


2023 - 2024 CITY OF IOWA CITY DEER MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Iowa City City Council adopted a 5-year Deer Management Plan in 2019. This plan was developed in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and local public input and was approved through the Iowa Natural Resource Commission. The Plan includes one year of professional sharpshooting, four years of urban bow hunts, and ongoing public education. To learn more, visit www.icgov.org/deer.

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BACKGROUND

Iowa City's Deer Management Plan was formed in response to resident concerns about deer in urban and suburban areas. A deer count survey conducted in 2018 revealed the urban deer population had tripled since the City ceased its deer management program in 2010. After coordinating with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and soliciting public input, the City Council adopted a [Deer Management Plan](#) in 2019. This plan was submitted to the Iowa Natural Resource Commission (NRC) and included one year of professional sharpshooting, four years of urban bow hunts, and ongoing public education. A full timeline and history of the City's deer management response is available at www.icgov.org/deer.

Public Input

In 2018, a deer committee was formed of City staff and community members. On August 14, approximately 60 community members attended a public input meeting held to discuss deer population management. Staff offered additional opportunities to provide input for those unable to attend the public forum. This input, in addition to DNR and NRC feedback, formed the basis for the 5-year deer management plan approved by City Council in August 2019.

In August 2020, City staff met with members of the Iowa City Deer Friends to receive feedback and incorporate their input into the rules for the 2020-2021 urban bow hunt. Members of the public also addressed the City Council during four City Council meetings at which the urban bow hunt rules and deer feeding ordinance were considered and approved.

In July 2022, the City held a Deer Management Listening Session with City staff, DNR staff, the media, and members of the public. City staff provided an overview of the history and current deer management strategies and then opened the floor for public comment and questions. A summary of the comments is available in the 2022-2023 Deer Management Annual Report. Additionally, DNR staff shared the success of urban bow hunts in other Iowa communities. Finally, City staff encouraged participants to promote opportunities for both property owners and hunters to contact the City if they are interested in being involved in the hunt and shared that it will begin updating its deer management plan which expires in 2024.

In July 2023, the City again solicited public input on its deer management efforts. By August 8, the City had received 43 comments, the majority of which expressed concerns about deer damage to property, dangers to drivers, and concerns about the spread of disease. Notably, several were long-term residents who provided longitudinal perspective observing a considerable uptick in deer levels in the last two to three years. 23 commenters explicitly supported lethal methods of management, 13 explicitly supported another round of sharpshooting, and 2 explicitly opposed any method of lethal management.

Members of the public are also invited to provide ongoing input on the City's deer management activities by contacting City staff through a dedicated email or City Council members. Typically, this correspondence occurs when a property owner experiences a deer-related issue and wishes to share suggestions for managing the deer population. The City reports its deer management and population estimates to City Council annually and makes the report publicly available. In addition, residents may address councilors during the public comment period at any regular City Council meeting.

State Collaboration

The City maintains close collaboration with staff from the DNR regarding implementation of the Long-Term Deer Management Plan. The City has sought input from DNR staff before and after the previous urban bow hunts and have incorporated many of their suggestions.

In preparation for the 2023-2024 urban bow hunt season, City staff again sought input from the DNR to discuss strategies for improving the effectiveness of the bow hunt program. The outcome of this collaboration was a pilot program allowing bow hunting on specifically designated public property, beginning with a portion of Sand Prairie Park at 1150 Covered Wagon Drive. City Council also set forth a process to designate additional public properties in the future. This feedback has been essential and has fostered continued growth and interest in the City's urban bow hunt program.

