

2023 SOUTH CAROLINA DEER HARVEST REPORT



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEER RESEARCH & MANAGEMENT PROJECT



Submitted by

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INTRODUCTION

The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) is the most popular, sought after, economically important, and controversial game animal in South Carolina. The 2023 Deer Hunter Survey represents the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' (SCDNR), Wildlife Section's ongoing commitment to conduct pertinent research related to the state's white-tailed deer resource. The primary objectives of this survey research were to obtain valid estimates of: (1) the statewide deer harvest in 2023, (2) the harvest of deer in the constituent counties of the state, (3) hunting effort related to deer, (4) resident and nonresident hunter activities, and (5) weapons use, weapons preference, and harvest rates by weapon type. Information on hunter opinion related to certain aspects of the deer resource as well as estimates of the wild hog and coyote harvest in the state is also presented.

Due to the importance of deer as a state resource, SCDNR believes that accurately assessing the harvest of deer, as well as hunter participation in deer hunting, is key to the management of this species. Proposed changes in deer-related laws and regulations should have foundations in biology, therefore, the population dynamics associated with annual hunting mortality cannot be ignored. Similarly, when issues arise that do not involve biological parameters, it is important to have information related to deer hunter activities afield because they too form an important basis for managing deer.

Since the inception of the Statewide Deer Research and Management Project (Deer Project) the methods used to document the state's deer harvest have changed. Historically, deer harvest figures were developed using a system of mandatory deer check stations in the 18 county Upstate (Game Zones 1 and 2) in conjunction with reported harvests from properties enrolled in the Deer Quota Program (DQP) in the 28 county Coastal Plain (Game Zones 3 and 4). This system yielded an actual count of harvested deer and was, therefore, an absolute minimum harvest figure. Shortcomings in this system included deterioration of check station compliance in the Upstate and failure to report by DQP cooperators in the Coastal Plain. Also, since the acreage enrolled in the DQP tends to be about one-half of the deer habitat in the Coastal Plain, past harvest figures have not documented deer harvests on non-quota lands (3.1 million acres) because there was no legal requirement to report harvested deer in the Coastal Plain. Therefore,

it is suspected that historic deer harvest figures only accounted for about one-half of the total deer harvest that occurred annually in the state.

Survey Methodology

The 2023 Deer Hunter Survey represents a random mail survey that involved a single mail-out. The questionnaire for the 2023 Deer Hunter Survey was developed by Wildlife Section personnel (Figure 1). The mailing list database was constructed by randomly selecting 35,000 known Big Game Permit holders that included 8 license types. The license types included: (1) Resident Sportsman' s, (2) 3-year Resident Sportsman' s, (3) Resident Combination, (4) 3-year Resident Combination, (5) Resident Junior Sportsman' s, (6) Resident Big Game Permit, (7) 3-year Resident Big Game Permit, and (8) Nonresident Big Game Permit. The number of individuals associated with each license type was based on an attempted sampling rate of approximately 15 percent for licenses purchased through December of 2023. Since deer seasons statewide end on January 1 there was no need to sample individuals that were licensed thereafter.

Data entry was completed by Success Staffing, LLC, Seabrook, SC. Statistical analysis was conducted using Statistix 10 (Analytical Software, Tallahassee, FL).

Acknowledgments

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As with any mail survey, a portion of the attempted sample (35,000) was returned as undeliverable mail (416). Therefore, the actual attempted sample was 34,584 representing 18.4 percent of the entire population (188,132) of license holders. A total of 4,799 completed surveys were returned yielding a 14 percent response rate and 2.6 percent sample on the entire licensee population.

Deer Harvest

During the 2023 deer season it is estimated that a total of 104,353 bucks and 93,818 does were harvested for a statewide total of 198,171 deer (Table 1). This represents a 10 percent increase in harvest from 2022 (179,414) and is 39 percent below the record harvest established in 2002 (319,902). After many years of rapidly increasing from the 1970's to the mid-1990's, the deer population in South Carolina exhibited relative stability between 1995 and 2002. Between 2003 and 2015, however, the population trended down with the overall reduction in harvest likely attributable to a number of factors, including habitat change, two decades of aggressive antlerless deer harvest, and the complete colonization of the state by coyotes and their impact on fawn survival. The harvest in 2023 was the highest since 2014 which may be indicative of the population beginning to increase after a number of years of relative stability.

Harvest Per Unit Area County Rankings

Comparisons can be made between deer harvests from the various counties in South Carolina if a harvest per unit area is established. Harvest per unit area standardizes the harvest among counties regardless of the size of individual counties. One measure of harvest rate is the number of deer taken per square mile (640ac. = 1 mile²). When considering the estimated deer habitat that is available in South Carolina, the deer harvest rate in 2023 was 10.5 deer per square mile over the entire state (Table 2). Although the deer harvest in the state is lower now than many years ago, South Carolina remains at the top among southeastern states, many of which

have also noted a declining trend. The top 5 counties for harvest per unit area were Anderson (23.5 deer/mile²), Bamberg (15.6 deer/mile²), Hampton (15.5 deer/mile²), Abbeville (15.1 deer/mile²), and Orangeburg (13.6 deer/mile²). Four of these counties were in the top 5 in 2022.

Deer Harvest Rankings by County

Total deer harvest by county is not comparable among counties because counties vary in size and are, therefore, not directly comparable. However, it has become customary to rank the counties based on number of deer harvested (Table 3). The top 5 counties during 2023 were Orangeburg, Colleton, Anderson, Hampton, and Williamsburg.

Deer Harvest on Wildlife Management Areas

Deer hunting on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) remains popular in South Carolina with approximately 60,000 licensees having a WMA Permit. Wildlife Management Areas represent lands owned by SCDNR, other state-owned lands enrolled in the WMA Program, US Forest Service lands enrolled in the WMA Program, and private and/or corporate lands that are leased by SCDNR as part of the WMA Program. Deer harvest figures for coastal WMAs are from check stations and are presented only for those WMA properties that have a deer check-in requirement. Deer harvest figures for upstate WMAs (Mountain and Central and Western Piedmont Hunt Units) were estimated by extrapolating the county deer harvest rates (deer/mi²) to the acreage of WMA land that falls within the respective counties comprising the WMA. This assumes that hunters on WMA lands exhibit effort and deer harvest patterns similar to those of the general licensee database that was surveyed. Finally, the estimated deer harvest on WMA lands is included in, not additive to, the county and statewide estimates found throughout this report.

During the 2023 season it is estimated that 4,017 bucks, 3,219 does, and 37 deer of unknown sex were harvested for a total deer harvest on Wildlife Management Areas of 7,273 (Table 4). This figure represents a 5 percent decrease from 2022.

Hunter Opinion Regarding the Deer Population

The 2023 Deer Hunter Survey asked participants their opinion regarding the following question. Compared to past years, how would you rate the number of deer in the area that you hunt most often? Survey participants were given 3 choices; increasing, about the same, or decreasing. Most hunters (60%) indicated that the number of deer in the area they hunted most often was about the same as in past years (Table 5). More hunters (24%) believed that the deer population was decreasing than increasing (16%). On a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being increasing, 2 being neutral, and 3 being decreasing, the overall mean rating of 2.1 suggests that hunters viewed the deer population about the same to slightly decreasing compared to past years.

Number of Deer Hunters

Even though all individuals receiving a survey were licensed to hunt deer, only 83 percent actually hunted deer. For residents, 81 percent of sampled licensees hunted deer and for nonresidents 90 percent hunted deer. Extrapolating to the respective licensee populations yields 140,459 residents (Table 6) and 14,256 nonresidents (Table 7) for a total of 154,715 deer hunters statewide during 2023. This figure represents a 13 percent increase from the 136,356 hunters in 2022. Counties with the highest estimates for individual hunters include Orangeburg, Colleton, Anderson, Laurens, and Newberry for resident hunters (Table 6) and Hampton, Allendale, Chester, Bamberg, and Union for nonresidents (Table 7). These were the same top 5 counties for nonresidents as in 2022.

Hunting Success

For determination of hunting success only those individuals who actually hunted deer were included in the analysis and similarly, success was defined as harvesting at least one deer. Overall hunting success in 2023 was 71 percent, which should be considered very good. Success rates for residents (71%, Table 6) were lower than nonresidents (73%, Table 7) likely since many nonresidents hunt commercially where considerable preparation is done for them. Estimates for resident and nonresident success rates for all counties are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Hunter Effort

For the purposes of this survey hunter effort was measured in days with one day being defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Resident hunters averaged 14 days afield for a total of 1,932,725 days deer hunting. Nonresidents averaged 14 days for a total of 203,060 days (Table 8). Total effort expended deer hunting in South Carolina during 2023 was estimated at 2,135,786 days (Table 8), a 6 percent increase from 2022. The number of days devoted to deer hunting in South Carolina is very significant and points not only to the availability and popularity of deer as a game species, but to the obvious economic benefits related to this important natural resource. Previous surveys conducted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that approximately 200 million dollars in direct retail sales are related to deer hunting in South Carolina annually.

The top 5 South Carolina counties for overall days of deer hunting during 2023 were Orangeburg, Colleton, Anderson, and Spartanburg (Table 8). Resident hunters expended the most hunting effort in Orangeburg, Colleton, Anderson, Aiken, and Spartanburg counties. Nonresidents hunted the most in Hampton, Allendale, Chester, Union, and Bamberg, counties and these 5 counties totaled 36 percent of all the nonresident deer hunting effort that took place in South Carolina in 2023.

