

RIFLE RIVER DEER SEASON -- 1946

Deer season investigations of the Rifle River Area were carried on essentially the same as last year, that is, hunters were checked in each morning and checked out at the end of each day's hunt. No camps were permitted on the area. The gate was locked each night after the hunters had left the area, and reopened at 6 AM. At least one man was in constant attendance at the checking station from opening time until all hunters were checked out at night. Information gathered included the number of hunters, hours hunted, the county of residence of each hunter, examination of deer killed including weight and antler measurements, and the number of bucks and other deer seen.

Most of the personnel for making the check was furnished by the Fish Division. However, a Game Division man was present and assisted in the investigations on all but three days of the open season for gun hunting.

The results of the investigations are believed to be reasonably accurate. Although it is known that some hunters entered the area without passing through the checking station, it is also known that some hunters registered and then left the area to hunt on some of the adjoining private clubs. These two factors tend to compensate each other, so the number of hunters registered is probably a reasonably true account of the number who actually hunted on the Rifle River Area. As far as it was possible to determine all of the deer killed on the area were handled at the checking station, and also all deer handled at the checking station were killed on the area.

The weather during hunting season was mostly mild. There were a few days when the temperature was below freezing, but at no time was there enough snow for tracking. A steady rain the second day made hunting conditions unfavorable, and also caused meat to spoil quickly. Two deer, illegally killed the first day, had already spoiled when found the afternoon of the second day. However, no deer legally killed and recovered by hunters spoiled, but since all deer were removed the same day they were killed no spoiled meat would be expected.

Hunting pressure during the bow and arrow season was light; 44 hunters were registered at the checking station. They hunted for a total of 99 hours, or 2.25 hours per hunter day. One legal buck was taken during the bow and arrow season, and no illegal deer were reported killed. During the gun season, 2159 hunter days totaling 10,262 hours, or an average of 4.75 hours per hunter day, were spent hunting deer, and 51 legal bucks were removed from the area. Three legal bucks were killed but not recovered until after they had spoiled. The illegal kill during the gun season consisted of 7 does, and 2 fawns. The total dressed weight of the bucks legally killed and removed from the area was 6277 pounds, for an average of 120.7 pounds per deer. Records of the 1945 bow and arrow season are not available for comparison, but during the 1945 gun season 1923 hunter days totaling 9346 hours were expended to kill 54 legal and 16 illegal deer. Total dressed weight of the legal bucks removed from the area in 1945 was 6912 pounds for an average of 128 pounds per deer. According to these figures the bucks killed in 1945 averaged over 7 pounds heavier than the ones killed in 1946. However, the men in charge of investigations believe that this difference is due primarily to the different scales used. The scales used in 1945 were steelyards which were erratic and hard to read, while those used in 1946 were platform scales that were accurate.

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112

as determined from antler measurements, Table I shows the age classifications of the legal bucks killed/and also the size of the racks or number of points on each. This table includes the same information for the 1945 and 1946 seasons. Since this area was closed to public hunting for approximately 20 years prior to 1945, it was believed that a considerably higher percentage of older deer would be taken during the first open season. However, these age studies do not justify this belief, because the percentage of deer falling in each age class was approximately the same for both years. As shown in the table, slightly over half of the deer killed were $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old, while approximately one quarter were $2\frac{1}{2}$ years old, and the balance $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or over. The table shows a close correlation between the ages of deer killed during the two seasons, which indicates that the area probably is too small to be materially affected by a long closed season. Table I shows also that the bucks killed in 1945 did not have larger racks than those killed in 1946. The largest racks taken in 1945 were nine points while in 1946 one ten point and two fourteen point racks were taken. During both years the most common rack sizes were spike horns and eight points. Racks of these two sizes occurred on more than half of the deer taken each year.

In 1946 52 legal deer were removed from the Rifle River Area, which has a total area of 4288 acres, or 6.7 square miles. A breakdown of these figures shows that the area produced one legal deer for each 82 acres, or 7.8 legal bucks per square mile. Considering both the legal and illegal kill, the area produced one deer for each 67 acres, or a kill of 9.5 deer per square mile. The above figures are based on the total area of the project, including both land and water. Since 343 acres of the total area is in lakes, and an estimated 35 acres is in streams and beaver ponds, the land area is only approximately 3910 acres, or 6.1 square miles. Basing the deer production on land area only shows a kill of 8.5 legal deer per square mile, or 1 to 75 acres. Considering the total deer kill, legal and illegal, the kill would be 10.5 deer per square mile, or 1 for each 61 acres. During the 1945 season when 54 legal and 16 illegal deer were killed the production based on total area was 1 buck per 79 acres or 8.1 per square mile when only the legal kill is considered. Considering both the legal and illegal kill the production was 1 deer per 61 acres or 10.5 per square mile.

A comparison between the hunting seasons of 1945 and 1946, (Table II), shows that 1923 hunters killed a total of 54 legal deer and 16 illegal deer in 1945, while 2159 hunters killed 51 legal deer and 9 illegal deer in 1946. During the 1946 season hunters reported seeing 5387 deer. Of this number 265 were identified as bucks. The remaining 5122 were does, fawns, and bucks not recognized as such. According to this compilation the average hunter saw .027 identified bucks per hour of hunting, or .13 bucks per hunter day. Deer seen, other than identified bucks, amounted to .49 per hour, or 2.3 per hunter day. The ratio of identified bucks to all other deer was 1 to 19. In 1945 the hunters saw 4729 deer of which 364 were identified bucks. The average number of bucks seen per hour of hunting was .039 or .19 per hunter day. The number of other deer seen averaged .47 per hour or 2.3 per hunter day.