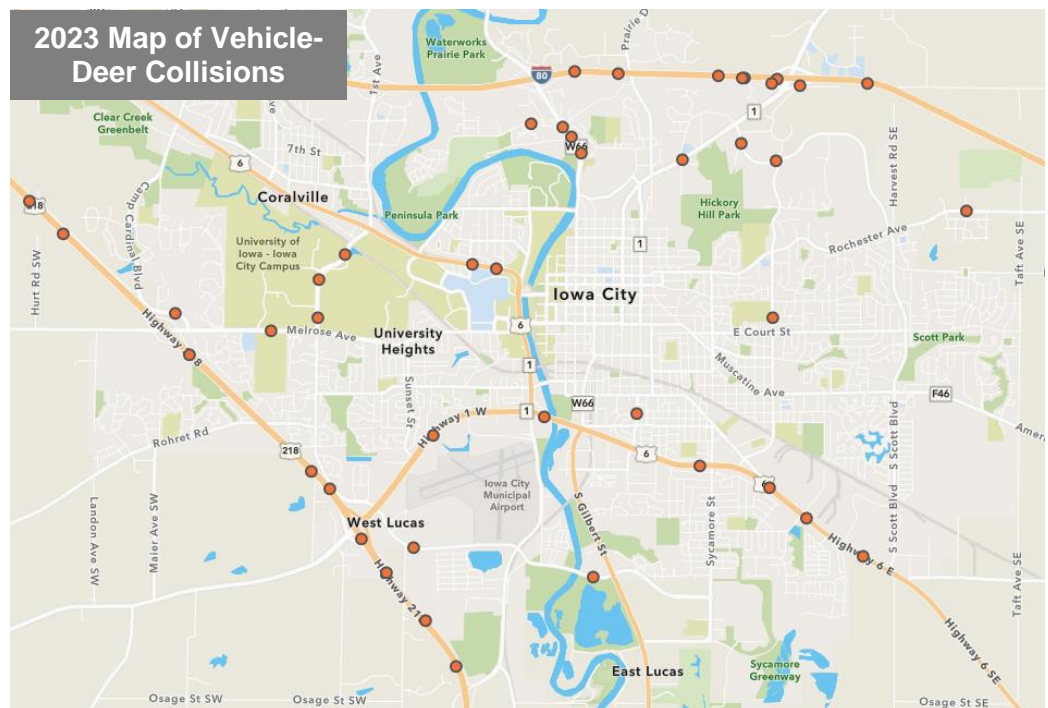
Both City and DNR staff recognize that shifting social and political comfort levels with the program in Iowa City is a work in progress. Staff intend to continue refining the urban bow hunt program in collaboration with the DNR and NRC. However, the City believes it is necessary to pursue sharpshooting in targeted areas to help manage growing deer levels in the short-term while the Urban Bow Hunt program continues to grow and gain traction as a sustainable deer management tool.

DEER COLLISIONS & COMPLAINTS

Vehicle & Deer Collisions

Between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023, the Iowa City Police Department received 27 calls for service involving vehicular collisions with deer, with the associated total estimated damage costs totaling \$104,400. All deer/vehicle accidents resulted in a call-for-service to police (minor collisions may be dealt with without police involvement).

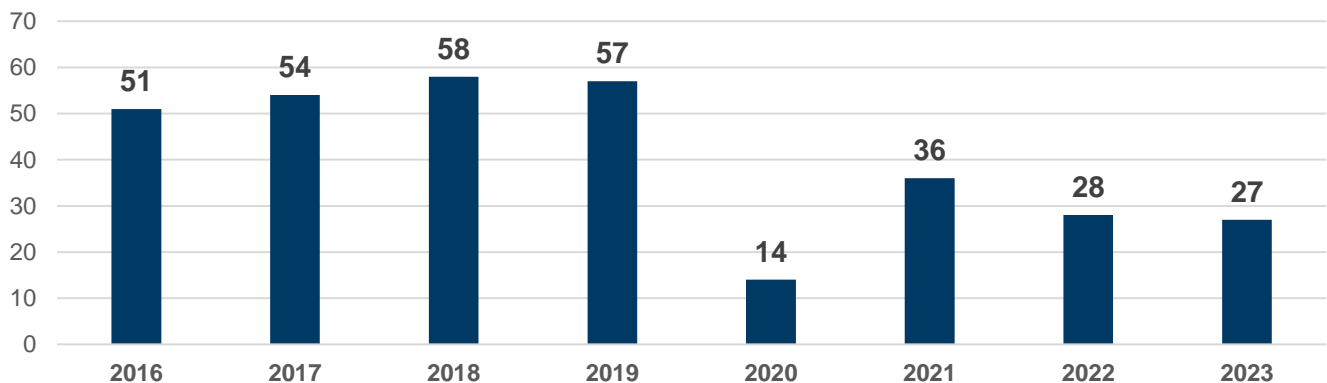
An interactive map showing locations of vehicle-deer collisions over the years is available at www.icgov.org/deer.