Resident hunters who were successful at harvesting at least one deer averaged more days (16 days) afield than unsuccessful residents (9 days) (Table 8). Similarly, successful nonresidents (16 days) averaged more days afield when compared with unsuccessful nonresidents (10 days).

The amount of effort required to harvest a deer varied between residents and nonresidents and by the county hunted. On average it took less time for nonresidents to harvest a deer (10 days, Table 7) compared to residents (11 days, Table 6). This may be due to the fact that many nonresidents hunt commercially where considerable preparation is done prior to the hunter's arrival. Also, there may be less selectivity with respect to deer harvested by nonresidents. Counties requiring the least effort to harvest a deer included Hampton, Marlboro, Jasper, Allendale, and Beaufort counties for resident hunters (Table 6). On the other hand, nonresidents spent less time harvesting a deer in Horry, Georgetown, and Bamberg counties (Table 7).

Deer Harvest by Weapon Type and Weapons Utilization and Preference

All areas of South Carolina have long and liberal firearms seasons and the majority (84%) of deer were harvested with centerfire rifles (Table 9). Shotguns (6.8%) and bows (4.5%) also contribute significantly to the overall deer harvest in the state, whereas muzzleloaders, crossbows, and handguns combine to contribute about 5 percent to the total harvest (Table 9).

Although rifles are used by about 92 percent of hunters, nearly 80 percent of hunters use multiple weapons during the deer season (Table 10, Table 11). Resident hunters appear to be more flexible than nonresidents in their use of multiple weapons and significantly more residents use archery equipment (30%) and shotguns (16%) than nonresidents (22% archery and 8% shotguns) (Table 11). This finding has been consistent for many years and two points can likely be made. First, since most aspects of deer hunting (travel, accommodations, etc.) are typically more convenient for residents, they may have more time to devote to becoming comfortable or proficient with additional weapons, in this case archery equipment. Second, shotguns are the customary weapon related to hunting deer with dogs and the argument can be made that dog hunting is being practiced more by residents than nonresidents. The weapons utilization data supports this contention.

Unlike weapons utilization, weapons preference is the single weapon that a hunter prefers. Obviously, a majority (80%) of deer hunters prefer rifles (Table 12). Bows (11%) are the second most preferred weapon which is interesting because compared to other states, there are limited exclusive opportunities for bow hunters in South Carolina. Nonetheless, the number of hunters indicating that bows are their preferred weapon has increased over time. Finally, there are several interesting points that can be made about preferences for other weapons based on residency. Shotguns are preferred significantly more by residents (5%) than nonresidents (2%) and muzzleloaders are preferred more by nonresidents (2.5%) than by residents (0.9%) (Table 12). The explanation of this for shotguns is similar to that for weapons utilization in that residents do most of the dog hunting in the state and tend to use shotguns. With respect to muzzleloaders, nonresidents may use muzzleloaders to take advantage of a special season that is available in South Carolina earlier than in their home state.

Deer Harvest by Month of Season

The 2023 Deer Hunter Survey asked hunters to provide information on the month of kill for deer taken during the 2023 season. Although South Carolina is noted to have the longest firearms deer season in the country, the relationship between season length and deer harvest is often misunderstood. Deer naturally increase their movements during the breeding season or rut making them more susceptible to being seen and harvested by hunters. In contrast, outside of the breeding season deer movements are reduced, therefore the chances of hunters seeing and harvesting deer are reduced.

Deer harvest by month of season demonstrates this phenomenon (Figure 2). Although firearms seasons are not open in all parts of the state in late August and early September, relatively few deer are harvested during that time where the season is open. On the other hand, a disproportionately high number of deer are taken during October and November. October and November encompass the majority of the breeding season in South Carolina with over 80 percent of does conceiving during that period (Figure 3). Ultimately, timing of the season is a more important factor in determining deer harvest and quality hunting than the length of the season. Although South Carolina offers early opening seasons, there may be negative consequences as it relates to deer harvest. Hunters should understand that hunting pressure that builds prior to the breeding season can suppress daytime movements of deer during the breeding season when deer movements and hunter harvests should be greatest.

Wild Hog Harvest

The 2023 Deer Hunter Survey also asked hunters to provide information on their wild hog and coyote harvesting activities. Documenting the hog harvest became customary several years ago because wild hogs are commonly taken incidental to deer hunting. Wild or feral hogs are often thought of as “game” and there is a certain amount of sport associated with harvesting hogs. Wild hogs provide quality meat for the hunter and mature hogs can make a highly sought-after “trophy”. Wild hogs are not native to South Carolina or any part of the North American continent. They are descendants of European domestic hogs that escaped or were released dating back as far as the early Spanish explorers. Also, closed-range or fencing requirements for livestock did not arise until the 1900's and letting hogs “free-range” was common prior to fencing laws. Wild hogs were historically associated with the major river flood plain systems in

Coastal South Carolina. Unfortunately, recent relocations of wild hogs by hunters appear to be responsible for the species populating areas where they were not found in the past. Wild hogs directly compete with native species like deer and wild turkey for habitat and food, and hogs can do significant damage to the habitat and agricultural production through their rooting activities. Legislation passed during the 2005 session of the South Carolina General Assembly prohibits the release of hogs in the state and legislation passed in 2010 prohibits the removal of a live hog from the woods without a permit (SC Code Section 50-16-25). Hogs are not protected animals in South Carolina and hunters can harvest them throughout the year during daylight hours and at night by registering their property.

During 2023 an estimated 34,367 wild hogs were incidentally harvested by deer hunters in South Carolina (Table 13), a substantial 27 percent increase from 2022 (26,945 hogs). Evidence of the presence of hogs in 44 of 46 counties was made by hunter harvest activities. Statewide, approximately 1.6 hogs/mile² were harvested, however, this figure is deceiving because hogs only inhabit a relatively small portion of the states' land area. The top 5 counties for wild hog harvest per unit area were Hampton (7.1 hogs/mile²), Allendale (6.0 hogs/mile²), Abbeville (5.3 hogs/mile²), Anderson (4.3 hogs/mile²), and Richland (3.5 hogs/mile²).

Coyote Harvest

Unlike wild hogs which are treated like game to some degree, coyotes are typically thought of as varmints that pose a threat to native game species. Like wild hogs, coyotes are a non-native species in South Carolina. Although a popular notion among hunters is that SCDNR released coyotes, the agency has never released coyotes in South Carolina. The occurrence of coyotes in the state is more recent than hogs and they appear to have gotten to the state by two methods, (1) natural movements from western states and (2) illegal importation. Coyotes were first documented in Oconee and Pickens Counties in 1978 and were thought to be linked to animals that were illegally imported for hunting purposes. Evidence for this includes an illegal importation case that was made and the fact that coyotes had not been documented in adjacent counties in Georgia and North Carolina. Within a few years coyotes began to appear in the western piedmont counties of Anderson, Abbeville, McCormick, etc. indicating a southeastern expansion from the original site. In the early 1980's coyotes were documented in Allendale County and were thought to be natural immigrants from Georgia since they had previously been

documented in the adjacent Georgia counties. Coyotes from this source apparently populated to the Northeast until they encountered the Santee Cooper Lakes. In the late 1980's coyotes were documented in the Pee Dee Region, again associated with illegal imports. In any event, by the mid-1990's coyotes had been documented in all South Carolina counties.

Sportsmen often voice concern over the presence of coyotes and the potential impact they have on game species such as deer. Though coyotes are one of the most adaptable animals, they are not designed to prey on big game. The coyote's diet is chiefly composed of small mammals (rats and mice), insects, and a variety of vegetable matter including fruits. On the other hand, coyotes will take deer fawns and deer that are sick or injured. SCDNR has completed two major studies with researchers investigating the affects coyotes are having on the survival of deer fawns. One study was conducted at the Savannah River Site (2005-2012) collaborating with the US Forest Service-Southern Research Station and the other on private land in McCormick County with researchers at Clemson University (2018-2022). Data from both studies revealed approximately 70 percent total fawn mortality with coyotes being responsible for approximately 80 percent of these mortalities. If these findings even moderately represent a statewide situation, this "new mortality factor" is clearly involved in the reduction in deer numbers. This is especially true when combined with extremely liberal deer harvests that have been the norm in South Carolina.

As part of the Savannah River Site project 3 years were for the purpose of determining if reducing coyote density through trapping increases fawn survival. It seems logical that if coyotes are preying on fawns, then significantly reducing coyote densities should increase fawn survival. Over the course of the 3-year coyote "control" phase, 474 coyotes were trapped/killed on the study areas. Overall, results showed only modest increases in fawn survival following these efforts with an overall average of about 35 percent increase in survival. Also, trapping seemed to help in some years but have little effect on predation in others. This "year" effect may have something to do with the availability of coyote food sources that may change in abundance annually. Given these results and the difficulty and high cost of coyote control, it seems apparent that making adjustments to how we manage deer, particularly female deer, is more important now than prior to the colonization of the state by coyotes.

