

A PRELIMINARY REPORT

1974

DEER
SEASON

MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES



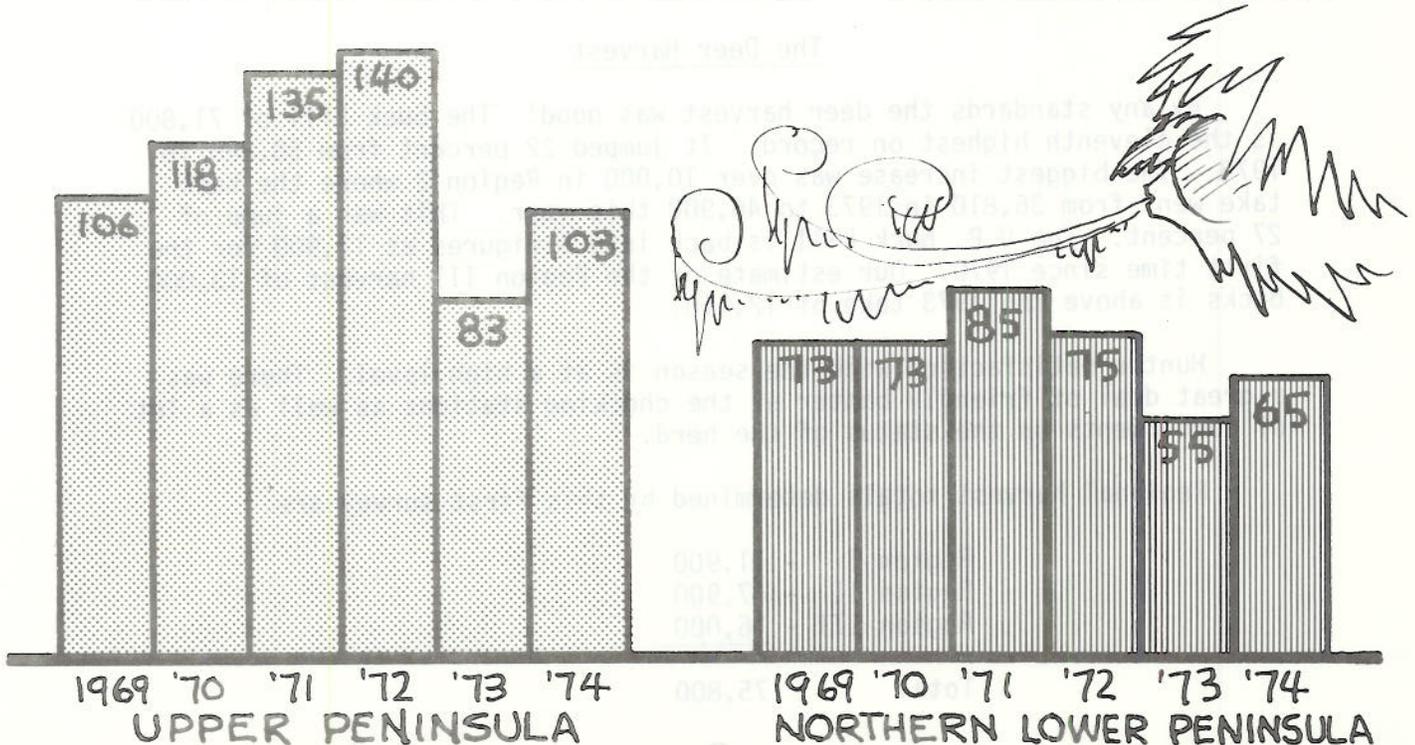
OVERALL

The 1974 deer season was great!! At this time it looks as though the buck kill was the best since 1964 . In the last 40 years, since 1935 the buck kill was better only ten times. There was improvement this year in all three regions of the state. The greatest gain was in the northern Lower Peninsula which, happily, is where most of the hunters hunt. However, both the Upper Peninsula and the southern Michigan farm belt were up some from a year ago.

