



Counting Deer in Riverwoods

Past Deer Counts

Each winter since the late 1980's the Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) has counted deer via aerial survey in Ryerson Woods. The LCFPD count includes roughly the western half of Riverwoods – west of Portwine Rd. and Kenilwood Lane. - since deer tend to move between adjacent areas of Riverwoods and Ryerson Woods.

During the last two winters, the Riverwoods Preservation Council (RPC) coordinated with the LCFPD to extend its count to include all of Riverwoods. The RPC employed the same experienced biologists as the LCFPD. In 2009, the Village shared the cost with the RPC.

The goals were to ensure that the deer count numbers in Riverwoods were reliable and that they could be combined with the deer count numbers in Ryerson for an overall picture of deer in the area. In past years, a significant number of deer was found in portions of the area surveyed.

This Year

This year, for the first time since 2000, the Village Board decided to count deer. Trustee Sherry Graditor questioned the validity of the LCFPD's correction of deer count numbers. The Village decided to count on its own rather than coordinate with the LCFPD. Two representatives from the Village Forester, Urban Forest Management, conducted the count. Trustee Richard Koomjian participated in the count.

Conducting the Count

Deer are counted from a helicopter. Experience is important, since it is difficult to distinguish deer from dark patches and shadows of trees and other objects.

The LCFPD counted deer on January 11 and 12, using a LCFPD wildlife biologist as well as a wildlife biologist from Christopher B. Burke Engineering, the contractor used in prior years. Counting conditions on the second day were better than on the first.

The Village of Riverwoods conducted its count on January 19 and 20. As in the case of the LCFPD count, counting conditions on the second day were better than on the first.

Correcting the Count

The experts apply a correction factor to deer numbers seen from the air, to account for deer missed in the count. Studies have shown that between 25% and 50% of deer are missed in an aerial count. The LCFPD uses the 25% figure.

Overpopulation

Ecologists' rule of thumb is that 15 deer per square mile is the desirable maximum in an unstressed area to preserve the health of the deer and the survivability of desirable vegetation. For areas with less food, e.g., stressed woodlands with little understory, like Riverwoods, a concentration of 5 to 15 deer per square mile is desirable.

The Deer Count Numbers

Deer move within Riverwoods and between Riverwoods and the forest preserves, so day-to-day and even hour-to-hour counts can vary significantly. Any count is simply a snapshot of one moment in time. That is why the Village counted deer in Riverwoods and in nearby locations from which deer could reasonably enter the Village - adjacent Ryerson, other adjacent Lake County forest preserves and Potawatomi Woods. For the same reason, the LCFPD counts deer in the forest preserves and in the western half of Riverwoods.

The count conducted by the Village yielded dramatically lower numbers than the count conducted a week earlier by the LCFPD. In the tables below, both observed deer counts (in brackets) and corrected deer counts are shown.

West Half of Riverwoods + Ryerson

	Day 1	Day 2
By Village	33 [25]	56 [42]
By LCFPD	93 [70]	127 [95]

East Half of Riverwoods

	Day 1	Day 2
By Village	4 [3]	40 [30]
By LCFPD	No count	No count

Potawatomi Woods (South of Lake Cook Road)

	Day 1	Day 2
By Village	35 [26]	47 [35]

The number of deer per square mile observed is shown in the following tables:

W. Half of Riverwoods + Ryerson (3.04 sq. mi.) E. Half of Riverwoods (1.4 sq. mi.)

	Day 1	Day 2
By Village	11 [8]	18 [14]
By LCFPD	31 [23]	42 [32]

	Day 1	Day 2
By Village	3 [2]	29 [21]
By LCFPD	No count	No count