Wildlife observed in addition to deer included 2 bear and 2 bobcats, seen during the 1946 season. Foxes, ruffed grouse, rabbits, and squirrels were also reported but no comparison can be made between the numbers of these animals seen in 1945 and 1946, because complete records were not kept for these species.

According to Basil Hughes, resident manager of the area, foxes appear to be down about 50% from last year. Few hunters reported seeing rabbits, but since they were not specifically questioned regarding this species, this should not be taken as an indication of a low rabbit population.

A compilation of the records to determine the county of residence of the hunters is shown in table III. It will be noted from this table that hunters using the Rifle River Area came from 39 Michigan counties. Hunters from Ohio were the only non-residents to use the area. They spent 33 hunter days there. Genesee County led all others by being the home county of hunters who used the area for a total of 403 hunter days. Ogemaw County, in which the Rifle River Area is located, was second, with 369 hunter days; and Wayne County, with 338 hunter days, was third. These three counties provided 1110 hunter days, or over 50% of the total hunting pressure.

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LAD/ro
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TABLE I.

AGE OF DEER KILLED ON RIFLE RIVER AREA

Age	Class*	1½ years	2½ years	3½ - 4½ years	5½ years and over	Total
1945	Number of Deer	28	10	9	2	49**
Season	Percent of Total	57	21	18	4	51***
1946	Number of Deer	29	12	8	2	100
Season	Percent of Total	56	24	16	4	100

* Age of deer determined from antler measurements.

** No measurements available for 5 of the bucks killed.

*** Buck killed during bow and arrow season not included.

SIZE OF RACKS OF DEER KILLED ON RIFLE RIVER AREA

Season	2Pt.	3Pt.	4Pt.	5Pt.	6Pt.	7Pt.	8Pt.	9Pt.	10Pt.	11Pt.	12Pt.	13Pt.	14Pt.	15Pt.	Total
1945	17	5	4	2	6	1	13	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	50*
1946	14	4	5	4	6	2	14	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	52

* No information available for 4 of the bucks killed.

TABLE II.

COMPARISON OF 1945 AND 1946 DEER HUNTING SEASONS ON RIFLE RIVER AREA

Date	No. of Hunters		Total Hours Hunted		Bucks Killed		Bucks Seen		Other Deer Seen	
	1945	1946	1945	1946	1945	1946	1945	1946	1945	1946
Bow & Arrow Season*		44		99		1		9		175
November 15	167	305	1032	2139	19	23	104	87	669	1248
16	211	303	1311	1405	12	14	59	33	697	858
17	262	330	1615	1380	10	8	53	35	735	693
18	208	203	920	955	6	2	29	14	313	485
19	161	134	678	684	1	1	29	27	363	206
20	122	114	593	492	4	1	16	5	193	172
21	88	73	351	375	0	0	13	13	164	130
22	80	64	274	178	0	1	5	6	144	74
23	109	129	464	582	0	0	15	10	327	211
24	157	116	718	418	1	1	15	2	235	162
25	97	39	325	172	0	0	7	2	63	57
26	40	24	138	128	0	0	4	0	66	57
27	63	46	197	179	0	0	4	7	110	95
28	38	97	189	409	1	0	5	5	113	140
29	57	104	258	435	0	0	2	4	70	247
30	63	78	283	331	0	0	4	6	103	112
Total Gun Season	1923	2159	9346	10,262	54	51	364	256	4365	4947
Total		2203		10,361		52		265		5122

TABLE II., continued

Dressed weight of deer killed:	<u>1945</u> 6912	<u>1946</u> 6132
Average dressed weight of deer killed:	128	120.7
Bucks seen per hour:	.039	.027
Bucks seen per hunter day:	.19	.13
Other deer seen per hour:	.47	.49
Other deer seen per hunter day:	2.3	2.3
Ratio of bucks to other deer seen:	1-12	1-19
Illegal kill:	16	9
Average length of hunter day (Bow & Arrow season):	*	2.25 hrs.
Average length of hunter day (Gun season):	4.86	4.75 hrs.

Three legal bucks were killed during the 1946 gun season but not recovered until after the meat had spoiled.

*Information on 1945 Bow and Arrow season not available.

TABLE III.

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF HUNTERS USING RIFLE RIVER AREA DURING THE
OPEN GUN SEASON ON DEER

County or State of Residence	No. of Hunters	County or State of Residence	No. of Hunters
Allegan	2	Lapeer	36
Arenac	63	Lenawee	9
Barry	2	Livingston	13
Bay	55	Macomb	53
Berrien	3	Midland	11
Calhoun	37	Monroe	57
Charlevoix	1	Oakland	135
Clinton	3	Ogemaw	369
Eaton	9	Oscoda	5
Emmet	1	Saginaw	124
Genesee	403	Sanilac	48
Gladwin	1	Shiawassee	55
Gratiot	10	St. Clair	24
Hillsdale	8	Tuscola	56
Huron	39	Van Buren	1
Ingham	55	Washtenaw	22
Iosco	19	Wayne	338
Isabella	1	Wexford	1
Jackson	3	---	---
Kalamazoo	2	Ohio	33
Kent	52	---	---
		TOTALS	2159