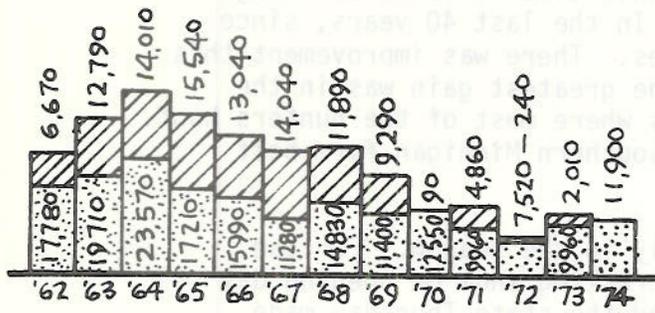
Hunting conditions were excellent early in the season. For the first time in many many years there was a tracking snow on opening day throughout the state. A storm which crossed the state Thursday made travelling miserable for northbound hunters, but most of them made it. Snowy, blustering weather characterized the opening day but in only a few places did the conditions cut the effectiveness of hunters seriously. The second day deer were unusually active and a higher than usual proportion of the deer checked were killed November 16. It warmed up rapidly and there was some fog and drizzle during the first week and some light rain and drizzle the middle weekend. But there were no conditions that tended to drive hunters from the woods or to keep them in camp. By Thanksgiving there was again snow over much of the hunting area. Throughout the season conditions would be considered good for hunting by almost any standards.

The deer population showed the benefits of two mild winters bolstered in many areas by good acorn crops in 1972 and again in 1973. The acorns this year were scattered at best and not much of a factor. The active commercial timber market coupled with the deer range improvement program certainly helped improve the health of the herd. However, let there be credit where credit is due. Mother nature with her mild winters had more to do with our good fortunes this fall than anything we might have done or not have done.

WINTER SEVERITY INDEX — Northern Mich.

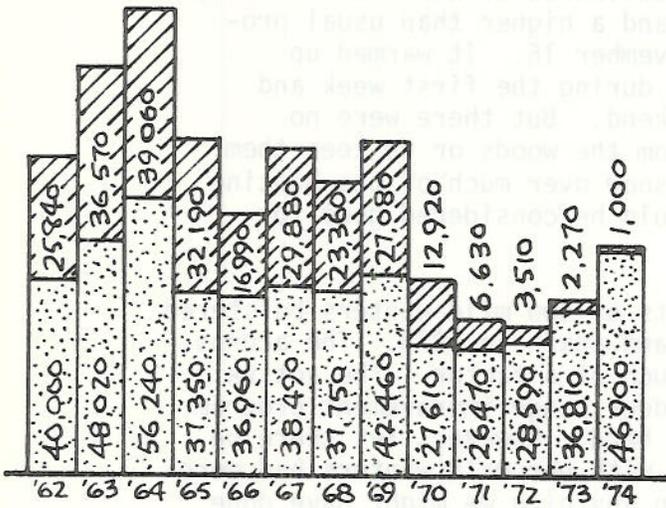


THE DEER HARVEST BY GUN

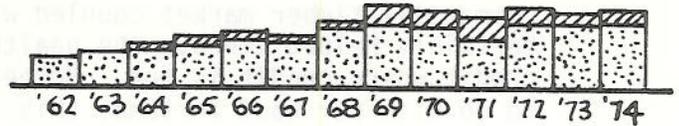


TOTAL KILL 1974 BY GUN 75,800

YEAR - BUCKS - ANTLERLESS



'62	-	5,540
'63	-	7,020
'64	-	7,110 - 1,350
'65	-	8,020 - 1,900
'66	-	9,150 - 2,060
'67	-	8,770 - 1,590
'68	-	11,670 - 2,040
'69	-	11,860 - 4,520
'70	-	12,220 - 3,400
'71	-	10,300 - 3,810
'72	-	12,110 - 3,790
'73	-	12,110 - 3,120
'74	-	13,000 - 3,000



 ANTLERLESS KILL BY PERMITTEES
 BUCK KILL

The Deer Harvest

By any standards the deer harvest was good! The buck kill of 71,800 is the eleventh highest on record. It jumped 22 percent from 58,880 in 1973. The biggest increase was over 10,000 in Region 2 where the buck take went from 36,810 in 1973 to 46,900 this year. This was a jump of 27 percent. The U.P. buck kill is back into 5 figures at 11,900 for the first time since 1970. Our estimate of the Region III harvest of 13,000 bucks is above the 1973 take of 12,110.

Hunter satisfaction with the season is at a high level. There was a great deal of friendly banter at the checking stations as well as a lot of compliments on the status of the herd.