Coyotes are not protected animals in South Carolina and hunters are allowed to harvest them throughout the year during daylight hours and at night by registering their property. During

2023 it is estimated that approximately 21,761 coyotes were harvested incidental to deer hunting in South Carolina (Table 13), which represents no change from 2022 (21,750 coyotes). It has been many years since evidence of coyotes being harvested in all counties did not occur. In 2023 there was no evidence of harvest in Beaufort County. Although the number of coyotes killed by deer hunters increased exponentially from the late 1990's to 2014 pointing to the expansion of this species in South Carolina, the harvest has decreased over 35 percent in recent years likely indicating a moderation in coyote populations across the state which is typical of a species following colonization. Statewide approximately 1.0 coyotes/mile² were harvested and the top 5 counties for coyote harvest per unit area included Anderson (2.9 coyotes/mile²), Spartanburg (2.5 coyotes/mile²), Oconee (2.4 coyotes/mile²), Allendale (1.8 coyotes/mile²), and Laurens (1.7 coyotes/mile²).

Supplementary Information

The following section is not related to the 2023 Deer Hunter Survey but is offered as information relevant to the state's deer population.

Based on preliminary data provided by the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) the number of reported deer-vehicle collisions for 2023 was 6,531 (Table 14). The reader should bear in mind that many types of deer-vehicle collisions are self-reported by the driver. Additionally, reporting criteria have changed over time.

Average body weights and antler characteristic of deer vary among the constituent counties in South Carolina and are dependent on deer density and habitat conditions (Tables 15 and 16). Statewide averages for male deer indicate that 1.5-year-old bucks average about 107 lbs. and 3.6 antler points while bucks 2.5 years old and older average about 138 lbs. and 6.5 antler points. Yearling (1.5 years old) females average approximately 88 lbs. while does 2.5 years old and older average nearly 101 lbs. This information is based on sampling completed between 1987 and 1994.

The history of the deer population and harvest in South Carolina demonstrates a trend typical of a species that initially expands into available habitat, stabilizes, and begins to decline as habitat changes (Figures 4 and 5). It is important to recognize that habitat is the primary factor controlling deer density in South Carolina, though regulated harvest is important as well. Keep in mind that between 1750 and 1900 the deer population in South Carolina experienced a

tremendous decline as it did in most of North America. Although unrestricted subsistence and commercial harvest of deer was important in the decline, major changes in habitat related to clearing of land for agriculture was the controlling factor.

By 1900 deer numbers in the State were very low, perhaps 20,000. However, in the 1920's, significant drought and the cotton boll weevil had devastating consequences for farming. With the decline in farming, reforestation of the state began and was largely complete by the 1970's. Timber harvest activities that followed into and throughout the 1980's created vast areas of early successional habitat that allowed for a dramatic increase in the State's deer population. South Carolina's deer population peaked in the mid to late 1990's at just over 1,000,000 deer.

Over time, deer hunters gained a better understanding of the relationship between deer numbers, habitat, and deer quality leading to more aggressive female harvests in many parts of the state. This increased emphasis on harvesting female deer to control deer densities has played a role in the stabilization and ultimate reduction in the State's deer population. Habitat is also very important. Keep in mind that the same forest management activities that stimulated the growth in South Carolina's deer population in the 1980s have resulted in considerable acreage currently being in even-aged stands that are greater than 15 years old. This habitat type simply does not support deer densities at the same level as habitat in early stages of ecological succession. As a result, a combination of habitat changes, high deer harvests, and the establishment of coyotes caused the deer population to trend down between 2003 and 2015. The last few years have seen an increase in harvest which is indicative of an increasing population. Currently the statewide population is estimated at about 725,000 deer.

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Table 1. Estimated statewide deer harvest in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2022
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Abbeville	223,113	349	3,231	2,050	5,281	42.2	15.1	65.0
Aiken	500,546	782	3,584	2,822	6,406	78.1	8.2	19.8
Allendale	216,455	338	2,011	2,227	4,238	51.1	12.5	28.9
Anderson	219,068	342	4,674	3,381	8,055	27.2	23.5	58.9
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,118	2,669	4,787	41.1	15.6	-12.4
Barnwell	281,764	440	1,417	1,123	2,540	110.9	5.8	-21.6
Beaufort	147,441	230	946	950	1,896	77.8	8.2	-16.1
Berkeley	567,530	887	2,792	2,469	5,261	107.9	5.9	11.7
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,249	1,399	3,648	52.3	12.2	12.3
Charleston	288,732	451	2,831	2,848	5,679	50.8	12.6	44.7
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,745	1,035	2,780	56.3	11.4	13.5
Chester	300,589	470	2,537	1,965	4,502	66.8	9.6	-9.3
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,335	1,796	4,131	90.2	7.1	-9.3
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,690	2,029	3,719	80.2	8.0	35.9
Colleton	502,666	785	4,187	4,030	8,217	61.2	10.5	53.8
Darlington	286,228	447	2,204	2,427	4,631	61.8	10.4	64.4
Dillon	214,069	334	559	879	1,438	148.9	4.3	13.1
Dorchester	302,717	473	1,883	1,642	3,525	85.9	7.5	2.8
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,515	1,134	2,649	93.1	6.9	-29.6
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,269	2,490	5,759	66.8	9.6	8.9
Florence	397,888	622	1,836	2,076	3,912	101.7	6.3	-13.6
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,934	2,457	4,391	91.0	7.0	54.8
Greenville	294,257	460	2,799	2,347	5,146	57.2	11.2	26.8
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,382	1,330	2,712	75.4	8.5	-16.9
Hampton	324,840	508	3,513	4,379	7,892	41.2	15.5	5.4
Horry	533,336	833	1,799	1,463	3,262	163.5	3.9	86.8
Jasper	309,889	484	1,868	1,667	3,535	87.7	7.3	119.4
Kershaw	360,485	563	2,724	1,639	4,363	82.6	7.7	25.9
Lancaster	266,382	416	2,855	1,738	4,593	58.0	11.0	44.8
Laurens	317,916	497	3,063	2,678	5,741	55.4	11.6	-6.3
Lee	220,106	344	1,042	521	1,563	140.8	4.5	-57.4
Lexington	280,742	439	2,322	1,563	3,885	72.3	8.9	11.4
McCormick	212,021	331	829	1,241	2,070	102.4	6.2	-25.0
Marion	216,907	339	756	930	1,686	128.7	5.0	65.3
Marlboro	281,271	439	981	745	1,726	163.0	3.9	-34.1
Newberry	317,761	497	3,243	2,698	5,941	53.5	12.0	7.9
Oconee	284,348	444	1,655	625	2,280	124.7	5.1	-4.4
Orangeburg	504,516	788	5,289	5,435	10,724	47.0	13.6	5.4
Pickens	219,926	344	1,352	917	2,269	96.9	6.6	-26.0
Richland	340,121	531	1,558	1,509	3,067	110.9	5.8	3.8
Saluda	192,173	300	1,335	1,223	2,558	75.1	8.5	-3.4
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,188	2,463	5,651	47.1	13.6	-7.8
Sumter	338,968	530	1,704	1,431	3,135	108.1	5.9	13.8
Union	258,111	403	2,363	2,327	4,690	55.0	11.6	0.8
Williamsburg	513,851	803	2,626	4,867	7,493	68.6	9.3	20.2
York	276,650	432	2,559	2,184	4,743	58.3	11.0	1.1
Total	14,028,896	21,920	104,353	93,818	198,171	80.8	9.3	10.5
95% Confidence Interval for harvest			(+ -4,038)	(+ -4,502)	(+ -6,901)			

* Acreage shown represents the acreage of forested land and acreage of row crops considered to be significant deer habitat within each county.

Table 2. County rankings based on deer harvested per unit area in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2022
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Anderson	219,068	342	4,674	3,381	8,055	27.2	23.5	58.9
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,118	2,669	4,787	41.1	15.6	-12.4
Hampton	324,840	508	3,513	4,379	7,892	41.2	15.5	5.4
Abbeville	223,113	349	3,231	2,050	5,281	42.2	15.1	65.0
Orangeburg	504,516	788	5,289	5,435	10,724	47.0	13.6	5.4
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,188	2,463	5,651	47.1	13.6	-7.8
Charleston	288,732	451	2,831	2,848	5,679	50.8	12.6	44.7
Allendale	216,455	338	2,011	2,227	4,238	51.1	12.5	28.9
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,249	1,399	3,648	52.3	12.2	12.3
Newberry	317,761	497	3,243	2,698	5,941	53.5	12.0	7.9
Union	258,111	403	2,363	2,327	4,690	55.0	11.6	0.8
Laurens	317,916	497	3,063	2,678	5,741	55.4	11.6	-6.3
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,745	1,035	2,780	56.3	11.4	13.5
Greenville	294,257	460	2,799	2,347	5,146	57.2	11.2	26.8
Lancaster	266,382	416	2,855	1,738	4,593	58.0	11.0	44.8
York	276,650	432	2,559	2,184	4,743	58.3	11.0	1.1
Colleton	502,666	785	4,187	4,030	8,217	61.2	10.5	53.8
Darlington	286,228	447	2,204	2,427	4,631	61.8	10.4	64.4
Chester	300,589	470	2,537	1,965	4,502	66.8	9.6	-9.3
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,269	2,490	5,759	66.8	9.6	8.9
Williamsburg	513,851	803	2,626	4,867	7,493	68.6	9.3	20.2
Lexington	280,742	439	2,322	1,563	3,885	72.3	8.9	11.4
Saluda	192,173	300	1,335	1,223	2,558	75.1	8.5	-3.4
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,382	1,330	2,712	75.4	8.5	-16.9
Beaufort	147,441	230	946	950	1,896	77.8	8.2	-16.1
Aiken	500,546	782	3,584	2,822	6,406	78.1	8.2	19.8
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,690	2,029	3,719	80.2	8.0	35.9
Kershaw	360,485	563	2,724	1,639	4,363	82.6	7.7	25.9
Dorchester	302,717	473	1,883	1,642	3,525	85.9	7.5	2.8
Jasper	309,889	484	1,868	1,667	3,535	87.7	7.3	119.4
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,335	1,796	4,131	90.2	7.1	-9.3
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,934	2,457	4,391	91.0	7.0	54.8
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,515	1,134	2,649	93.1	6.9	-29.6
Pickens	219,926	344	1,352	917	2,269	96.9	6.6	-26.0
Florence	397,888	622	1,836	2,076	3,912	101.7	6.3	-13.6
McCormick	212,021	331	829	1,241	2,070	102.4	6.2	-25.0
Berkeley	567,530	887	2,792	2,469	5,261	107.9	5.9	11.7
Sumter	338,968	530	1,704	1,431	3,135	108.1	5.9	13.8
Richland	340,121	531	1,558	1,509	3,067	110.9	5.8	3.8
Barnwell	281,764	440	1,417	1,123	2,540	110.9	5.8	-21.6
Oconee	284,348	444	1,655	625	2,280	124.7	5.1	-4.4
Marion	216,907	339	756	930	1,686	128.7	5.0	65.3
Lee	220,106	344	1,042	521	1,563	140.8	4.5	-57.4
Dillon	214,069	334	559	879	1,438	148.9	4.3	13.1
Marlboro	281,271	439	981	745	1,726	163.0	3.9	-34.1
Horry	533,336	833	1,799	1,463	3,262	163.5	3.9	86.8
Total	14,028,896	21,920	104,353	93,818	198,171	80.8	9.3	10.5

