

# Restoring Balance

Humans have been hunting for centuries. Local jurisdictions find government-managed programs are the best deer population control options for our suburban landscapes.

**Fairfax County** began its hunting program in 1998. Police manage a volunteer archery program. There have been no safety incidents or injuries to park patrons (or pets) since the program's inception. About 1,000 deer are removed from the parks per year.

**Montgomery County** has managed a variety of hunting operations in more than 50% of its parks since the late 1990s. Over 19,500 deer have been removed. Car accidents with deer have declined near the parks where hunting takes place.

**The National Park Service** began its deer management program in Rock Creek Park in 2012. Professional sharpshooters hunt during the night when the park is closed.

All of these programs donate venison to food banks.

**Alexandria and Arlington** have no deer management program at this time.

# In other words ...



Deer looking for a meal, Margie McKelvey

*"... just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades."*

**Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (1949)**

Leopold (1887-1946) - wildlife biologist and early conservation thinker - helped change our country's land management approach from one of conquering the land to living in harmony with it.

For more information:  
<https://armn.org/deer-management/>



**Arlington Regional  
Master Naturalists**

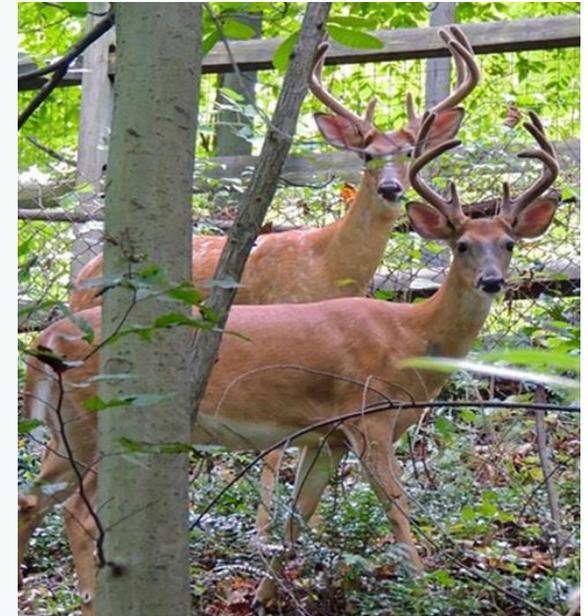


Photo by David Howell

**WHITE-TAILED DEER  
AND FOREST HEALTH  
IN NORTHERN  
VIRGINIA**

[armn.org](https://armn.org)

# The Forest Understory

Healthy understories provide

- Habitat for small mammals, birds, and other wildlife
- Ecosystem services (flood mitigation and excessive runoff protection into Chesapeake Bay)



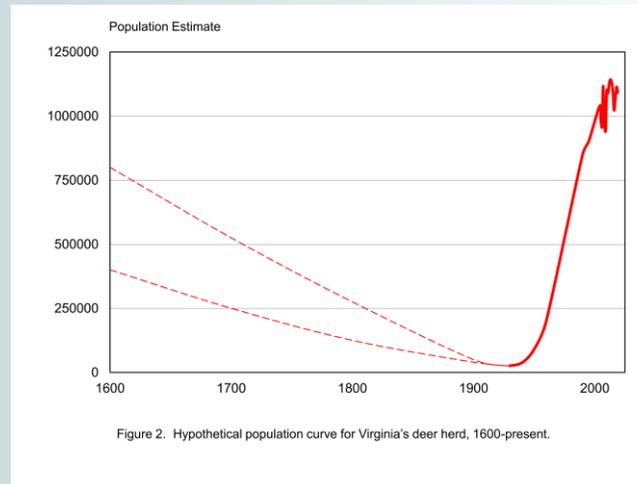
Woodthrushnest in understory, David Howell

Deer are voracious eaters (5-7 pounds per day), destroying the understory in our forest and any hope for future canopy trees.



Image credit: CC BY-SA 3.0

# Overpopulation



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

- Our suburban neighborhoods create a nearly ideal environment for the deer to thrive.
- Deer overpopulation contributes to malnutrition, spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) and the degeneration of our forests.



Forest with Healthy Understory  
Photos: Charles Smith



Forest Heavily Browsed by Deer

# Why the Imbalance



Gray Wolf, Pixabay Licence

All natural predators have been extirpated from the landscape.

Sport hunting has declined in popularity.

Contraceptive and sterilization methods have proven to be ineffective, expensive, and inhumane.



Eastern Cougar, Pixabay Licence