2023 Vehicle-Deer Collisions (Iowa City Police Department)

Date	Location of Deer Collision	Total Estimated Damage
1/2/2023	Mormon Trek Blvd	\$3,000
1/2/2023	Scott Blvd	\$2,500
1/17/2023	Dubuque St	\$1,500
2/2/2023	Mormon Trek Blvd	\$1,000
2/21/2023	2901 Melrose Ave	\$2,000
3/27/2023	218/93 S Bound	\$3,000
4/18/2023	Dubuque St	\$2,500
4/27/2023	Scott Blvd	\$5,000
5/11/2023	Foster Rd	\$2,500
5/13/2023	US 218 N/91	\$5,000
5/13/2023	US 218 S/95.3	\$4,000
5/25/2023	US 218 N	\$10,000
6/4/2023	US 218 N	\$2,000
6/7/2023	US 218 S	\$3,000
8/6/2023	1st Ave/Mayfield Rd	\$1,000
9/29/2023	US 6 W	\$3,000
9/29/2023	Mormon Trek Blvd	\$3,500
10/3/2023	IA 1 N	\$1,900
10/6/2023	I80 West	\$2,000
10/10/2023	Ramp I80 E to IA 1N and I80E	\$3,000
10/11/2023	Dubuque St	\$4,000
10/22/2023	I80 East	\$6,000
10/24/2023	Hanks Dr/Herbert Hoover Hwy	\$1,500
10/29/2023	I80 East	\$26,000
11/21/2023	McCollister Blvd	\$2,000
12/20/2023	Camp Cardinal Blvd	\$2,000
12/6/2023	Keokuk St and Keokuk Ct	\$1,500

Number of Deer-Vehicle Collisions in Iowa City



2023 Deer-Related Calls and Complaints

The City received 19 emailed comments and complaints related to deer in 2023. While this is two less than the number received in 2022, it is still higher than the number of complaints received in 2020 and 2021 combined. In addition, the City received several phone calls (which are not tracked as closely) and 12 deer-related complaints submitted through ICgovXpress, a digital platform allowing residents to report general concerns to the City.

Nearly all emails from residents expressed frustration that deer population levels were too high, concerns about traffic hazards and disease, complaints about landscaping and garden damage, and views that the City's needs to enhance current deer management efforts. Notably, multiple complaints mentioned observing groups of deer as large as 15 in their yards, and some individuals shared longitudinal perspectives that deer-related issues have been worsening, especially in the past two to three years.



In addition to concerns from the public, the City of Iowa City Parks and Recreation Department has reported that deer have become a significant threat to urban tree health in general and frequently observes damage to public trees caused by deer.

NON-LETHAL DEER MANAGEMENT

Iowa City's Long-Term Deer Management Plan includes a series of activities for the City to provide, consider, or develop. Non-lethal management actions taken to date include:

- Publishing of a comprehensive set of deer management related content at www.icgov.org/deer, which includes background information, FAQs, non-lethal management tips, links to resources, a map of deer-vehicle collisions, and other content referenced in the Long-Term Deer Management Plan.
- Passing an ordinance which prohibits the feeding of deer and issuing periodic communications notifying residents.
- Issuing utility-bill inserts, news releases, and social media posts that advise residents how to minimize deer damage using non-lethal methods.



