# DEER-RELATED CRASHES

DID YOU KNOW...

- Over 20,000 deer-related crashes occurred in Wisconsin in 2016. Deer were the third most commonly-struck object in Wisconsin (behind other vehicles and fixed objects).
- In these deer-related crashes, 11 people were killed and 451 people were injured. 100% (11 of the 11   fatalities) were among motorcyclists. Furthermore, total injuries among motorcyclists were only about a third lower than the combined number of injuries among car and light truck occupants. This is not surprising considering that motorcyclists lack the protection that windshields provide to those in cars

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

### DEER-RELATED INJ. & FATALITIES (2000-2016)
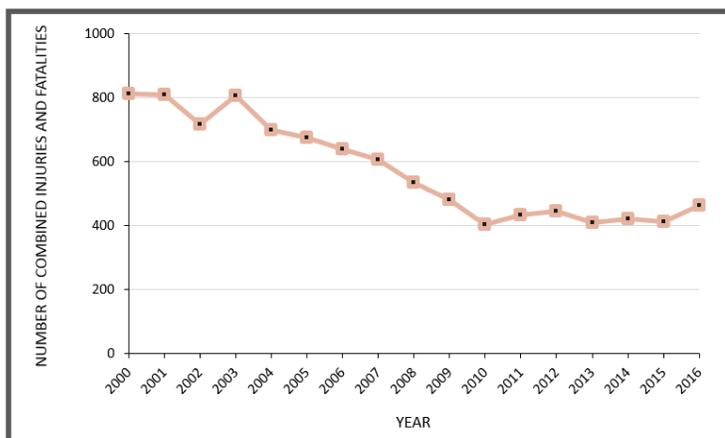
- Over the past 16 years, Wisconsin has experienced a secular—though uneven—decline in deer-related injuries and fatalities.

- This is likely due to the fact that seatbelt use increased dramatically over the past several decades and to the fact that automobiles and motorcycles have themselves become much safer. More motorcyclists are wearing helmets than in years past, which is important as motorcyclists are at the greatest risk from deer crashes.

- 2016 saw a significant increase in deer-related injuries and fatalities (from 411 to 462).

WHEN DO DEER-RELATED CRASHES OCCUR?

DEER-RELATED CRASHES BY MONTH (2016)
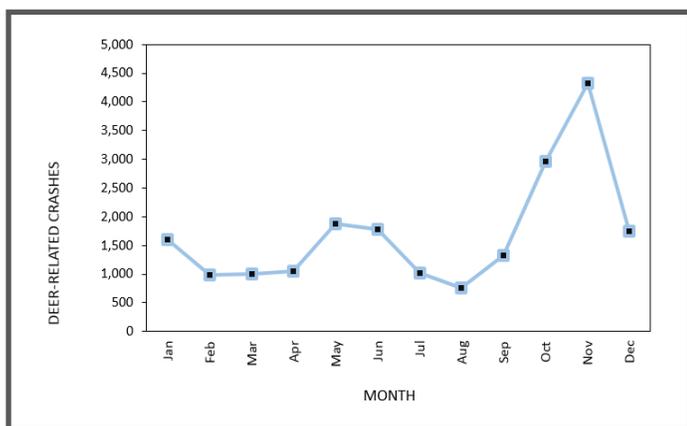
DEER-RELATED CRASHES BY TIME (2016)
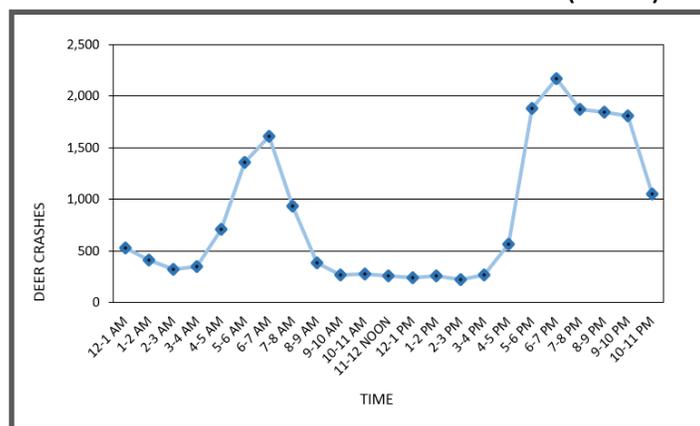
- While October and November are the peak months for crashes, May and June often represent another peak. Furthermore, in 2016, the number of injuries and fatalities recorded in both May and June either equaled or nearly equaled the number of fatalities and serious injuries in October and November. This is likely a result of drivers in May and June driving faster—and thus suffering more severe injuries when deer crashes occur.

