

Wisconsin Bowhunter Wildlife Survey 2005

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Abstract

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in conjunction with the Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) and the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association (WBA) surveyed members of the WBA to help track mammalian and avian wildlife populations.

Methods

A survey was included in the 1997-2005 fall issues of *The Bowhunter* (official publication of the WBA) for bowhunters to remove and record the animals seen during their hunting trips. At the completion of the 2005 archery season, hunters were asked to return the completed survey to the WDNR, by tri-folding the survey with the postage paid side visible, and dropping it in the mailbox. No return postage was necessary.

Results

Wisconsin bowhunters sent back 97 Bowhunter Wildlife surveys after the completion of the 2005 archery season. This was lower than in 2004 when 102 hunters returned surveys. These 97 bowhunters averaged 20.5 trips into the field during the archery season. The average total hours hunted during the season was 65.6. The average time spent hunting during a single day was 3.2 hours. This is in comparison to the 2004 season where hunters averaged 21.7 trips, 72.5 hours hunted during the season, and 3.4 hours per day. During both years, most trips were taken in the month of October, followed by November, September, December, and January.

Not surprisingly, the animal most frequently sighted while hunting was deer (Table 1). Hunters reported sighting an average of 42.9 deer per season and 2.1 deer per trip. This is in comparison to the 2004 season where hunters averaged seeing 47.8 deer per season and 2.2 deer per trip. Although the survey does not ask questions about harvest, it is possible that a change in hunter effort due to harvest success could cause a change in survey response from year to year.

The next most frequently sighted animal was wild turkey. Archers averaged seeing 1.2 turkeys per trip; compared to 1.3 per trip in 2004. Ruffed grouse and raccoon followed turkeys as some of the more frequently seen wildlife. The least frequently sighted animals were the American marten, badger, otter, bobcat, skunk, fisher, and porcupine.

Hunters were also asked to report animals they saw that were not listed on the survey form. Some of the more unusual reports were sightings of snowshoe hare, falcon, eagle, merlin, flying squirrel, and snow geese. Some of the most frequently reported species were squirrel, pheasant, owl, opossum, and cottontail rabbit. The data collected from this survey will be used by the WDNR in estimating distribution and abundance of Wisconsin's wildlife.

Table 1. Total number of animals seen during the 2005 archery season by deer management region (number seen per 1,000 hours hunted).

Species	Region					Statewide
	Central Forest	Eastern Farmland	Northern Forest	Southern Farmland	Western Farmland	
American Marten	--	--	--	--	--	--
Badger	--	--	1(0.8)	--	--	1 (0.2)
Black Bear	--	1 (0.6)	33 (25.7)	--	--	34 (5.3)
Bobcat	--	--	4 (3.1)	--	--	4 (0.6)
Coyote	2 (6.6)	12 (7.6)	14 (10.9)	45 (17.5)	1 (1.8)	74 (11.6)
Fisher	--	--	12 (9.4)	--	3 (5.4)	15 (2.4)
Fox (Red & Gray)	--	6 (3.9)	4 (3.7)	66 (25.7)	4 (8.4)	82 ¹ (12.9)
Gray Wolf	7 (23.1)	2 (1.3)	7 (5.5)	--	6 (10.7)	22 (3.5)
House Cat	--	31 (19.7)	--	41 (15.9)	6 (10.7)	78 (12.3)
Porcupine	5 (16.5)	3 (1.9)	11 (8.6)	--	--	19 (3.0)
Raccoon	2 (6.6)	26 (16.5)	8 (6.2)	144 (55.9)	2 (3.6)	182 (28.6)
River Otter	--	--	1 (0.8)	--	--	1 (0.2)
Ruffed Grouse	11 (36.3)	23 (14.6)	132 (103.0)	12 (4.7)	15 (26.8)	193 (30.3)
Skunk	--	--	2 (1.6)	3 (1.2)	4 (7.2)	9 (1.4)
White-tailed Deer	146 (0.5) ²	1,226 (0.8) ²	624 (0.5) ²	1,608 (0.6) ²	526 (0.9) ²	4,157 ³ (0.7) ²
Wild Turkey	189 (624.2)	835 (531.0)	155 (120.9)	1,089 (422.9)	159 (284.3)	2,430 ⁴ (381.7)

¹ 2 sightings from unknown region. ² Expressed as deer seen per hour. ³ 27 sightings from unknown region.

⁴ 3 sightings from unknown region.

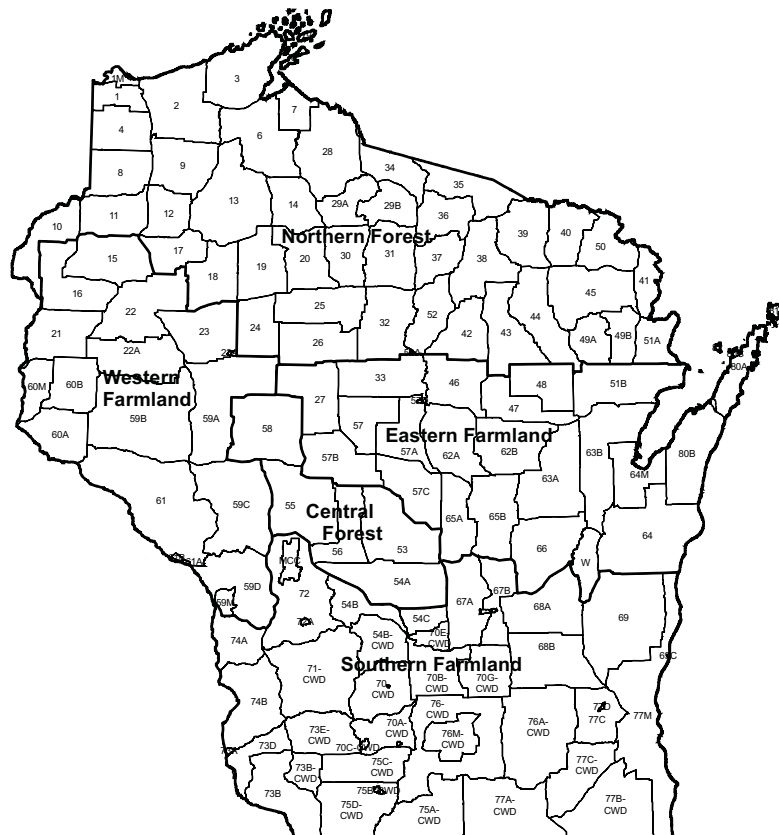


Figure 1. Wisconsin deer management regions.