Currently, there are five Deer Crossing signs installed within Iowa City limits to help advise motorists to take extra caution. These are located at Dubuque Street, north of Linder Road; Dubuque Street, south of the I-80 bridge; Rochester Avenue, east of First Avenue; Rochester Avenue, west of Scott Boulevard; and Dodge Street, west of ACT Circle.

In an effort to deter deer from browsing on City-maintained plantings, the City has adopted a practice of planting allium species in place of more deer-friendly vegetation, such as hostas.

DEER DEPREDATION RESULTS

The [Long-Term Deer Management Plan](#) adopted by City Council and submitted to the Iowa NRC includes one year of professional sharpshooting and a bow hunt in years 2020 – 2024.

Deer Harvest Summary by Year				
Year	Hunters Approved	Tags Purchased	Buck Incentive Earned	Deer Harvested
2019 – 2020 Sharpshooting	n/a	n/a	n/a	500
2020 – 2021 Urban Bow Hunt	5	14	0	3
2021 – 2022 Urban Bow Hunt	5	15	1	4
2022 – 2023 Urban Bow Hunt	12	46	6	29
2023 – 2024 Urban Bow Hunt	16	51	7	32

2019 – 2020 Professional Sharpshooting

The City contracted with White Buffalo Inc., a wildlife management organization, to conduct the 2019-2020 professional sharpshooting deer cull. White Buffalo Inc. provided a full report of the cull results in March 2020. Approximately 500 deer were harvested through the sharpshoot. The meat from the deer (estimated to be approximately 30,000 pounds) was tested for safety by the Iowa DNR and then processed and donated to local food banks.

2020 – 2021 Urban Bow Hunt

A total of 14 tags were purchased between the five approved hunters. Of those tags, three deer were harvested during the 2020-2021 urban bow hunt. All the deer were harvested on private property per the hunt rules.

2021 – 2022 Urban Bow Hunt

A total of 15 tags were purchased between the five approved hunters. Of those tags, four deer were harvested on private property per the hunt rules and one buck incentive was earned. Prior to the 2021 – 2022 season, the City implemented several changes to the program as recommended by the DNR staff, including: lengthening the application period, opening the hunt season earlier, and increasing the quota from 75 deer to 200 deer.

2022 – 2023 Urban Bow Hunt

The application period, quota, and season duration changes implemented in the previous bow hunt were maintained. Additionally, the City introduced new outreach efforts based on recommendations from DNR staff, best practices in other communities, and public input. These

included asking private property owners to submit their interest in providing land for hunters which the City would use to help connect approved hunters with cooperative property owners; City outreach to key property owners in targeted areas with high deer densities; and collaboration with a local outfitter to promote the hunt with local hunting, outdoorsmen, and sportsmen groups. As a result, two private properties with large natural areas participated in the hunt, which improved hunter participation and significantly increased the number of deer harvested. Several other property owners expressed interest in participating in the future, but a few who expressed interest were deemed ineligible due to the 150' separation requirement.

2023 – 2024 Urban Bow Hunt

All policies implemented in the 2022-2023 bow hunt were maintained. Additionally, City Council began allowing hunting on specifically identified public lands as recommended by DNR staff. Under the change, any new public properties recommended for use would be presented to City Council each year prior to the annual bow hunt season. During the 2023-2024 season, City Council approved the use of Sand Prairie Park at 1150 Covered Wagon Drive.

The City’s 2022- 2023 bow hunt season began on September 14, 2023, and ended on January 10, 2024. The City of Iowa City accepted applications for bow hunters until October 20, 2023. 16 hunters applied and all were accepted for the hunt. All approved hunters held a valid DNR hunting license, completed the required qualifications at Fin & Feather, and submitted the appropriate paperwork with the City regarding their hunt locations.