95% Confidence Interval for harvest (+ -4,038) (+ -4,502) (+ -6,901)

* Acreage shown represents the acreage of forested land and acreage of row crops considered to be significant deer habitat within each county.

Table 3. County rankings based on total deer harvested in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2022
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Orangeburg	504,516	788	5,289	5,435	10,724	47.0	13.6	5.4
Colleton	502,666	785	4,187	4,030	8,217	61.2	10.5	53.8
Anderson	219,068	342	4,674	3,381	8,055	27.2	23.5	58.9
Hampton	324,840	508	3,513	4,379	7,892	41.2	15.5	5.4
Williamsburg	513,851	803	2,626	4,867	7,493	68.6	9.3	20.2
Aiken	500,546	782	3,584	2,822	6,406	78.1	8.2	19.8
Newberry	317,761	497	3,243	2,698	5,941	53.5	12.0	7.9
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,269	2,490	5,759	66.8	9.6	8.9
Laurens	317,916	497	3,063	2,678	5,741	55.4	11.6	-6.3
Charleston	288,732	451	2,831	2,848	5,679	50.8	12.6	44.7
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,188	2,463	5,651	47.1	13.6	-7.8
Abbeville	223,113	349	3,231	2,050	5,281	42.2	15.1	65.0
Berkeley	567,530	887	2,792	2,469	5,261	107.9	5.9	11.7
Greenville	294,257	460	2,799	2,347	5,146	57.2	11.2	26.8
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,118	2,669	4,787	41.1	15.6	-12.4
York	276,650	432	2,559	2,184	4,743	58.3	11.0	1.1
Union	258,111	403	2,363	2,327	4,690	55.0	11.6	0.8
Darlington	286,228	447	2,204	2,427	4,631	61.8	10.4	64.4
Lancaster	266,382	416	2,855	1,738	4,593	58.0	11.0	44.8
Chester	300,589	470	2,537	1,965	4,502	66.8	9.6	-9.3
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,934	2,457	4,391	91.0	7.0	54.8
Kershaw	360,485	563	2,724	1,639	4,363	82.6	7.7	25.9
Allendale	216,455	338	2,011	2,227	4,238	51.1	12.5	28.9
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,335	1,796	4,131	90.2	7.1	-9.3
Florence	397,888	622	1,836	2,076	3,912	101.7	6.3	-13.6
Lexington	280,742	439	2,322	1,563	3,885	72.3	8.9	11.4
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,690	2,029	3,719	80.2	8.0	35.9
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,249	1,399	3,648	52.3	12.2	12.3
Jasper	309,889	484	1,868	1,667	3,535	87.7	7.3	119.4
Dorchester	302,717	473	1,883	1,642	3,525	85.9	7.5	2.8
Horry	533,336	833	1,799	1,463	3,262	163.5	3.9	86.8
Sumter	338,968	530	1,704	1,431	3,135	108.1	5.9	13.8
Richland	340,121	531	1,558	1,509	3,067	110.9	5.8	3.8
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,745	1,035	2,780	56.3	11.4	13.5
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,382	1,330	2,712	75.4	8.5	-16.9
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,515	1,134	2,649	93.1	6.9	-29.6
Saluda	192,173	300	1,335	1,223	2,558	75.1	8.5	-3.4
Barnwell	281,764	440	1,417	1,123	2,540	110.9	5.8	-21.6
Oconee	284,348	444	1,655	625	2,280	124.7	5.1	-4.4
Pickens	219,926	344	1,352	917	2,269	96.9	6.6	-26.0
McCormick	212,021	331	829	1,241	2,070	102.4	6.2	-25.0
Beaufort	147,441	230	946	950	1,896	77.8	8.2	-16.1
Marlboro	281,271	439	981	745	1,726	163.0	3.9	-34.1
Marion	216,907	339	756	930	1,686	128.7	5.0	65.3
Lee	220,106	344	1,042	521	1,563	140.8	4.5	-57.4
Dillon	214,069	334	559	879	1,438	148.9	4.3	13.1
Total	14,028,896	21,920	104,353	93,818	198,171	80.8	9.3	10.5
95% Confidence Interval for harvest			(+ -4,038)	(+ -4,502)	(+ -6,901)			

* Acreage shown represents the acreage of forested land and acreage of row crops considered to be significant deer habitat within each county.

Table 4. Estimated deer harvest on Wildlife Management Areas in South Carolina in 2023.

Area	Acreage	Bucks	Does	Total	Deer/Mi.²
Mountain Hunt Unit	193,566	1,232	697	1,929	6.4
Central Piedmont Hunt Unit	159,793	1,515	1,338	2,853	11.4
Western Piedmont Hunt Unit	119,077	804	723	1,527	8.2
Subtotal for Upstate WMA's	472,436	3,551	2,758	6,309	8.5
Coastal WMA's*					
Bear Island WMA	1,519	7	3	10	4.2
Bonneau Ferry WMA ¹	10,697	35	45	117	7.0
Botany Bay WMA	2,000	12	19	31	9.9
Coosawhatchie	3,700	10	25	35	6.1
Crackerneck WMA	10,470	37	38	75	4.6
Donnelley WMA	8,048	38	49	87	6.9
Francis Marion WMA	252,578	151	134	285	0.7
Hamilton Ridge	13,281	39	21	60	2.9
Liberty Hill WMA	7,876	19	13	32	2.6
McBee WMA	1,213	13	18	31	16.4
Moultrie WMA	9,480	15	8	23	1.6
Oak Lea WMA	2,024	5	13	18	5.7
Palachucola WMA	5,947	33	28	61	6.6
Wateree River WMA	3,674	14	4	18	3.1
Webb Wildlife Center WMA	5,866	38	43	81	8.8
Subtotal for Coastal WMA's	338,373	466	461	964	1.8
Total	810,809	4,017	3,219	7,273	5.7

*Check Station data. ¹ Total includes deer of unknown sex

Table 5. Hunter opinion (percent) regarding the number of deer in the area hunted most often in South Carolina in 2023 compared to previous years.

	Increasing	About the Same	Decreasing
Residents	17.7	59.5	22.8
Non-Residents	12.2	59.8	28.0
Overall	16.6	59.5	23.9