Regional harvest totals determined by this first survey are:

Region I	-	11,900
Region II	-	47,900
Region III	-	16,000

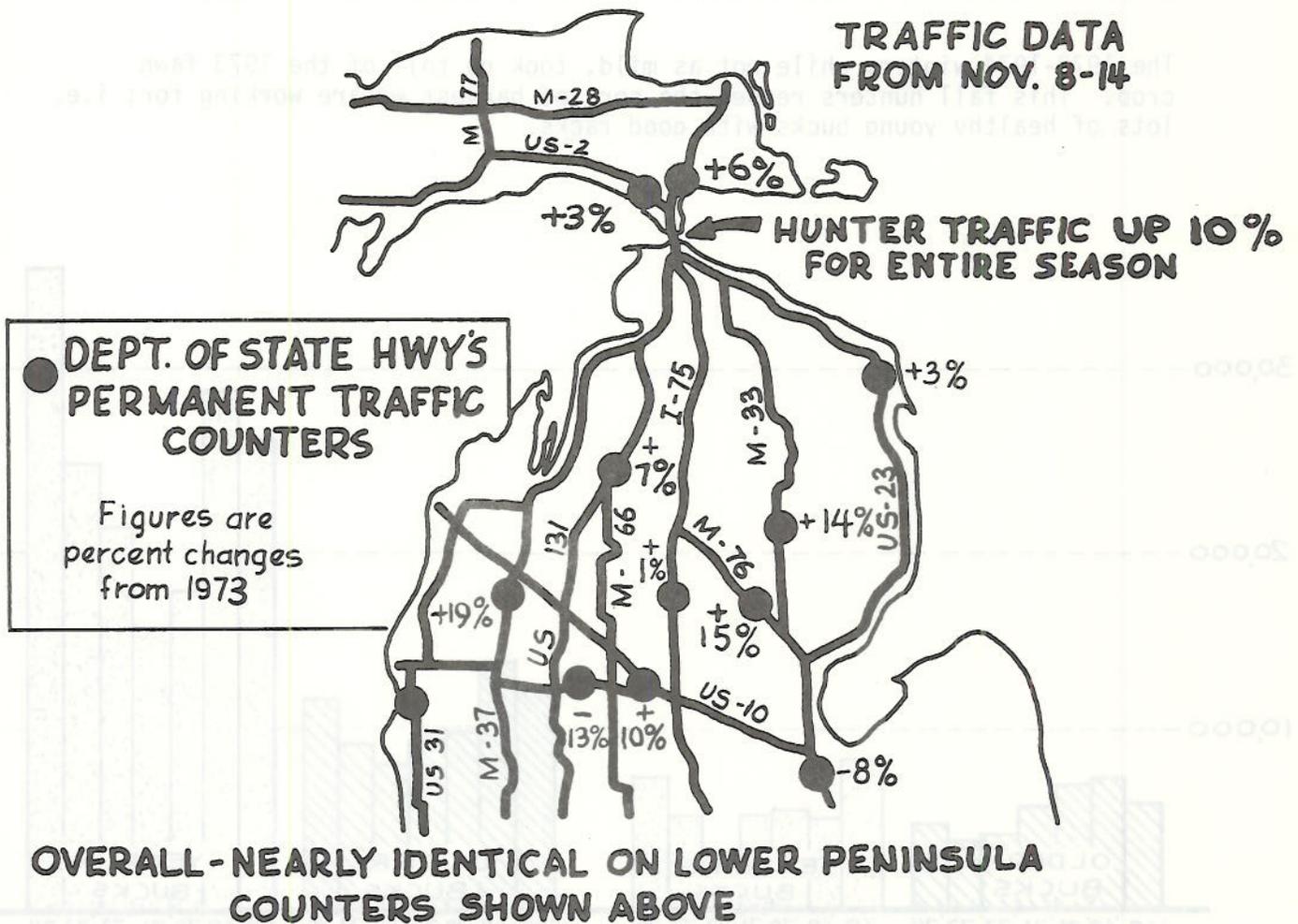
Total 75,800

HUNTER NUMBERS

Hunter Numbers

Counts by the Mackinac Bridge Authority show that hunter traffic across the Straits was up about 10 percent from 1973. In the northern Lower Peninsula the Department of State Highways and Transportation's permanent traffic counters indicated traffic at nearly the same level as a year ago. However, since normal traffic is generally down a little, an increase in hunter traffic is probable.

