

Treeways

2016 – 4

Deer Management

Antlered rodents. They are so cute. They are so graceful. They are so abundant. They travel in packs (herds). They like the same flowers and plants that we do ... only for food. They are beautiful and they can be destructive but they are only behaving normally. For some reason they seem to seek out freshly planted young trees to rub their antlers on. The landscapes of Sunfish Lake are ideal deer habitat. Diverse plant species, lots of forest edges abutting meadows, streams, ponds and lakes. Sunfish Lake is heaven on earth for deer and with no predators larger than coyotes they have nothing to fear. Some deer do not even fear people. They should fear cars and trucks but I don't think they understand what vehicles are. An estimated 10-20 deer are hit by vehicles in the immediate vicinity of Sunfish Lake each year. All of the above are why the City has an annual deer management plan that strives to maintain the deer population at a level that reduces the risk of vehicle deer incidents, reduces the potential for the spread of lyme disease, and reduces landscape destruction by deer feeding and antler rubbing.

It is reported that 72% of forested land in Minnesota has fewer than 21 deer per square mile. It is also believed that having 21 or fewer deer per square mile is a healthy condition for a forest unless there are significant numbers of browse sensitive species such as arborvitae, tulips, roses, or white pine. Just like our landscapes in Sunfish Lake. When these or other browse sensitive species are present then having only 3-10 deer per square mile may place forest regeneration at risk. Only 38% of Minnesota forests are below 3-10 deer per square mile. Sunfish Lake's deer population when counted on January 27, 2016, from a low flying helicopter was 58 deer – that equals 34 deer per square mile. This is why it is difficult to grow new trees in the City and why all young new trees need protection from deer until they are well established. Steel posts, tree protection tubes, and metal fences will all work to limit deer damage in your landscape. The sprinkle on and spray on products work too but are not 100% effective and need to be reapplied following rain events.

We are so lucky to live in a city with abundant wildlife of all kinds. Enjoy the park-like city we have and protect the tender plants you like so much.

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