



SPIRIT LAKE NATION
FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
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Final Report for the 2013 Deer Spotlight Survey

A survey for the white-tail deer population is need on the reservation to help monitor the deer population. This survey does not need to be completed every year, but on a biannual basis. The most recent semi-annual spotlight survey for White-tailed deer on the Spirit Lake Reservation took place from September 11, 2013 to October 17, 2013.

This survey consisted of three predetermined routes that traversed the different habitat types on the Spirit Lake Reservation. A new route had to be determined during the summer of 2013 due to the loss of an old route from political unrest. The other two routes have four years of data and trend data is able to be developed.

Survey routes were driven a total of five times each during this survey period. Driving of these routes started about 1/2 hour after sunset and ended before midnight. The sun set times were taken off the website www.timeanddate.com. The routes were driven about 5 mph through the survey and both sides of the vehicle were scanned with a 3 million candle watt spotlight. Driving direction of the route changed every week to prevent time bias of when the deer are coming out to feed in the evenings. The number of deer observed during the spotlight survey was recorded, as well as sex and age if this could be determined.

No volunteers from the college participated this fall, even though this opportunity was open to them, but three students from Warwick High School volunteered most nights. These students were freshman and a sophomore in school. Two employees from Sully's Hill volunteered one night each.

Results:

The results for the 2013 survey are:

Estimated White-tailed Deer population before the hunting season: **4915**

Breakdown of sex:

Bucks	8%
Spikes	1%
Does	61%
Fawns	11%
Unknown	18%

This breakdown suggests a high concentration of does. Ideally the healthy ratio between bucks and does should be at 50:50. This suggests that the bucks are being over hunted on the reservation. Population of deer on the reservation is good as there is no widespread evidence that over-browsing is taking place or that crop depredation is very prevalent.

Suggestions for next hunting season are to have a limit on bucks for everybody, including members, and to reduce the buck hunting season. This will allow the population to grow and for the mature bucks to breed. The fawn ratios are normally 50:50 for male/female, so if these recommendation can be met, the population should right itself in a few years.

The Fish and Wildlife office has three years of data, and trends are being looked at. These surveys are needed to compile trend data. Trend data allows us to look at the population over time and gives a better overall view of the populations.

To further assess the population status, a hunters harvest report needs to be filled out by every hunter on the reservation. This will let the Fish and Wildlife office know how many deer are being harvested each year. Plans are in place to perform a fawn study so that the Fish and Wildlife office can obtain a birth rate for white-tailed deer as well.

For any questions or comments, Please contact me. I will be happy to answer any questions.

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