Further indications that hunter numbers may be up some in the north is the fact that an unusually large number of license agents ran out of deer licenses.



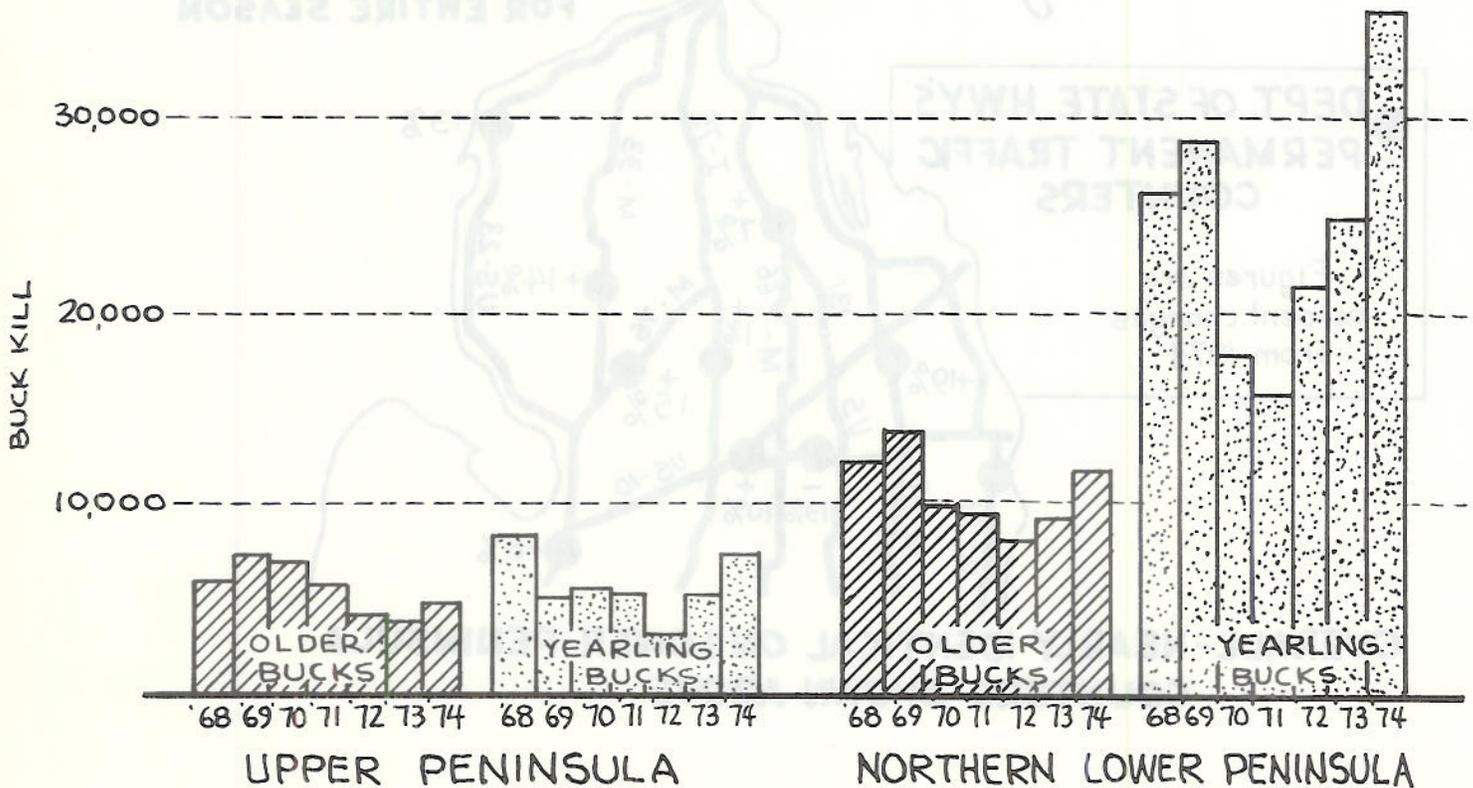
NUMBER OF 1½-YEAR-OLD BUCKS

The Yearlings

The number of 1½ year old bucks (yearlings) in the herd is just about the most important statistic around to both deer hunters and biologists. These yearlings make up much of the hunters' kill and when there are a lot of them, hunting is good; not so many, hunting is not so good. This year hunting was good. There were lots of yearlings in both the U.P. and the northern Lower Peninsula. In fact, the proportion of yearlings in the U.P. has never been higher and not since 1964 has the proportion been as high in Region II.

