeze the trigger, you are making a deer herd management decision on the piece of property where you hunt.

Good hunting to all. 🍷

For more about Oklahoma's deer and deer hunting, scan the code:



Hunters Take 60 Black Bears During 2022 Seasons

Black bear hunters had a decent hunting season in 2022, taking a total of 60 bears, which was 10 fewer than the year before.

Archery hunters took 57 black bears, while muzzleloader hunters managed three bears this past year in the black bear hunting zone that includes all or portions of 12 counties in southeastern Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's record black bear harvest was in 2018, when 85 bears were taken.

The 2022 season was the first time that Choctaw Nation authorities handled bear check-in for tribal members only. They checked eight of the 60 bears harvested. Three bears in 2022's harvest carried research tags. And the average age of a harvested bear was 4 years.

In a testament to Oklahoma being regarded as a hunting destination, hunters from seven states bagged a black bear last year, hailing from Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Based on weather conditions, bear hunters should expect this fall's season to be similar to last year's.

Wildlife biologists offer these tips for increasing your chances of taking a black bear:

- Locate an area with fresh bear sign and stay there; you might have to sit all day or hunt multiple days.
- Start hunting as early in the season as possible.
- Stay weather-aware. Cold and wet conditions make bears less active.
- If the weather is hot, consider hunting near a water source.
- Bears will return to whatever food source is helping

them gain the most weight. Acorns, especially from white oaks, are preferred by bears in non-bait areas.

- Start scouting for hunting spots in September.

All hunters wanting to pursue a black bear must buy either an archery or muzzleloader bear license before the opening dates of each season. Archery bear season dates are defined in statute, running from Oct. 1 until the third Sunday in October. In 2022, archery bear season will close Oct. 15. Archery bear season has no harvest quota.



DESIREE BRANSON/CUNLEIGH READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2020

2022 Black Bear Harvest

County	Archery		Muzzleloader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Le Flore	12	13	0	2	27
Latimer	5	4	0	0	9
Pushmataha	10	4	0	0	14
McCurain	4	5	0	1	10
Grand Total	31	26	0	3	60

Muzzleloader bear season will be Oct. 28-Nov. 5, but the season will close as soon as a quota of 20 bears has been reached. Before they hunt, muzzleloader hunters must call for the latest bear quota information at (888) 901-3256.

For more on black bear hunting, consult the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations at www.wildlifedepartment.com, in the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app for Apple and Android, or in print free at license dealers statewide. 🍷