ABOUT THE PROJECT

We are an interdisciplinary team working to explore the social and environmental dynamics of wildlife in suburban and urban communities of Massachusetts and New York.

White-tailed deer are an increasingly common sight in the streets and backyards of communities across Massachusetts and New York. Several factors have contributed to the growth in deer populations, including the lack of predators and abundant food supplies in yard and community spaces. The growing presence of deer in communities across the Northeast has caused a mixture of interest and concern from residents and officials across both states.

This research project will gather information to better understand deer populations and the factors affecting their impacts in your community and across the Northeast. Our work will provide information to residents and municipal officials that can support efforts to assess the number and impacts of deer and the evaluation of various options for management of white-tailed deer.

The project is funded by the National Science Foundation (Award #1832191 and Award #1923668) and led by researchers at Boston University, Texas A&M University, Colorado State University, and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

OBJECTIVES

To better understand the relationships between deer, wildlife management, and the environment, our work focuses on these questions:

- *Why are deer numbers increasing in urban, rural, and suburban communities and how are communities responding?*
- *What concerns do communities have about the increasing presence of deer and potential management activities?*

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

To answer these questions, we are working with a selection of municipalities to understand the local impacts of deer over a three-year period. Below is a brief description of the research activities we are hoping to conduct in your community and across the Northeast.

Deer population monitoring: In each municipality, we will monitor deer activity using wildlife cameras on public and private land. With the permission of land owners and municipal officials, we will strategically place these cameras to count deer and other species, monitor their behaviors, and understand how hunters, deer and other species interact with each other.

Wildlife cameras will be placed in Summer 2021 and visited 2-4 times a year by a member of the research team for the duration of the project (2021-2024).

Environmental impacts: During the same time period, we will survey plant populations around the camera sites to understand if and how deer impact forests and ecological health across municipal and residential spaces. Following specific sampling protocols, we will establish semi-permanent plots in sampled forest patches and conduct repeated browse surveys.

Vegetation surveys will be conducted annually by a member of the research team during the summer for the duration of the project (2021-2014).

Human Dimensions: To better understand how people respond to increased deer numbers within their municipality, we will conduct interviews with municipal officials, non-profits, landowners, and residents about deer and their impacts. These research activities will help us understand how decisions regarding deer and deer management are made in each selected municipality.

Interviews and focus groups will occur throughout the duration of the project at the convenience of the participants.

IMPACTS

We will share the results of these research activities to all participating municipalities.

Our research will be relevant to policy-makers, natural resource managers, activists and members of the public interested in human-wildlife interactions and their social, ecological and political impacts. For your municipality in particular, our project will contribute to monitoring the local impacts of deer in your community and provide insight into municipal and resident concerns about deer that can be used in future management discussions.

To learn more about the project, visit our website at:
http://sites.bu.edu/urbanwilds/