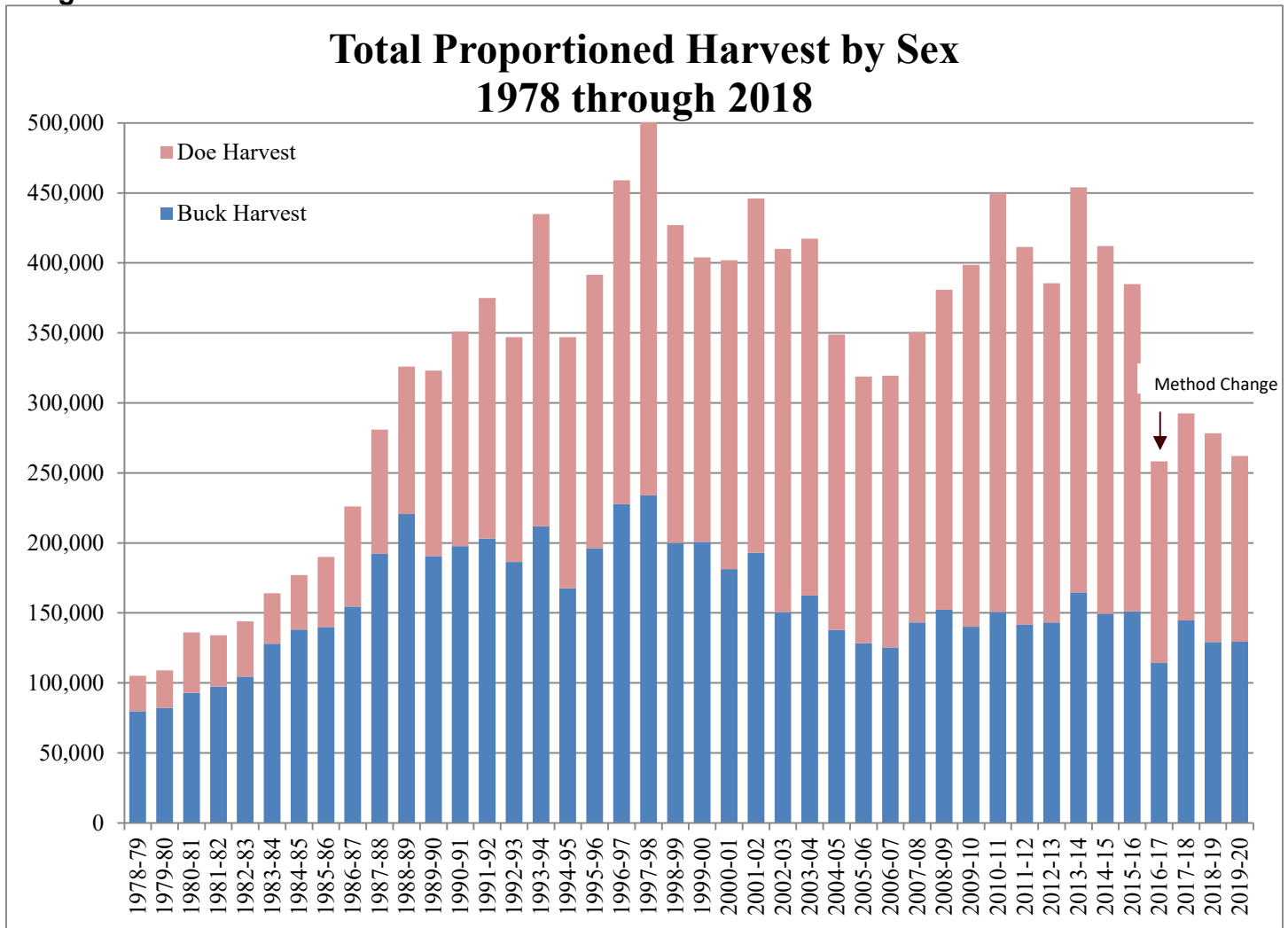