Table 6. Resident deer hunter and deer harvest statistics in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Number Hunters	Man/Days Hunted	Percent Success	Deer/Hunter	Days/Deer	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest
Abbeville	3,709	51,926	76	1.3	10.5	3,096	1,870	4,967
Aiken	4,128	68,183	71	1.5	11.3	3,419	2,612	6,031
Allendale	1,774	18,480	80	1.3	8.1	1,097	1,193	2,290
Anderson	5,289	74,406	78	1.5	9.3	4,644	3,322	7,966
Bamberg	1,774	32,187	80	2.0	9.2	1,548	1,935	3,483
Barnwell	1,613	19,158	84	1.1	10.6	968	839	1,806
Beaufort	1,355	14,611	76	1.3	8.1	871	935	1,806
Berkeley	3,967	52,345	71	1.2	10.7	2,612	2,290	4,902
Calhoun	2,451	30,703	76	1.4	8.8	2,129	1,355	3,483
Charleston	4,096	54,895	71	1.3	10.0	2,741	2,774	5,515
Cherokee	2,000	25,126	76	1.2	10.3	1,580	871	2,451
Chester	3,354	40,348	72	1.0	11.6	1,967	1,516	3,483
Chesterfield	2,064	35,543	85	1.6	10.7	1,871	1,451	3,322
Clarendon	2,387	32,027	70	1.5	8.8	1,645	2,000	3,644
Colleton	5,709	79,824	69	1.4	10.4	3,902	3,806	7,708
Darlington	2,161	36,993	74	2.1	8.3	2,129	2,322	4,451
Dillon	839	13,191	76	1.5	10.5	484	774	1,258
Dorchester	2,838	46,637	69	1.2	13.5	1,838	1,613	3,451
Edgefield	2,483	22,771	62	0.9	9.9	1,290	1,000	2,290
Fairfield	4,225	58,217	78	1.2	11.3	2,999	2,161	5,160
Florence	2,806	42,959	71	1.4	11.2	1,806	2,032	3,838
Georgetown	2,935	50,443	74	1.4	12.5	1,709	2,322	4,031
Greenville	4,515	54,861	65	1.1	11.0	2,709	2,258	4,967
Greenwood	2,774	37,606	59	0.9	14.8	1,322	1,226	2,548
Hampton	3,257	37,090	81	1.5	7.7	2,000	2,806	4,806
Horry	2,806	43,992	62	1.1	14.1	1,709	1,419	3,128
Jasper	1,742	21,384	81	1.6	7.8	1,419	1,322	2,741
Kershaw	3,386	48,701	67	1.1	13.4	2,290	1,355	3,645
Lancaster	2,451	32,574	77	1.6	8.3	2,451	1,484	3,935
Laurens	5,225	59,668	69	1.0	11.2	2,838	2,483	5,322
Lee	1,516	21,834	68	0.9	16.1	968	387	1,355
Lexington	3,677	50,541	71	1.1	13.1	2,322	1,548	3,871
McCormick	2,032	24,866	62	0.9	14.3	710	1,032	1,742
Marion	1,548	23,737	67	1.0	14.7	742	871	1,613
Marlboro	742	10,289	82	1.8	7.8	742	581	1,322
Newberry	5,128	77,794	74	1.1	13.9	3,064	2,548	5,612
Oconee	2,322	29,673	68	0.9	13.7	1,580	581	2,161
Orangeburg	6,418	91,209	72	1.5	9.2	4,870	5,031	9,901
Pickens	2,967	29,832	71	0.8	13.4	1,322	903	2,225
Richland	2,935	40,218	72	1.0	13.9	1,484	1,419	2,903
Saluda	2,516	27,705	69	1.0	11.2	1,290	1,193	2,483
Spartanburg	4,677	65,182	68	1.2	11.8	3,129	2,419	5,547
Sumter	2,774	34,896	73	1.1	11.5	1,645	1,387	3,032
Union	4,032	52,604	68	1.0	13.0	2,064	1,967	4,032
Williamsburg	3,806	60,539	80	1.8	8.6	2,387	4,612	6,999
York	3,257	54,957	69	1.3	12.6	2,290	2,064	4,354
Total	140,459	1,932,725	71	1.3	10.9	93,693	83,888	177,581
% Change from 2021	16.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	-6.4	9.6	23.0	15.6

Table 7. Nonresident deer hunter and deer harvest statistics in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Number Hunters	Man/Days Hunted	Percent Success	Deer/Hunter	Days/Deer	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest
Abbeville	165	3,223	81	1.9	10.2	135	180	315
Aiken	345	5,367	74	1.1	14.3	165	210	375
Allendale	1,139	18,184	71	1.7	9.3	914	1,034	1,949
Anderson	90	1,259	50	1.0	14.0	30	60	90
Bamberg	705	9,129	78	1.9	7.0	570	735	1,304
Barnwell	435	6,161	76	1.7	8.4	450	285	735
Beaufort	90	1,739	83	1.0	19.3	75	15	90
Berkeley	300	3,313	75	1.2	9.2	180	180	360
Calhoun	165	1,244	73	1.0	7.5	120	45	165
Charleston	150	2,054	70	1.1	12.5	90	75	165
Cherokee	240	4,497	75	1.4	13.6	165	165	330
Chester	824	14,226	69	1.2	14.0	570	450	1,019
Chesterfield	510	7,240	79	1.6	8.9	465	345	810
Clarendon	45	1,244	67	1.7	16.6	45	30	75
Colleton	480	6,251	65	1.1	12.3	285	225	510
Darlington	90	1,334	83	2.0	7.4	75	105	180
Dillon	90	2,024	83	2.0	11.3	75	105	180
Dorchester	90	1,829	50	0.8	24.4	45	30	75
Edgefield	315	4,002	62	1.1	11.1	225	135	360
Fairfield	510	7,150	68	1.2	11.9	270	330	600
Florence	120	1,004	25	0.6	13.4	30	45	75
Georgetown	150	1,469	90	2.4	4.1	225	135	360
Greenville	195	1,769	77	0.9	9.8	90	90	180
Greenwood	135	2,069	44	1.2	12.5	60	105	165
Hampton	1,439	23,115	80	2.1	7.5	1,514	1,574	3,088
Horry	75	435	80	1.8	3.2	90	45	135
Jasper	450	6,401	80	1.8	8.1	450	345	795
Kershaw	435	7,360	76	1.7	10.2	435	285	720
Lancaster	480	6,206	78	1.4	9.4	405	255	660
Laurens	300	4,287	90	1.4	10.2	225	195	420
Lee	105	2,069	100	2.0	9.9	75	135	210
Lexington	75	690	60	0.2	46.0	0	15	15
McCormick	240	3,418	56	1.4	10.4	120	210	330
Marion	75	600	80	1.0	8.0	15	60	75
Marlboro	255	3,463	76	1.6	8.6	240	165	405
Newberry	420	4,257	64	0.8	12.9	180	150	330
Oconee	105	2,563	57	1.1	0.0	75	45	120
Orangeburg	510	6,206	82	1.6	7.5	420	405	824
Pickens	135	854	44	0.3	19.0	30	15	45
Richland	165	2,084	81	1.0	12.6	75	90	165
Saluda	90	585	50	0.8	7.8	45	30	75
Spartanburg	105	989	57	1.0	9.4	60	45	105
Sumter	150	1,154	60	0.7	11.0	60	45	105
Union	615	9,144	58	1.1	13.9	300	360	660
Williamsburg	345	4,452	69	1.4	9.0	240	255	495
York	315	4,947	76	1.2	12.7	270	120	390
Total	14,256	203,060	73	1.4	9.8	10,673	9,954	20,627
% Change from 2022	-6.6	-9.0	8.6	-3.0	12.6	-23.0	-27.0	-25.0

Table 8. Hunting effort (man/days) by county for successful and unsuccessful resident and nonresident deer hunters in South Carolina in 2023.

County	Residents (man/days)			Total Effort Residents	Nonresidents (man/days)			Total Effort Non-residents	Total Days
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Average		Successful	Unsuccessful	Average		
Abbeville	16.2	7.3	14.0	51,926	22.3	7.0	19.5	3,223	55,149
Aiken	18.5	12.0	16.5	68,183	19.1	5.7	15.6	5,367	73,550
Allendale	12.1	3.7	10.4	18,480	20.4	5.2	16.0	18,184	36,664
Anderson	15.8	7.6	14.1	74,406	15.0	13.0	14.0	1,259	75,665
Bamberg	19.4	13.2	18.1	32,187	15.4	3.9	13.0	9,129	41,316
Barnwell	12.9	6.8	11.9	19,158	15.1	11.3	14.2	6,161	25,319
Beaufort	12.3	5.9	10.8	14,611	11.2	60.0	19.3	1,739	16,350
Berkeley	15.6	7.3	13.2	52,345	13.0	5.2	11.1	3,313	55,658
Calhoun	13.8	8.4	12.5	30,703	8.8	4.3	7.5	1,244	31,948
Charleston	15.7	7.9	13.4	54,895	13.3	14.7	13.7	2,054	56,949
Cherokee	14.0	7.9	12.6	25,126	16.1	26.8	18.8	4,497	29,623
Chester	12.7	10.2	12.0	40,348	20.4	10.3	17.3	14,226	54,575
Chesterfield	18.9	6.7	17.2	35,543	15.6	8.9	14.2	7,240	42,783
Clarendon	15.0	9.6	13.4	32,027	40.0	3.0	27.7	1,244	33,271
Colleton	16.0	9.6	14.0	79,824	12.4	14.2	13.0	6,251	86,075
Darlington	20.3	7.6	17.1	36,993	17.2	3.0	14.8	1,334	38,327
Dillon	17.4	10.3	15.7	13,191	23.0	20.0	22.5	2,024	15,215
Dorchester	18.0	13.0	16.4	46,637	16.3	24.3	20.3	1,829	48,466
Edgefield	11.2	5.8	9.2	22,771	12.6	12.9	12.7	4,002	26,773
Fairfield	15.1	8.9	13.8	58,217	13.9	14.3	14.0	7,150	65,367
Florence	15.2	15.5	15.3	42,959	23.0	3.5	8.4	1,004	43,964
Georgetown	19.0	12.1	17.2	50,443	10.6	3.0	9.8	1,469	51,912
Greenville	14.1	8.6	12.2	54,861	10.3	5.0	9.1	1,769	56,630
Greenwood	14.8	11.7	13.6	37,606	18.0	13.2	15.3	2,069	39,675
Hampton	12.9	5.0	11.4	37,090	17.9	8.7	16.1	23,115	60,204
Horry	18.9	10.3	15.7	43,992	6.8	2.0	5.8	435	44,426
Jasper	13.7	5.9	12.3	21,384	15.9	7.7	14.2	6,401	27,785
Kershaw	16.9	9.3	14.4	48,701	20.0	7.4	16.9	7,360	56,062
Lancaster	15.8	4.5	13.3	32,574	13.9	9.6	12.9	6,206	38,780
Laurens	12.0	10.2	11.4	59,668	14.4	13.5	14.3	4,287	63,955
Lee	16.6	9.7	14.4	21,834	19.7		19.7	2,069	23,903
Lexington	13.7	13.9	13.7	50,541	14.3	1.5	9.2	690	51,230
McCormick	15.1	7.7	12.2	24,866	18.0	9.4	14.3	3,418	28,284
Marion	18.7	8.6	15.3	23,737	7.5	10.0	8.0	600	24,337
Marlboro	15.4	6.8	13.9	10,289	16.5	4.0	13.6	3,463	13,752
Newberry	17.7	8.0	15.2	77,794	10.4	9.7	10.1	4,257	82,051
Oconee	13.0	12.4	12.8	29,673	36.8	8.0	24.4	2,563	32,236
Orangeburg	16.3	8.8	14.2	91,209	13.1	7.8	12.2	6,206	97,415
Pickens	10.7	8.5	10.1	29,832	9.3	4.0	6.3	854	30,687
Richland	14.5	11.6	13.7	40,218	15.0	2.0	12.6	2,084	42,301
Saluda	12.3	8.2	11.0	27,705	8.0	5.0	6.5	585	28,290
Spartanburg	17.1	7.1	13.9	65,182	10.8	7.7	9.4	989	66,172
Sumter	14.1	8.5	12.6	34,896	5.8	10.5	7.7	1,154	36,050
Union	15.0	8.8	13.0	52,604	16.3	12.9	14.9	9,144	61,748
Williamsburg	17.7	8.6	15.9	60,539	16.1	5.7	12.9	4,452	64,991
York	19.1	11.8	16.9	54,957	14.1	21.0	15.7	4,947	59,904
Total	15.5	9.2	13.8	1,932,725	16.0	9.6	14.2	203,060	2,135,786
% Change from 2022	-6.0	-6.0	-6.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	-9.0	6.3