- The main crash peak in October and November occurs when young deer reach maturity and thus roam the countryside looking for mates. The secondary crash peak in May and June is the result of inexperienced young deer that have been pushed out onto their own for the first time by their mothers.

WHERE DO DEER-RELATED CRASHES OCCUR?

- Deer crashes typically occur in exurban settings, where there are both high levels of deer and human populations. *Within these exurban areas*, the majority (almost 90%) of crashes occur on rural roads.

- In 2016, Dane, Waukesha, and Washington Counties reported the highest absolute number of reported deer crashes. Dane County reported the most vehicle-deer crashes, with 1,006, followed by Waukesha and Washington (with 871 and 766 crashes, respectively). All of these counties contain exurban areas which are the sites of significant and overlapping human and deer populations. Dane County is located in Greater Madison, while Waukesha and Washington Counties are located in the Milwaukee Region.

- Nonetheless, as can be seen on the right, other counties reported more relative crashes (with deer crashes composing a higher relative percentage of all crashes). These counties—where more than 40% of all crashes were deer-related in 2016—are generally rural. Only Shawano County appears near the top of both lists, with high absolute and high relative numbers of deer crashes.

Legend
- AREAS WHERE > 40% OF CRASHES ARE DEER-RELATED
- AREAS WHERE < 40% OF CRASHES ARE DEER-RELATED
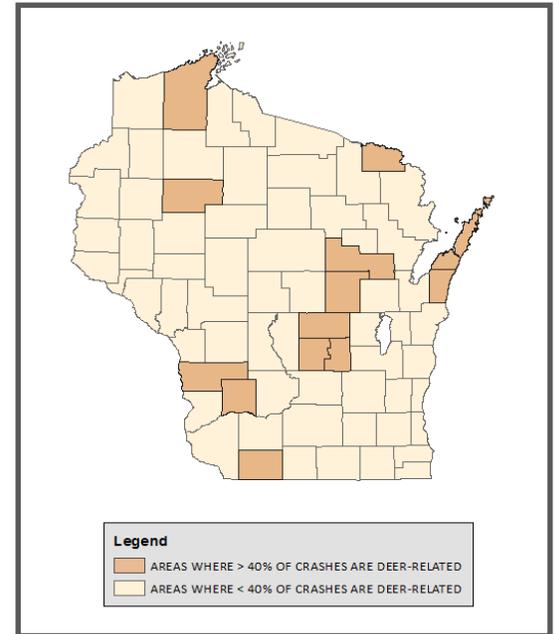
WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

- Motorcyclists are most at risk because motorcycles are lighter and lack a front windshield. Consequently, when crashes *do* occur, they are far more likely to cause severe injuries or fatalities.

- For example, 239 motorcycle-deer crashes caused 11 fatalities and 52 incapacitating injuries. Conversely, about 20,000 auto-deer and light truck-deer crashes caused 0 fatalities and 15 incapacitating injuries. In other words, there is a 26 % chance that a motorcycle-deer crash will cause a fatality or serious injury, while the comparable chance for an auto-deer or light truck-deer crash is ~ 0.1%.

PREVENTING DEER-RELATED CRASHES

- Exercise particular caution in the months of May, June, October, and November. As mentioned earlier, these months represent the time of year when young deer leave their mothers, and mate, respectively. Moreover, a heavy majority of deer crashes occur in the early morning and early evening hours, when deer are feeding. Decrease speeds and increase caution at these times.

- If you see a single deer, slow down and scan along the side of the road. Mothers often travel with fawns in the spring and early summer and males often pursue females in the mating season of October and November.

- Many deer-related crashes are caused by swerving. If a deer suddenly appears in front of you, do not swerve. This can cause you to move into the path of oncoming traffic or roll over into a ditch, which could kill you. However, if nobody is immediately behind you, do hit the brakes to minimize the crash intensity.

- If you hit a deer, pull over to the side of the road. Put on your hazard lights and call law enforcement as soon as possible.