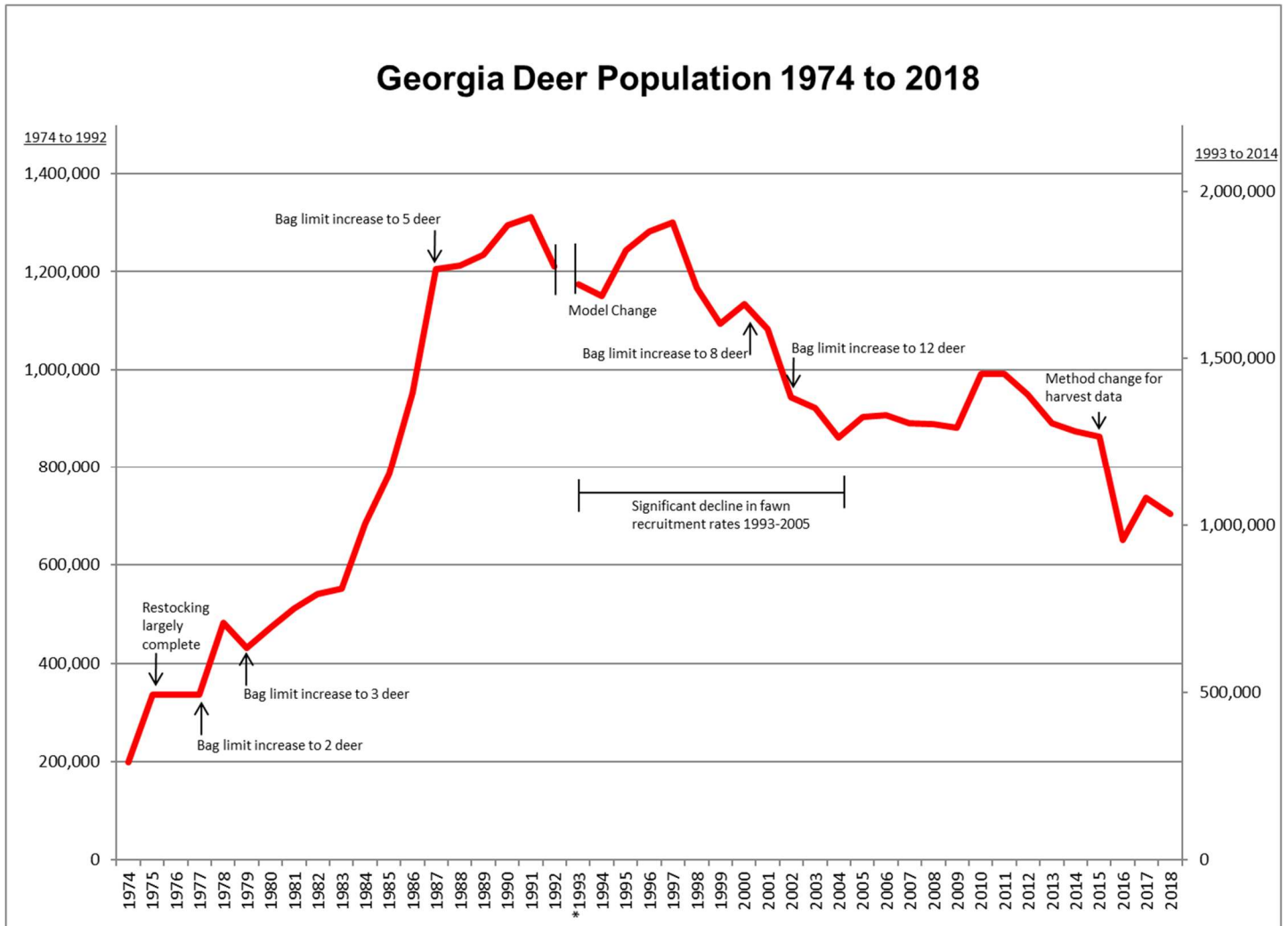