Table 9. Estimated deer harvest by weapon type in South Carolina in 2023.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun	Total
Number of Deer Harvested	165,869	8,918	13,476	3,765	5,945	198	198,171
Percent Total Deer Harvest	83.7	4.5	6.8	1.9	3.0	0.1	100.0
Percent Hunter Success With Weapon	68.3	27.5	37.5	23.8	26.1	15.4	NA*

* Total is not applicable because individual hunters take deer with multiple weapons.

Table 10. Number of hunters using each type of weapon in South Carolina in 2023.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun
Residents	129,363	26,687	21,912	11,939	16,012	4,354
Nonresidents	13,258	1,739	1,098	1,896	1,440	157
Total	142,621	28,426	23,009	13,835	17,452	4,511

Total across weapons not given because hunters use multiple weapons. Total hunters = 154,715.

Table 11. Weapons utilization (percent) among deer hunters in South Carolina in 2023.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun
Residents	92.1	19.0*	15.6*	8.5*	11.4	3.1*
Nonresidents	93.0	12.2	7.7	13.3	10.1	1.1
Total	92.3	17.8	14.2	9.3	11.2	2.9

* Significant difference in weapons use category based on residency.

Table 12. Weapons preference (percent) among deer hunters in South Carolina in 2023.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun	Total
Residents	79.1	11.8*	5.1*	0.9*	2.6	0.4*	100.0
Nonresidents	85.6	7.1	1.9	2.5	2.9	0.0	100.0
Total	80.4	10.9	4.5	1.2	2.7	0.3	100.0

* Significant difference in weapons preference category based on residency.

Table 13. Estimated wild hog and coyote harvest by deer hunters in South Carolina in 2023.
Rank is by per unit area harvested.

County	Hog Harv.	Harv./ Mile ²	% Change from 2022	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Coyote Harv.	Harv./ Mile ²	% Change from 2022	2023 Rank	2022 Rank
Abbeville	1,870	5.36	33.9	3	3	419	1.20	-44.3	13	6
Aiken	613	0.78	-29.8	30	24	935	1.20	10.6	13	22
Allendale	1,999	5.91	281.6	2	15	613	1.81	64.0	4	21
Anderson	1,483	4.33	-26.1	4	1	999	2.92	76.9	1	8
Bamberg	548	1.78	34.5	13	19	451	1.47	74.5	10	25
Barnwell	484	1.10	-20.9	26	17	419	0.95	-35.4	22	13
Beaufort	193	0.84	121.6	29	37	0	0.00	-100.0	46	41
Berkeley	2,031	2.29	125.2	12	27	484	0.55	24.6	37	39
Calhoun	451	1.52	-65.5	17	2	226	0.76	-65.5	29	5
Charleston	1,225	2.72	180.7	8	28	290	0.64	-59.9	33	9
Cherokee	0	0.00	-100.0	45	20	355	1.45	-3.1	11	12
Chester	645	1.37	-26.1	19	10	709	1.51	-0.2	9	11
Chesterfield	451	0.78	-29.5	30	25	451	0.78	41.0	28	35
Clarendon	613	1.32	-19.0	20	13	387	0.83	26.6	26	32
Colleton	1,838	2.34	250.8	11	34	935	1.19	111.0	16	34
Darlington	1,451	3.24	162.4	6	21	548	1.23	161.6	12	37
Dillon	32	0.10	-77.8	44	36	161	0.48	-50.8	39	24
Dorchester	613	1.30	-29.8	21	11	516	1.09	-7.9	19	18
Edgefield	161	0.42	38.5	34	40	258	0.67	-45.5	31	16
Fairfield	774	1.29	89.9	22	33	613	1.02	37.0	21	29
Florence	1,064	1.71	128.5	15	30	419	0.67	-13.3	31	27
Georgetown	1,096	1.76	135.4	14	30	226	0.36	88.0	42	46
Greenville	161	0.35	38.5	37	41	419	0.91	-22.8	24	18
Greenwood	838	2.62	37.2	10	9	193	0.61	-47.2	35	20
Hampton	3,611	7.11	153.2	1	4	870	1.71	35.1	6	15
Horry	484	0.58	454.0	32	45	290	0.35	42.4	43	45
Jasper	1,547	3.20	112.7	7	16	355	0.73	56.7	30	37
Kershaw	709	1.26	121.6	23	35	355	0.63	74.1	34	42
Lancaster	129	0.31	-55.7	38	32	193	0.46	10.8	41	40
Laurens	484	0.97	-27.7	28	18	870	1.75	-6.5	5	7
Lee	64	0.19	10.8	41	43	322	0.94	-66.4	23	2
Lexington	64	0.15	240.0	42	39	741	1.69	124.0	7	28
McCormick	870	2.63	49.6	9	12	548	1.65	34.5	8	16
Marion	580	1.71	-16.9	15	7	97	0.29	10.8	44	43
Marlboro	484	1.10	-7.7	26	23	64	0.15	-40.9	45	44
Newberry	193	0.39	-48.9	36	29	548	1.10	39.5	18	26
Oconee	613	1.38	-43.1	18	5	1,096	2.47	310.9	3	33
Orangeburg	97	0.12	-33.5	43	42	387	0.49	-27.5	38	31
Pickens	419	1.22	-37.4	24	8	161	0.47	-69.2	40	10
Richland	1,870	3.52	56.7	5	6	322	0.61	-41.2	35	23
Saluda	161	0.54	454.0	33	45	322	1.07	-51.8	20	4
Spartanburg	129	0.31	-11.4	38	38	1,064	2.56	-8.6	2	1
Sumter	161	0.30	-70.8	40	26	613	1.16	63.7	17	30
Union	161	0.40	-67.4	35	22	484	1.20	-15.2	13	14
Williamsburg	903	1.12	-27.9	25	14	645	0.80	58.3	27	36
York	0	0.00	-100.0	45	44	387	0.89	-63.1	25	3
Total	34,367	1.57	27.5	NA	NA	21,761	0.99	0	NA	NA
	(+ -2,945)					(+ -1,552)				

95% Confidence Interval for harvest

Ranking is based on harvest per square mile

Table 14. Number of deer-vehicle collisions reported by the South Department of Public Safety 2019-2023.

County	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Abbeville	8	4	50	59	52
Aiken	93	95	276	219	197
Allendale	19	11	31	27	12
Anderson	97	69	316	345	371
Bamberg	27	21	43	30	37
Barnwell	15	21	43	44	38
Beaufort	130	136	169	183	216
Berkeley	115	109	193	154	155
Calhoun	31	24	64	54	38
Charleston	248	249	280	244	256
Cherokee	41	31	70	101	103
Chester	48	46	114	119	114
Chesterfield	37	49	90	94	129
Clarendon	19	16	73	58	83
Colleton	51	39	132	88	79
Darlington	133	106	129	177	173
Dillon	71	74	63	78	99
Dorchester	60	54	134	120	118
Edgefield	11	2	35	28	56
Fairfield	33	27	81	67	71
Florence	176	136	188	183	191
Georgetown	31	32	59	56	58
Greenville	162	132	334	308	335
Greenwood	19	17	123	116	117
Hampton	18	17	51	27	21
Horry	340	286	366	349	455
Jasper	64	62	115	108	94
Kershaw	37	37	136	122	131
Lancaster	40	45	132	131	165
Laurens	14	19	174	153	149
Lee	15	14	94	71	83
Lexington	33	30	212	185	183
McCormick	0	0	10	9	11
Marion	63	44	71	65	89
Marlboro	85	75	155	136	169
Newberry	13	6	75	74	78
Oconee	26	11	75	78	86
Orangeburg	148	132	257	242	224
Pickens	50	35	131	122	136
Richland	54	58	255	228	200
Saluda	5	2	32	37	37
Spartanburg	169	142	389	458	485
Sumter	25	20	128	125	168
Union	20	27	33	47	53
Williamsburg	85	68	81	101	100
York	107	106	301	304	316
Total	3,086	2,736	6,363	6,124	6,531