Why? - The reasons are two mild winters back to back and especially in the Lower Peninsula. Here over 75 percent of the bucks examined at the checking stations were yearlings. This means that 35,460 out of the total harvest of 46,900 were bucks born in the spring of 1973. In the U.P. 7,190 out of 11,900 were born in 1973. That spring the adult deer came out of the winter in the best shape of many years. Fawns born that year were to healthy mothers; infant mortality was virtually nil for a change.

The 1973-1974 winter, while not as mild, took no toll of the 1973 fawn crop. This fall hunters reaped the sort of harvest we are working for; i.e. lots of healthy young bucks with good racks.



PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE HERD

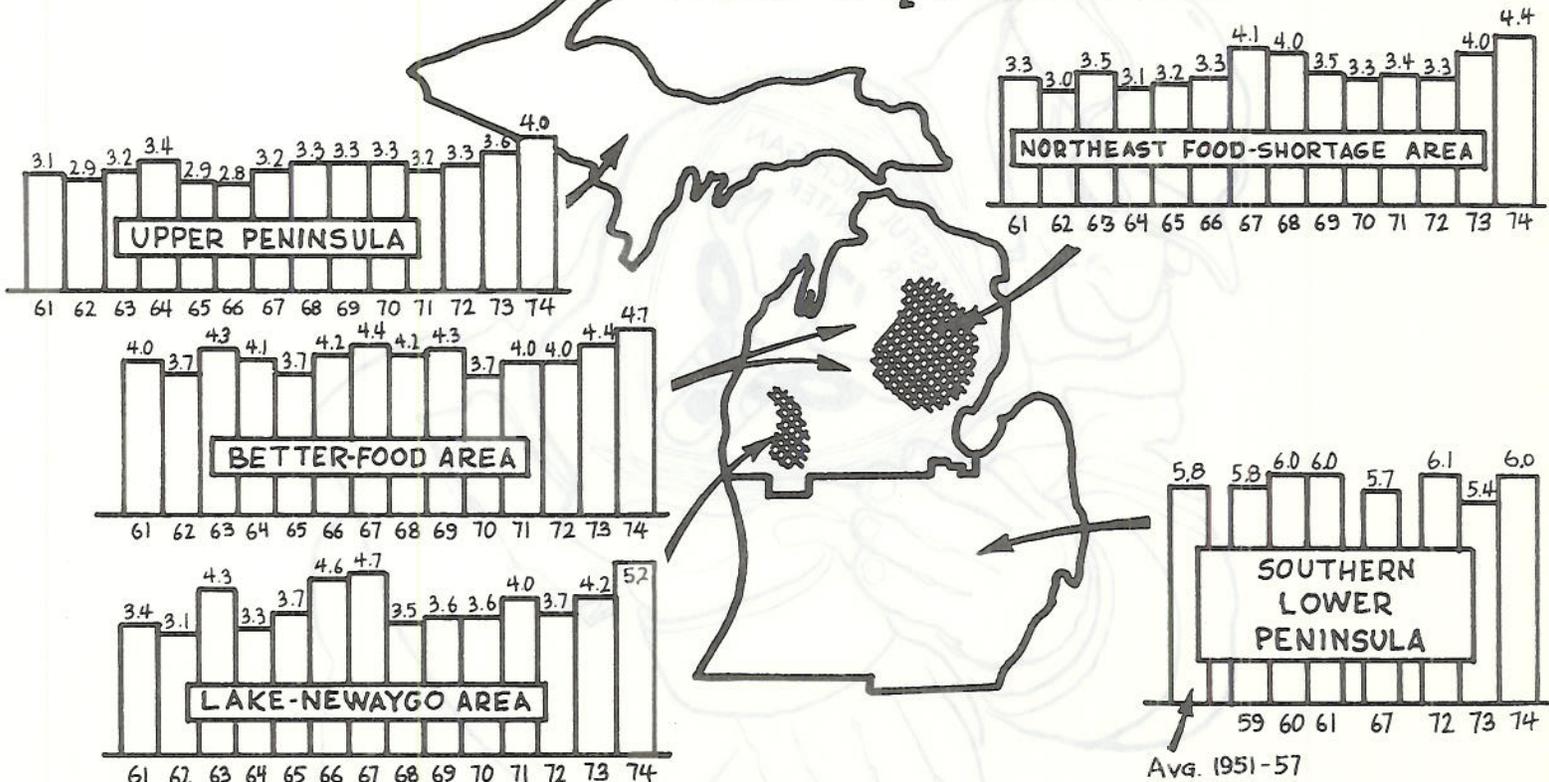
Physical Condition of the Herd

Deer were bigger and better as well as more numerous. The improved physical condition of the herd is reflected in the size and number of points on yearling bucks. Both beam diameters and the number of points were greater than ever this year which all goes to show you that mild winters, good acorn crops and lots of forest cuttings make the deer hornier.

Average Base Diameter of Yearlings' Antlers (In millimeters)

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
Upper Peninsula	17.2	16.0	15.8	16.8	17.4	17.0	17.1	16.9	16.5	18.1	18.7
Northern Lower Peninsula Better Food Areas	19.1	18.0	19.1	19.4	19.3	18.8	17.8	18.3	18.0	19.5	20.0
Northeast Food Shortage Areas	17.4	16.8	17.7	18.4	18.9	17.8	17.1	17.4	16.8	18.9	19.6
Lake-Newaygo Area	18.0	17.8	19.7	19.7	18.5	18.1	18.0	18.1	18.1	19.4	20.3

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ANTLER POINTS ON 1½ YEAR OLD BUCKS



THE PATCH

The Patch

Hunters providing the information on which this report is based were given a patch for their coat, shirt, office wall, or whatever. This is the Department's thank you for helping gather the needed information. This knowledge is essential for basing sound management decisions. The Department is most pleased that hunters have received these patches with such enthusiasm. This year we really did a land office business at the checking stations. While records are still being gathered and assembled at field offices, the deer check so far has gone something like this in 1974.