Overview

The 2019-20 deer season was excellent with 199,915 deer hunters taking 262,042 deer, slightly less than 2018-19. Harvest estimates are determined through the Game Check harvest reporting system and adjusted for reporting rates from an annual telephone survey of active deer hunters. Hunter satisfaction for the 2019-20 deer season was excellent with 90% of survey respondents rating their season as satisfactory, good, or excellent. Fawn recruitment rates were lower than expected, but discrepancies were apparent among data sources. Georgia’s new Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) was launched in November of 2019. This new initiative provides technical deer management guidance to hunt clubs and private landowners. Program participants receive detailed habitat and herd management plans, harvest data analysis, and assistance with camera surveys. When biologically justified from data collected on each property, some deer harvest flexibility may be prescribed to achieve management goals.

Long Term Data

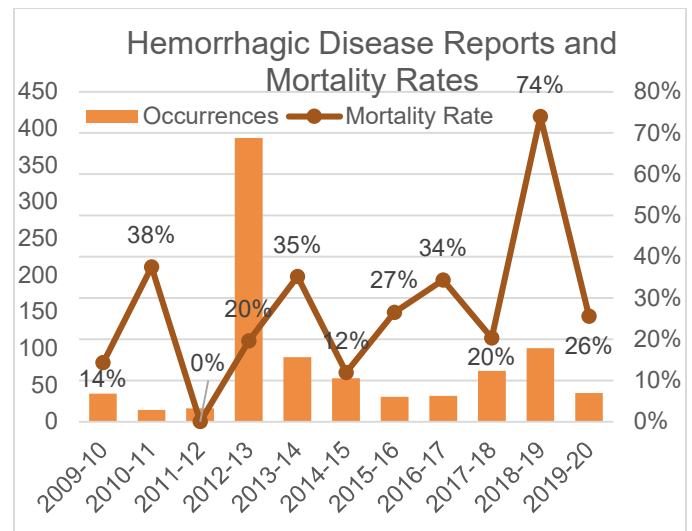




Disease

Georgia is fortunate to have a strong herd immunity to hemorrhagic disease, so outbreaks capable of causing regional population declines are rare. 2019 had a normal number of occurrences and normal mortality rate.

Chronic Wasting Disease has not been found in Georgia to date, however recent discoveries in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee have increased our level of concern. We are continually monitoring the population and adapt our disease surveillance strategy whenever new scientific information becomes available. WRD staff collected 945 samples in 2019-20.



Deer Program Highlights

FY 2019–2020

Fawn Recruitment

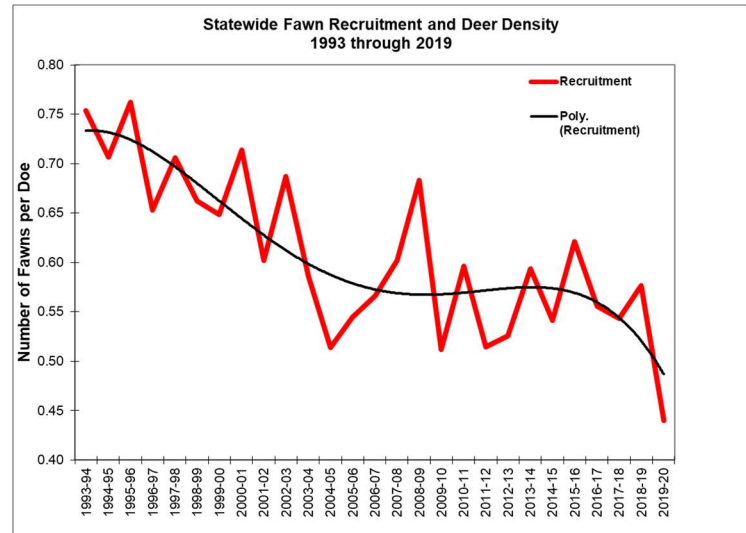
Fawn recruitment is the ratio of fawns per adult doe that survive to deer season, which is one of the most important measures of productivity of the deer population. Fawn recruitment has been relatively stable over the last decade with the exception of the 2019-20 deer season. This unusual dip was not reflected in the harvest ratios of button bucks to does in either Game Check or the harvest survey and warrants further investigation.

Research

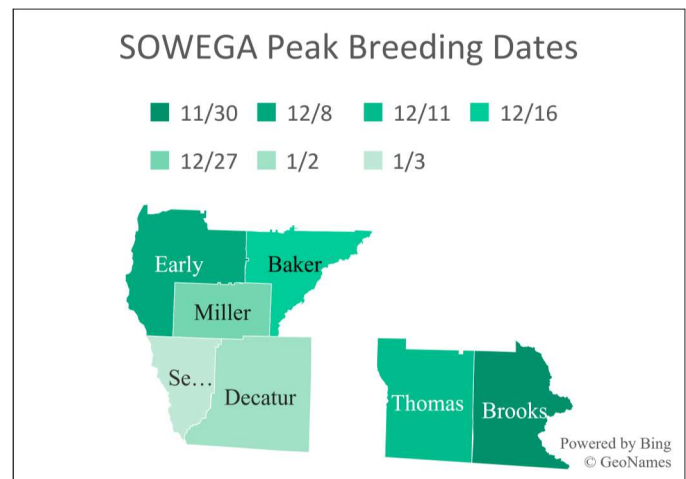
As a result of significant declines in the deer population on the Chattahoochee National Forest and associated WMAs, a fawn mortality study was launched in 2017. During the 2019 capture season, only 20% of radio-collared fawns survived and 56% of the mortalities were attributed to predation. Using mortality investigation and DNA testing, most mortalities were attributed to coyotes followed by black bears.