* Preliminary figures

Table 15. Average live body weights of deer from South Carolina counties, based on historic data

COUNTY	Males				Females			
	1.5 Years Old		2.5+ Years Old		1.5 Years Old		2.5+ Years Old	
	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.
Abbeville	1,390	111.7	484	145.9	466	90.4	747	102.7
Aiken	2,667	121.6	1,485	162.6	808	94.9	1,522	109.6
Allendale	6,175	108.9	3,333	146.0	2,503	87.7	5,606	100.8
Anderson	30	121.9	17	148.1	4	92.5	8	113.0
Bamberg	2,414	111.9	1,113	142.4	884	91.4	1,721	103.9
Barnwell	1,478	119.1	695	156.6	601	94.3	1,071	106.9
Beaufort	952	101.6	1,236	135.2	690	86.7	1,818	99.8
Berkeley	3,162	100.6	4,198	127.3	1,086	83.4	3,991	97.2
Calhoun	1,588	110.2	633	144.1	312	91.4	943	104.6
Charleston	1,256	97.9	2,088	123.3	422	83.3	1,581	95.8
Cherokee	1	80.0	1	139.0	9	77.8	26	89.6
Chester	1,445	105.9	963	140.1	470	87.4	1,091	99.4
Chesterfield	79	119.4	140	152.5	27	93.5	1,128	99.8
Clarendon	13	101.3	29	152.5	42	89.6	87	103.0
Colleton	5,822	105.6	6,908	135.5	3,279	87.9	8,920	100.4
Darlington	334	113.6	273	153.3	216	92.8	573	105.2
Dillon	74	112.8	46	138.5	13	92.8	50	103.9
Dorchester	1,868	107.2	2,205	137.0	653	88.0	2,055	103.0
Edgefield	556	100.9	334	133.4	159	84.6	306	96.9
Fairfield	2,048	102.1	1,444	136.5	761	86.3	2,021	99.2
Florence	696	110.8	459	139.2	198	89.6	621	102.8
Georgetown	1,881	98.7	2,281	126.1	668	85.6	1,961	97.6
Greenville	7	122.1	9	149.9	7	79.3	16	98.4
Greenwood	1,158	111.4	537	145.1	313	90.2	629	103.0
Hampton	6,103	106.7	4,710	140.0	3,034	87.2	7,236	100.5
Horry	302	96.1	311	126.1	129	79.2	301	91.3
Jasper	3,385	101.8	4,691	135.4	2,142	84.6	5,948	96.9
Kershaw	603	108.9	588	144.6	251	89.6	758	102.9
Lancaster	472	113.1	246	153.3	213	91.4	441	105.2
Laurens	240	104.7	181	132.9	107	87.3	238	96.9
Lee	472	119.6	187	151.3	162	96.6	330	108.5
Lexington	20	120.8	9	164.8	6	101.3	15	115.8
McCormick	2,354	101.5	1,056	134.5	877	85.3	1,745	97.3
Marion	690	108.5	501	138.7	256	88.6	630	98.7
Marlboro	106	115.0	62	149.8	30	95.0	70	107.8
Newberry	143	97.1	100	135.6	85	86.0	171	92.7
Oconee	74	113.1	58	152.6	33	85.3	39	99.6
Orangeburg	2,293	112.5	1,375	145.0	686	90.8	1,684	103.4
Pickens	47	109.1	41	145.4	18	79.9	48	100.5
Richland	1,320	106.1	1,274	145.2	651	92.7	1,879	106.3
Saluda	100	115.8	40	148.0	25	93.6	34	105.2
Spartanburg	34	109.3	22	142.2	13	95.0	31	98.8
Sumter	666	111.3	353	142.1	188	94.4	509	105.3
Union	958	101.7	608	135.8	439	87.9	761	97.8
Williamsburg	469	112.5	559	143.3	150	91.4	478	106.0
York	13	96.9	30	143.9	20	78.7	41	93.9
Total	57,958	107.3	47,913	137.9	24,106	88.0	61,879	100.6

Table 16. Antler characteristics of male deer from South Carolina counties, based on historic data

COUNTY	1.5 Years Old Males			2.5+ Years Old Males			% 1.5 Bucks in Antlered Harvest
	Number Points	Percent Spikes	Outside Spread	Number Points	Percent Spikes	Outside Spread	
Abbeville	4.2	32		7.2	2		74
Aiken	4.4	28	8.7	7.4	1	14.7	64
Allendale	4.0	36	7.7	7.2	3	13.7	65
Anderson	4.7	28		6.8	0		63
Bamberg	4.0	34	7.6	6.7	4	12.5	68
Barnwell	4.6	21	8.7	7.1	2	13.9	68
Beaufort	3.1	58	7.4	6.4	9	13.0	44
Berkeley	3.0	62	6.6	5.8	12	11.5	43
Calhoun	4.0	33	7.4	7.0	3	13.2	72
Charleston	2.8	69	6.2	5.4	15	10.6	38
Cherokee				7.0	0		50
Chester	3.4	47	8.7	6.7	4	13.9	61
Chesterfield	4.5	21	8.6	7.2			61
Clarendon	2.8	58	6.2	7.7	3	12.9	31
Colleton	3.3	50	6.9	6.4	7	11.7	46
Darlington	3.1	57	7.4	6.7	5	13.7	55
Dillon	3.2	54	8.1	5.7	9	11.6	62
Dorchester	3.3	53	6.6	6.0	9	11.1	46
Edgefield	3.3	50		6.6	5		63
Fairfield	3.1	55	7.5	6.4	6	13.8	59
Florence	3.4	47	7.4	6.1	9	12.1	60
Georgetown	2.8	65	6.6	5.6	13	11.0	45
Greenville	4.7	14		7.6	0		44
Greenwood	3.9	34		6.7	3		68
Hampton	3.9	39	7.7	6.9	4	13.0	56
Horry	3.0	58	6.8	6.2	8	12.1	49
Jasper	3.3	52	7.0	6.6	6	12.8	42
Kershaw	3.6	47	7.7	6.9	7	12.3	51
Lancaster	4.3	27	6.7	7.4	0	15.0	66
Laurens	3.2	53	6.7	6.0	10	13.7	57
Lee	4.3	25	8.4	6.7	2	12.9	72
Lexington	4.1	30	9.1	7.3	0	15.7	69
McCormick	3.5	47		6.8	4		69
Marion	3.3	52	7.3	6.2	10	12.4	58
Marlboro	3.1	53	7.0	6.4	10	12.6	63
Newberry	2.8	54		6.3	8	13.3	59
Oconee	3.4	52		7.3	3		56
Orangeburg	3.8	38	7.6	6.8	5	12.6	63
Pickens	4.0	43		7.2	2		53
Richland	3.3	52	7.3	6.8	5	13.5	51
Saluda	4.0	32	9.0	6.9	0	10.8	71
Spartanburg	4.0	33	6.1	7.1	0		61
Sumter	3.7	41	7.7	6.6	5	12.5	65
Union	3.3	51	7.2	6.6	5	13.6	61
Williamsburg	3.6	43	7.6	6.8	5	12.6	46
York	3.1	60	5.3	7.4	0	13.3	30
Total	3.6	44	7.4	6.5	7	12.4	55

Figure 1. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2023 Deer Hunter Survey.

January, 2024

Dear Sportsman:

White-tailed deer are one of the most important game species in South Carolina. Therefore, it is important that this species be monitored for population status and harvesting activities. Wildlife resource managers require current and accurate information about deer harvests to aid in successfully managing this important natural resource and to optimize future hunting potential. To obtain this needed data, the Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is conducting a survey of licensed Big Game Permit holders.

You are one of a group of randomly selected hunters asked to participate in this survey. To draw accurate conclusions it is very important that you complete the survey and return it. Please take time to read each question. Even if you did not hunt deer last season please indicate this by answering the appropriate questions and moving on to the next set of questions.

In addition to the questions concerning your deer hunting activities, there are questions concerning the weapons that you used to harvest deer and questions concerning the number of wild hogs and coyotes that you may have harvested. Not only is this data important to DNR game biologists, many hunters are interested in this type of information so it is important that you answer these questions too.

Please note that complete confidentiality will be given to you. There is no number on your survey form, therefore, there is no way to link your responses to you. Keep in mind that the primary purpose of the survey is to determine the deer harvest in South Carolina and not to determine whether game laws are observed. By accurately answering the survey questions you will enable DNR biologists to better manage the white-tailed deer resource for you and other citizens of the state.

Please keep in mind that in order to reduce costs, this is the only 2023 Deer Hunter Survey form you will receive. There will be no reminders or second surveys sent to individuals that do not respond to this initial survey. Therefore, it is very important that you take a few minutes to complete this survey and mail it. Return postage is prepaid.

Results of this survey will be posted on the DNR web site once completed (hopefully by June). The results from the 2022 survey can be found at www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/deer/2022/DeerHarvestReport.html

Thank you for your assistance.

Charles Ruth
Wildlife Biologist
Big Game Program Coordinator

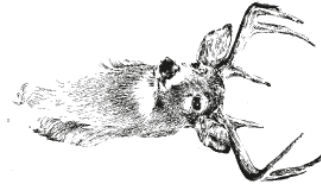
PLEASE MAIL YOUR SURVEY AFTER SEPARATING THIS HALF FROM THE SIDE ON WHICH YOUR ANSWERS HAVE BEEN ENTERED. NO POSTAGE IS NECESSARY.