A total of 51 tags were purchased, 45 of which were for antlerless deer. In total, 32 deer were harvested during the hunt. All the deer were harvested per the hunt rules. Seven hunters earned buck incentive tags, which means those hunters will be eligible for a buck tag for the 2024-2025 urban bow hunt season.

DNR #	Doe	Button Buck	Buck	Total Harvest
866190879	3		1	4
712186386	1			1
4465621	3			3
1738095	3		1	4
2672145-455268	3			3
1000522239				0
586414070	3		1	4
2617694	2			2
1000277157	3			3
626058457	1			1
4446548	2			2
1000406124				0
RED100276				0
833696107	1			1
416035897	1			1
1000333634	3			3
Total harvested:	29		3	32

There was one complaint about the placement of a deer stand. Even though the stand was placed within the rules, the hunter agreed to move it to avoid conflict with the complainant. No reporting violations occurred.

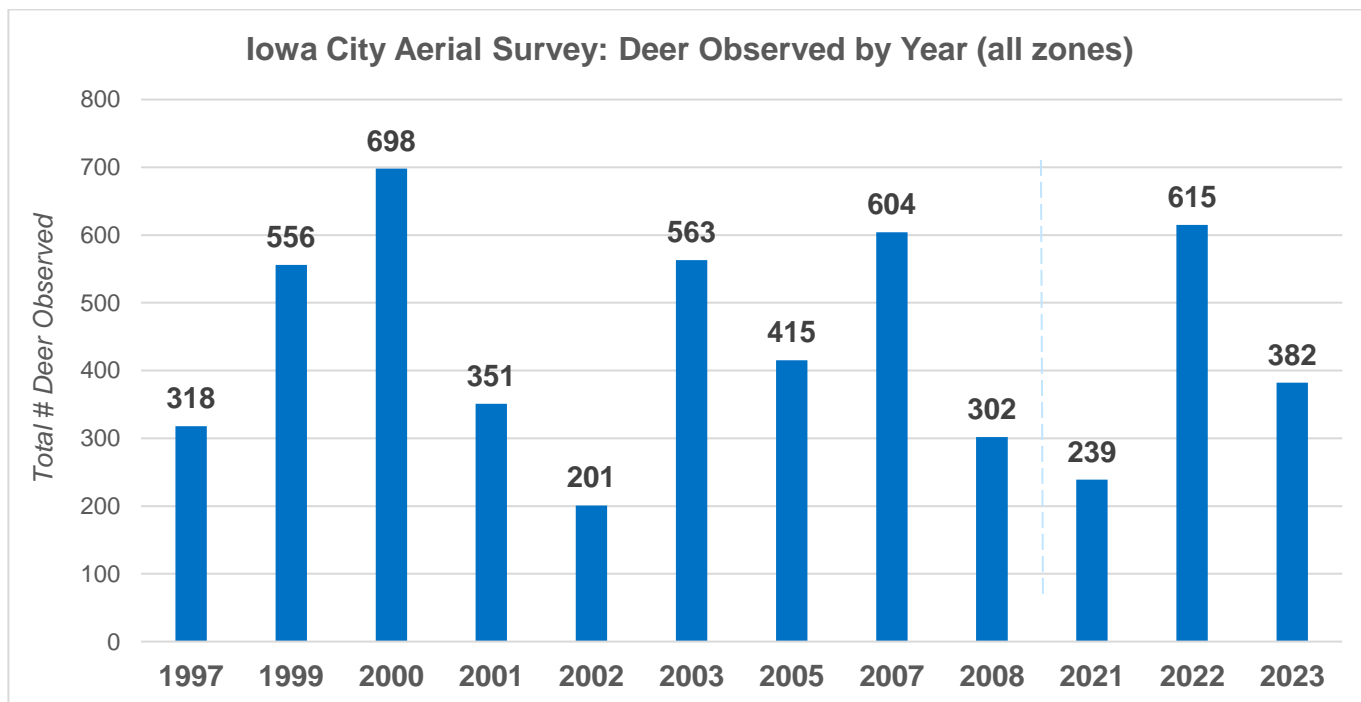
The voluntary participation of large private property owners and limited use of public lands resulted in continued growth in the number of deer harvested over prior years. However, it is important not to depend too heavily on private property owners as their participation is entirely voluntary and could change from year to year. As such, staff anticipates expanding the use of public lands for the 2024-2025 bow hunt following the process approved by City Council.

