

# DEER-RELATED CRASHES

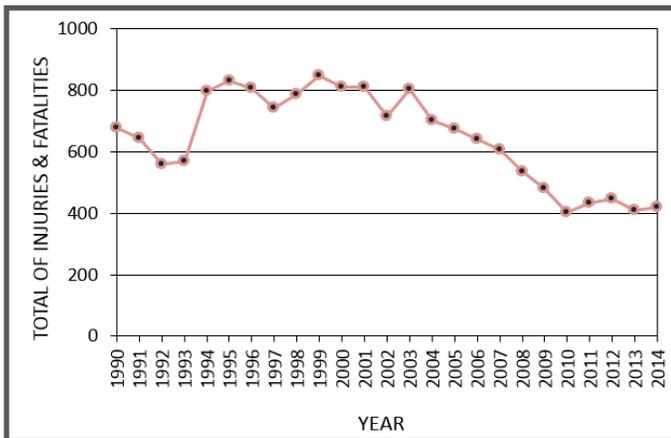


## DID YOU KNOW...

- Over 18,000 deer-related crashes occurred in Wisconsin in 2014. Deer were the third most commonly struck object in Wisconsin (behind other vehicles and fixed objects).
- In these deer-related crashes, 10 people were killed and 410 people were injured. However, 80% (8 of the 10 fatalities) were among motorcyclists. Furthermore, total injuries among motorcyclists were more than double the number among auto drivers and passengers combined. This is not surprising considering that motorcyclists generally lack the protection that windshields provides to drivers and passengers.

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

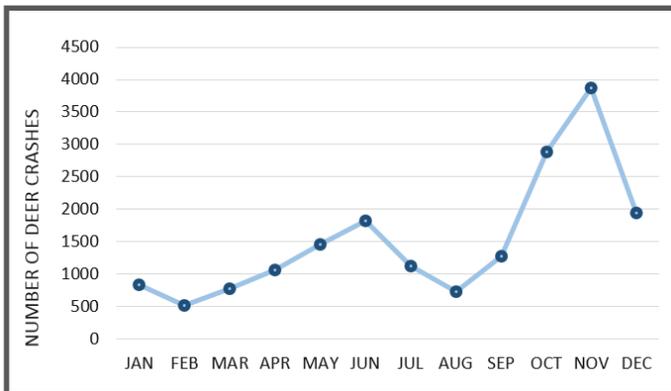
### DEER-RELATED INJ. & FATALITIES (1979-2014)



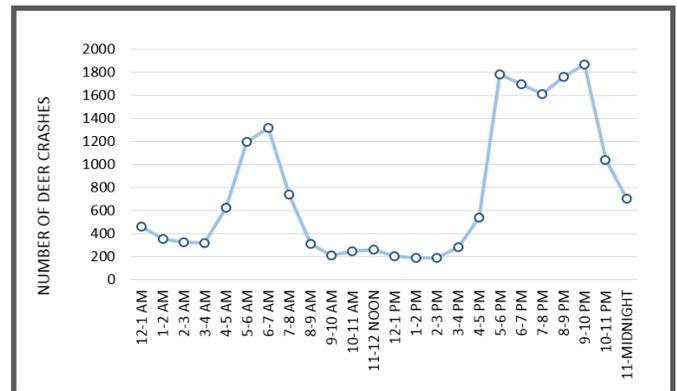
- Over the past 15 years, Wisconsin has experienced a secular—though uneven—decline in deer-related injuries and fatalities.
- This is likely due to the fact that seatbelt use increased dramatically over the past several decades and to the fact that automobiles and motorcycles have themselves become much safer. More motorcyclists are wearing helmets than in years past, which is important as motorcyclists are at the greatest risk from deer crashes.
- 2014 saw a slight increase in deer-related injuries and fatalities (from 410 to 420).

## WHEN DO DEER-RELATED CRASHES OCCUR?

### DEER-RELATED CRASHES BY MONTH (2014)



### DEER-RELATED CRASHES BY TIME (2014)

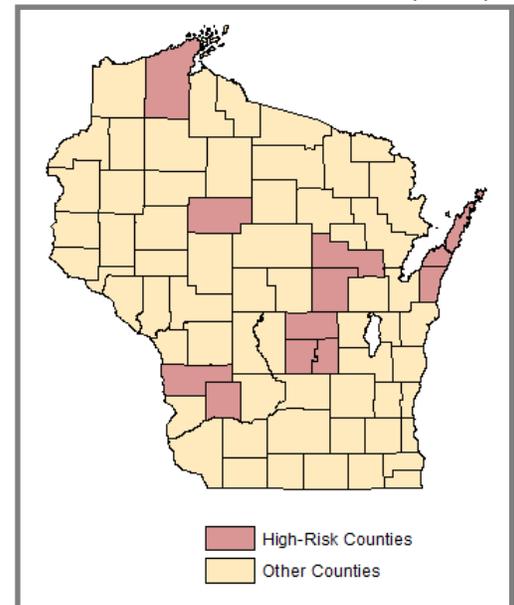


- While October and November are the peak months for crashes, May and June often represent another peak. In most years—2014 included—May and June reported the highest number of *injuries* and *fatalities* because motorists are more active at this time (and driving faster).
- The main crash peak in October-November occurs when young deer reach maturity and thus roam the countryside looking for mates. The secondary crash peak in May-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 moderately high levels of deer and human populations. *Within these exurban areas*, the vast majority (almost 90%) of crashes occur on rural roads.
- In 2014, Dane, Shawano, and Waukesha counties reported the highest absolute number of reported deer crashes. Dane County had the most motor vehicle-deer crashes, with 863. Shawano followed with 725, with Waukesha right behind at 700. All of these counties contain large exurban areas which are the sites of significant and overlapping human and deer populations. Dane County is located in Greater Madison, Shawano County is located in Greater Green Bay, and Waukesha County is located in Greater Milwaukee.
- 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 2014—are generally more rural and located away from major population centers. Only Shawano County appears on the top of both lists, reporting high absolute *and* high relative numbers of auto-deer crashes.

COUNTIES WHERE MORE > 40% OF CRASHES ARE DEER-RELATED (2014)



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## 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, in 2014, 234 motorcycle crashes caused 8 fatalities and 62 incapacitating injuries. Conversely, about 18,000 auto-deer crashes caused 2 fatalities and 79 incapacitating injuries. In other words, there is a 30% chance that a motorcycle-deer crash will cause a fatality or serious injury, while the comparable chance for an auto-deer crash is ~1%.

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## 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-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.