NUMBER OF DEER EXAMINED AT CHECKING STATIONS

<u>Checking Station</u>	<u>Antlerless Deer</u>	<u>Bucks</u>	<u>Total</u>
Alma	8	1,544	1,552
Bay City	152	4,672	4,824
Paris	3	846	849
White Cloud	9	1,392	1,401
Field*	14	273	287
Total	186	8,727	8,913

* Not all of these records have been submitted.



SPECIAL AREA CHECKS

Special Area Checks

Drummond Island (130 square miles)

- 1974 - 1,490 hunters took 169 bucks
- 1973 - 1,545 hunters took 105 bucks
- 1972 - 1,495 hunters took 59 bucks
- 1971 - 1,716 hunters took 89 bucks, 57 antlerless deer

In 1974, 59 percent of 92 bucks examined were yearlings.

Bois Blanc Island (33 square miles)

- 1974 - 290 hunters took 34 bucks
- 1973 - unknown number of hunters took 10 bucks
- 1972 - 264 hunters took 13 bucks
- 1971 - 510 hunters took 35 bucks, 40 antlerless deer

Roscommon County Habitat Improvement Areas

- 1974 - 188 bucks checked. 22 killed illegally.
- 1973 - 131 bucks checked. 15 deer killed illegally. Percent of hunters expressing satisfaction with season - 78%
- 1972 - 42 bucks, 2 antlerless deer checked. 5 deer killed illegally. Percent of hunters satisfied - 45%.

Beaver Island (55 square miles)

- 1974 - 75 bucks
- 1973 - 30 bucks
- 1972 - 26 bucks
- 1971 - 27 bucks

South Fox Island (5 square miles)

- 1974 - 239 permittees killed 109 deer which were 27 adult does, 28 adult bucks, 11 male fawns, 8 female fawns.
- 1973 - 370 permittees killed 90 deer - 40 bucks, 50 antlerless
- 1972 - 44 hunters took 22 deer, 13 bucks, 9 antlerless

Cover Picture

Darrell Hinkle and his son David, 15, of Ypsilanti brought the two bucks with antlers locked in a death struggle to the Alma checking station. This is the most unusual trophy seen in several decades of deer checking by the DNR.

Wildlife Division Report No. 2732
David A. Arnold
December, 1974