AERIAL DEER SURVEY

The Iowa DNR did not conduct an aerial deer survey in Iowa City for 2024 due to uncondusive weather conditions. However, the City is initiating discussions with the DNR to identify alternative methods of tracking deer populations in the future to prevent reliance on a single data source.

As a result, the most current deer survey data is from February 2023, at which time 382 deer were observed in all zones. Prior to that year, deer density estimates were also provided by zone, but DNR staff advised that the best data is the trend in observed deer numbers over a long period of time. Consequently, density estimates are no longer included.

The DNR also advises that aerial surveys provide a snapshot of levels but that a variety of factors influence the day-to-day movement of deer throughout the area. Variance in numbers from aerial surveys year to year can be due to variables such as weather, food availability, days of snow cover, or other factors.

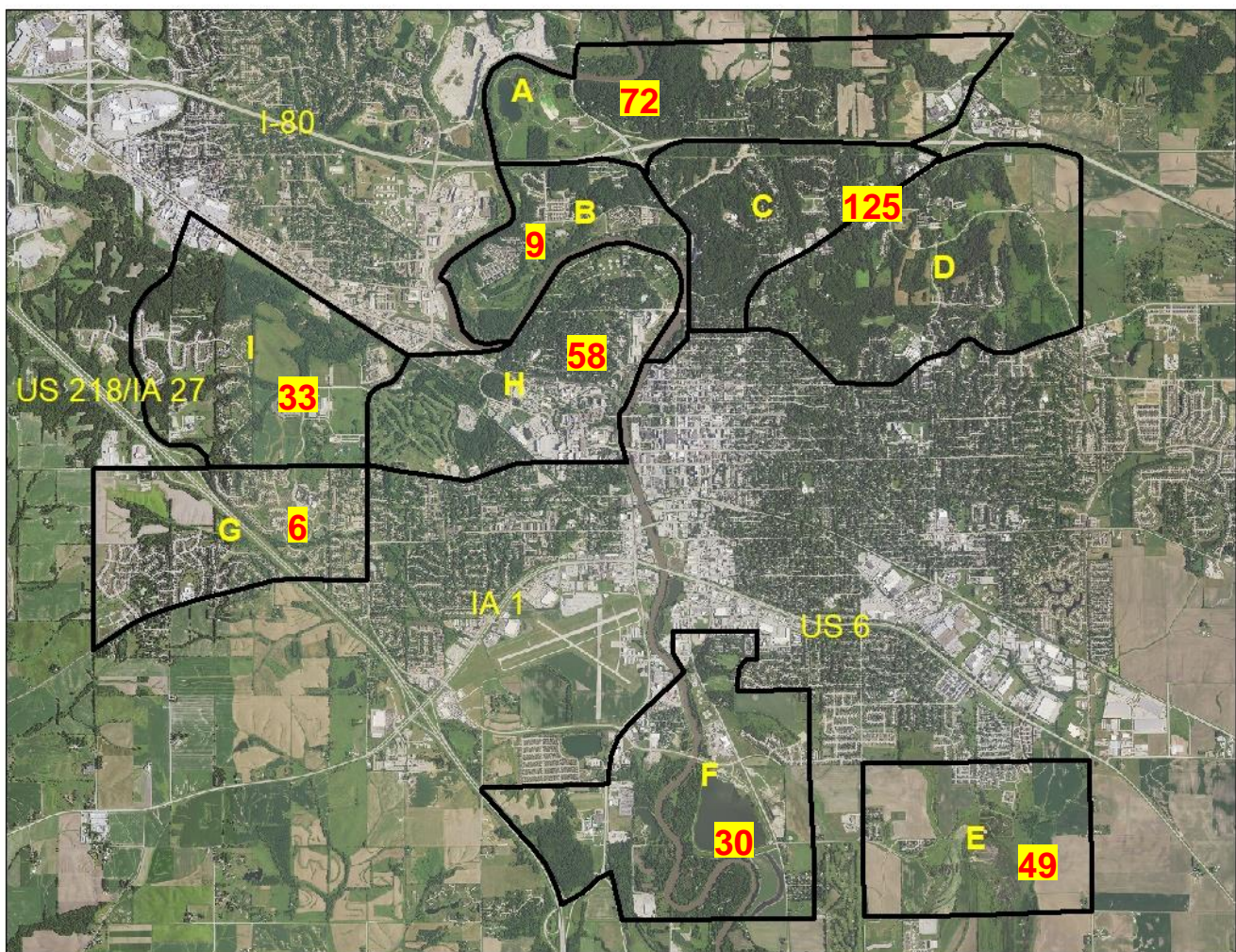


Note: Professional sharpshooting to manage deer occurred in 2000 – 2009 and ceased in 2010. One year of professional sharpshooting was again completed in 2020 and culled approximately 500 deer.

Iowa City Aerial Surveys and Deer Observed

Zone	Acres	Sq Miles	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2005	2007	2008	2021	2022	2023
A	1,398	2.18	37	60	74	64	29	76	71	170	80	15	180	72
B	669	1.05	69	154	81	33	30	30	19	5	2	3	20	9
C	808	1.26	78	90	99	39	36	60	43	46	33	30	87	125
D	1,489	2.33	65	127	140	38	25	100	88	65	36	103	130	
E	958	1.50	0	0	7	12	0	12	9	41	19	21	79	49
F	1,594	2.49	11	15	48	42	15	74	65	80	32	19	66	30
G	993	1.55	3	0	4	0	0	0	5	43	35	13	4	6
H	1,187	1.85	6	31	48	24	23	42	6	53	26	20	24	58
