

March 8, 2009

I would like to speak briefly about the problem of deer within Chapel Hill.

Two years ago deer occasionally ran through my yard on Lake Ellen Drive. Last summer the accubas, azaleas, hostas, and many other plants were leveled by midsummer. During this fall and winter I have seen increasing numbers of deer in my yard, in groups from two to six, and there has been increased eating of evergreen shrubs.

I recently spent two weeks reading some of the information available on the internet. The problem of increasing urban deer population is occurring in many areas of the country. It occurs as rural areas are developed, although even in Duke Forest there are not enough natural predators to maintain the population at an appropriate level.

Within urban areas there is only the automobile. According to the town's Department of Sanitation around 25 deer carcasses were picked up last year. The person giving me this information declined to identify herself. I was transferred to her supervisor and left a voice-mail message at 2:30 today. A call to the same office about a week ago gave me a figure of 22 between April 2008 and March 2009. It seems obvious that records are kept. A week ago it was suggested that the number was likely an undercount.

Aside from the automobile, deer adapt well to urban areas. They are a site-stable population that is constantly increasing, and are a problem because they eat the landscape, they are increasingly involved in vehicular accidents, they cause property damage to cars and personal injury to drivers, and finally there is a health risk in that they are carriers of ticks spreading Lyme disease.

Regarding the packets you have received. The map shows how widespread Chapel Hill's deer population has become. The journal article by Jay Kirkpatrick, a scientist whose work is in deer contraception, is a cautionary tale. The email from a district biologist at the North Carolina Wildlife Commission explains the role that municipalities play in the state's Urban Archery Season.

I Am asking the town to address the issue of deer population within Chapel Hill town limits. There are no easy or instant solutions, but it is a genuine problem that will increase. Eventually it will need to be addressed. There are local experts at universities and within state government who can help. I am happy to share the information I have collected.

Thank you very much for your time.

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