Baited trail camera surveys have been used to estimate local deer population abundance and population demographics for the last couple of decades. However, the methods lacked rigorous testing for much of that time and new literature has shown biases associated with baited surveys. To improve survey accuracy and eliminate complications with bait on WMAs, a new passive survey was developed. The new method will be tested on WMAs across the state in 2019 and 2020 for final adjustment and will likely be available to the public for use in Fall 2020 through DMAP.

Both projects are a collaborative effort between the Wildlife Resources Division and the University of Georgia.



Deep southwest Georgia is locally known for having one of the latest peak rut periods in the state, however the sample size of conception dates is inadequate to pinpoint peak times. WRD biologist began working with private landowners in February of 2020 to collect fetal conception dates in a 10-county area in the southwestern corner of the state. While only 56 samples from 7 counties were able to be collected this year, we hope to dramatically scale up data collection in 2021. The preliminary results shown below may change as sample size increases.



Deer Program Highlights

FY 2019–2020

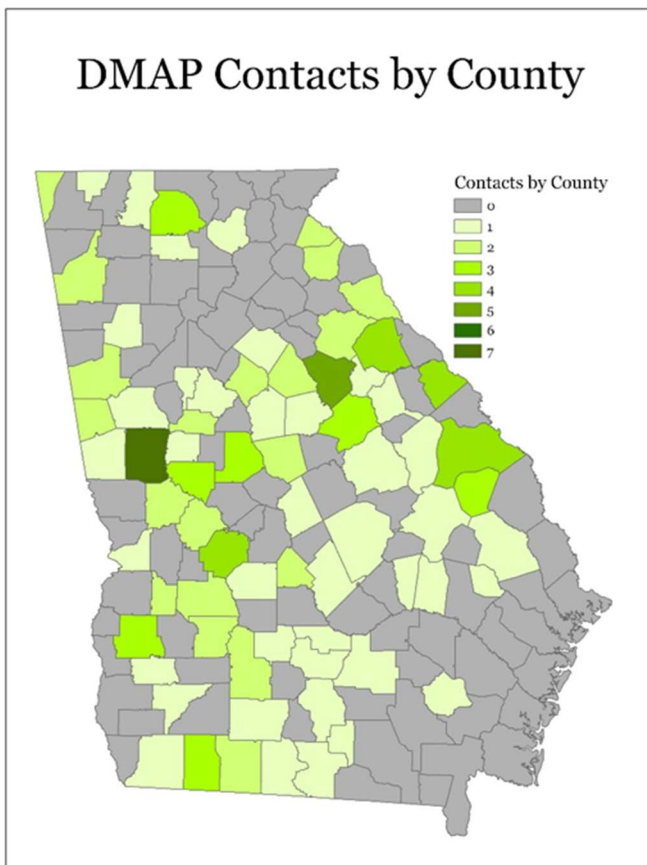
Deer Management Assistance Program

Georgia’s DMAP is administered by 3 experienced wildlife biologists under guidance of the State Deer Biologist. Since the launch of the program in November of 2019, DMAP biologists have provided technical guidance to 136 customers with a total impacted land area of 170,043 acres. Of those, 56 customers have enrolled their private property or hunting club in DMAP with a total 84,385 acres in the program. There are 4 different levels of the program to accommodate a wide range of acreages. Georgia’s DMAP was designed to provide assistance to everyone regardless of property size.

Number of DMAP Properties by Acreage

	1-249 Acres	250-499 Acres	500-1499 Acres	>1500 Acres
Level 1				
Private	18	4	13	8
Leased	1	0	3	9
Level 2				
Private	7	17	7	0
Leased	0	4	2	3
Level 3				
Private	1	3	10	2
Leased	0	0	2	3
Level 4				
Private	0	0	1	8
Leased	0	0	1	0

DMAP Contacts by County



*Acreage minimums only apply to harvest flexibility, any size property can receive the other services of the level they choose