I	1,239	1.94	49	79	197	99	43	169	109	101	39	15	25	33
Total			318	556	698	351	201	563	415	604	302	239	615	382

2023 Iowa City Aerial Survey Zone Map (with number of deer observed added in RED)



ANALYSIS & LOOKING AHEAD

Looking holistically at the variety of datasets collected by the City (including deer-vehicle collisions, location of public complaints, and the aerial deer survey), top areas of concern for deer population levels include the belt stretching from Manville Heights east through Morningside-Glendale and Washington Hills and north around Hickory Hill Park and the Bluffwood/Shimek neighborhoods.

While recruiting property owners for the last two bow hunts, the City identified potential bow hunting areas in Iowa City which met the 150' separation requirements. Fortunately, the participation of a few large property owners in the northeast region of Iowa City, where population levels are estimated to be the highest, resulted in a higher deer harvest count in the past two bow hunts.

However, it is important to remember that property owner participation is voluntary and not guaranteed from year to year. Should one of these properties change use, ownership or otherwise decline to participate in future bow hunts, it is unlikely the City would see similar harvest results. As such, the lack of eligible hunting land in Iowa City remains a top concern about the City's ability to effectively manage deer population levels moving forward.

The current Long-Term Deer Management Plan concluded with a final 2023-2024 urban bow hunt. The City is in the process of preparing for the 2024-2025 urban bow hunt and planning for a new deer management plan to be reviewed by the Natural Resource Commission in summer 2024.