If you have questions regarding this survey, please call 803-734-3886 or write 2023 Deer Hunter Survey, SCDNR, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202

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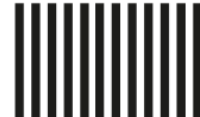


**DEER HUNTER SURVEY
S.C. DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 167
COLUMBIA SC 29202-9976**

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Figure 1 cont.

2023 South Carolina Deer Hunter Survey

1. Did you hunt deer in SC this past season (2023)? 1. Yes 2. No
If you answered No to this question please go to question # 9.

2. Did you harvest any deer in SC this past season? 1. Yes 2. No

3. Even if you did not harvest any deer, please record the SC counties you deer hunted and the number of days hunted in each county this past season (2023). **Please begin with the county you hunted the most.** If you harvested deer please record the number of bucks and does taken in each county. A day of hunting is defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Please do not give ranges (i.e. 5-10), rather provide absolute numbers (i.e. 5). Provide information only for yourself- not friends, relatives, or other hunt club members.

	SC Counties You Deer Hunted	# of Days Hunted	# of Deer Harvested	
			#Bucks	#Does
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

If you did not harvest any deer in SC in 2023 please go to question # 6.

4. Please record the number of deer taken by month of season in SC last season (2023).

August	September	October	November	December	January

5. Please record the number of deer taken with each weapon in SC last season (2023).

Rifle	Bow	Shotgun	Muzzleloader	Crossbow	Handgun

6. Please circle **all** the weapons that you hunted deer with in 2023.

1. Rifle 2. Bow 3. Shotgun 4. Muzzleloader 5. Crossbow 6. Handgun

7. Please circle the **one** weapon that you **prefer to hunt deer with**.

1. Rifle 2. Bow 3. Shotgun 4. Muzzleloader 5. Crossbow 6. Handgun

8. Compared to past years, how would you describe the number of deer in the area that you hunt most often? (*Circle one*)

1. Increasing 2. About the same 3. Decreasing

9. If you **harvested** any wild hogs or coyotes while hunting in SC in 2023, please complete the box below.

If you did not harvest any hogs or coyotes please go to question # 10.

	County	# of Hogs		County	# of Coyotes
1.			1.		
2.			2.		

10. Are you a resident of SC? 1. Yes 2. No

11. If yes, which county? _____

Separate and return this portion of the survey. Postage is prepaid. Please do not staple this form.



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Figure 2. Percent of deer harvested by month of season in South Carolina in 2023. Note that December includes January 1 which is the last day of deer season.

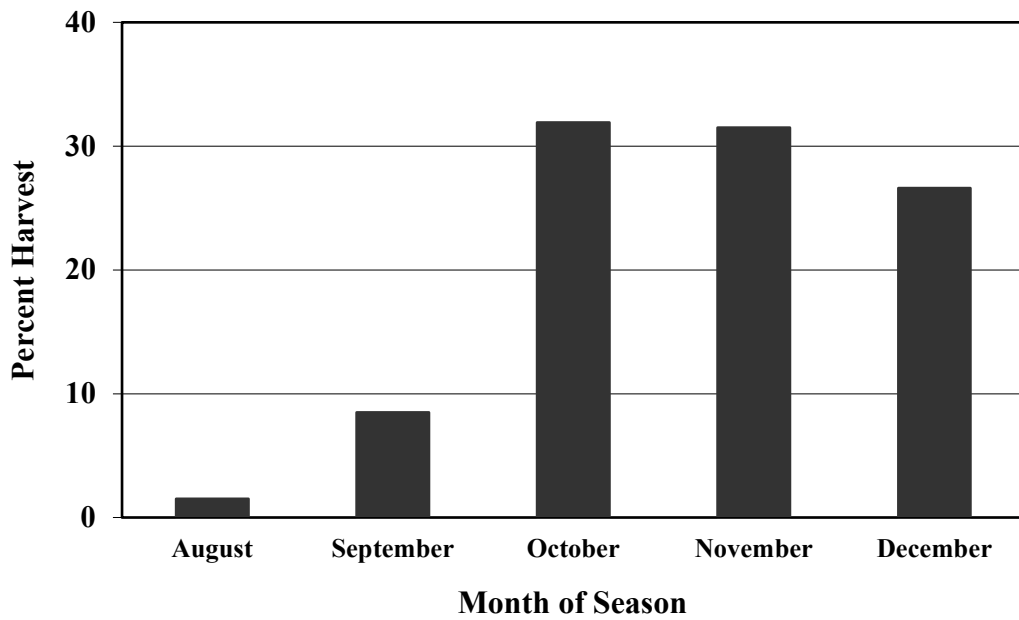


Figure 3. Percent of female deer conceiving by week in South Carolina, based on historic data.

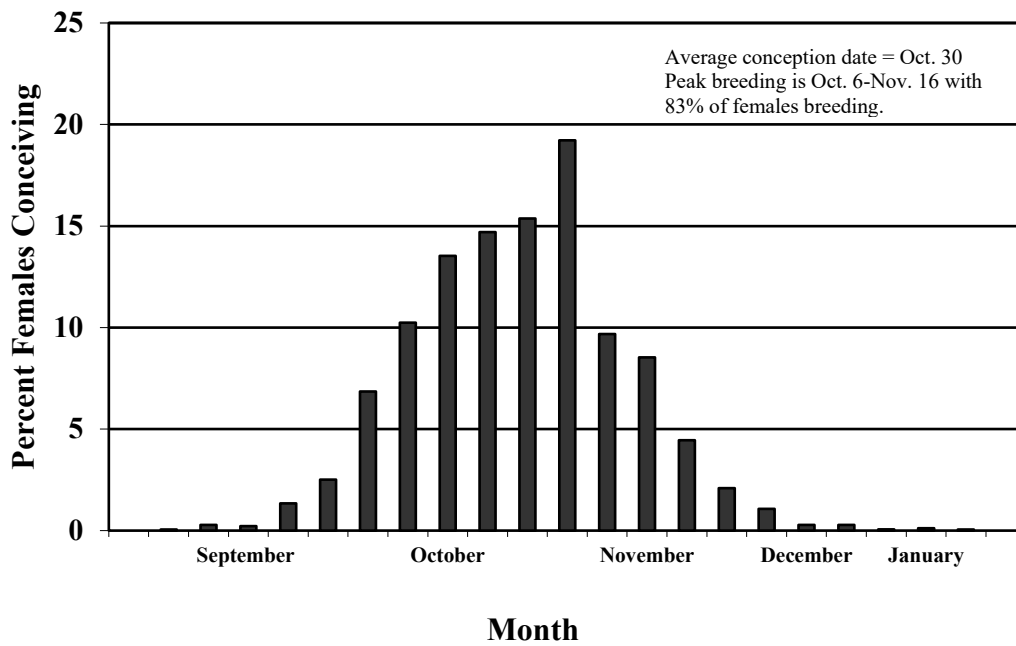


Figure 4. Estimated deer harvest in South Carolina 1972-2023.

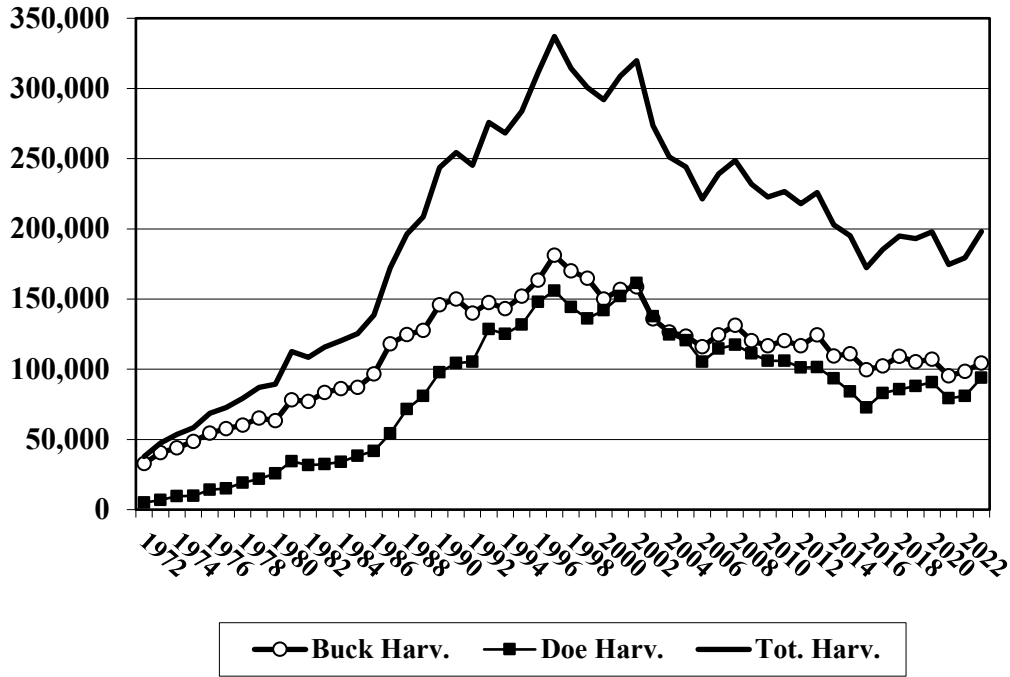


Figure 5. Estimated South Carolina deer population 1972-2023 based on population reconstruction modeling. Note that antlerless deer includes male fawns (button bucks).

