



# ARCHER SURVEY 2015 REPORT



During the past 24 years, Illinois bowhunters have helped the Department of Natural Resources by reporting types and numbers of animals observed while hunting. This information is used to detect major changes in wildlife populations over time based on a “sighting index” (number of sightings per 1,000 hours of field time).

During 2015, 1,089 volunteers reported 53,426 hours of wildlife observations. An increase in the number of squirrels sighted during 2015 was statistically significant. Changes in sighting indices for other species were considered nominal. Long-term (1992-2015) increases in sighting indices occurred for bobcat, coyote, white-tailed deer, squirrel, and wild turkey (Table 1). Long-term decreases occurred for red fox and gray fox.

**Table1.** Trends in statewide Archery Deer Hunter Survey sighting index in Illinois, 1992-2015, using hunter-location method of analysis.

Year	Species							
	Bobcat	Coyote	Deer	Gray fox	Raccoon	Red fox	Squirrel	Turkey
1992 (1,239) <sup>a</sup>	0.53	27.09	655.29	2.50	30.14	9.25	972.66	93.41
1993 (2,877)	0.65	29.68	611.17	1.90	49.35	8.06	1017.30	123.85
1994 (1,814)	0.40	28.44	586.54	1.68	46.74	5.67	1089.03	146.25
1995 (2,278)	0.81	30.57	696.88	1.61	52.53	6.64	995.29	138.17
1996 (1,458)	0.80	27.50	662.87	1.18	45.73	4.68	938.52	144.45
1997 (1,411)	1.34	26.48	661.98	0.64	47.16	5.45	981.15	139.24
1998 (2,052)	1.10	30.82	736.18	0.80	49.18	6.02	928.99	201.51
1999 (1,931)	1.37	32.26	729.16	1.39	63.02	3.51	988.98	241.48
2000 (1,854)	1.10	30.56	853.55	0.68	65.90	4.11	1087.00	272.55
2001 (1,366)	1.57	32.35	918.72	0.76	66.64	4.42	1266.34	311.16
2002 (1,780)	2.00	34.47	995.25	0.60	55.07	3.74	1081.09	348.07
2003 (1,569)	2.10	29.75	1033.49	0.81	65.72	3.53	1177.41	308.02
2004 (1,216)	1.31	35.93	1143.40	0.57	64.12	3.53	1219.52	344.96
2005 (1,544)	3.69	32.01	1145.71	0.62	53.14	3.62	1045.07	280.14
2006 ( 791)	3.07	35.46	1104.14	0.47	70.32	3.86	1255.03	342.55
2007 (1,075)	2.89	47.58	1104.24	0.82	60.69	3.96	1076.21	332.91
2008 ( 649)	3.36	32.09	930.51	0.33	60.43	2.70	1007.79	267.49
2009 (1,067)	2.80	27.41	815.75	0.36	52.25	4.05	1098.01	287.15
2010 ( 700)	3.84	40.95	915.54	1.04	91.86	3.20	1223.82	279.73
2011 ( 936)	4.11	32.54	856.17	1.26	- <sup>b</sup>	3.80	1225.71	273.90
2012 ( 896)	5.89	43.60	940.70	0.71	- <sup>b</sup>	4.12	1173.81	279.12
2013 ( 886)	5.88	31.23	764.46	0.36	- <sup>b</sup>	2.29	1135.46	225.29
2014 (1,002)	5.59	34.58	802.58	0.13	- <sup>b</sup>	3.86	1223.33	253.62
2015 (1,089)	11.10	44.90	871.71	0.40	- <sup>b</sup>	5.59	1403.66	323.66

<sup>a</sup> Number of observers in parentheses following year.

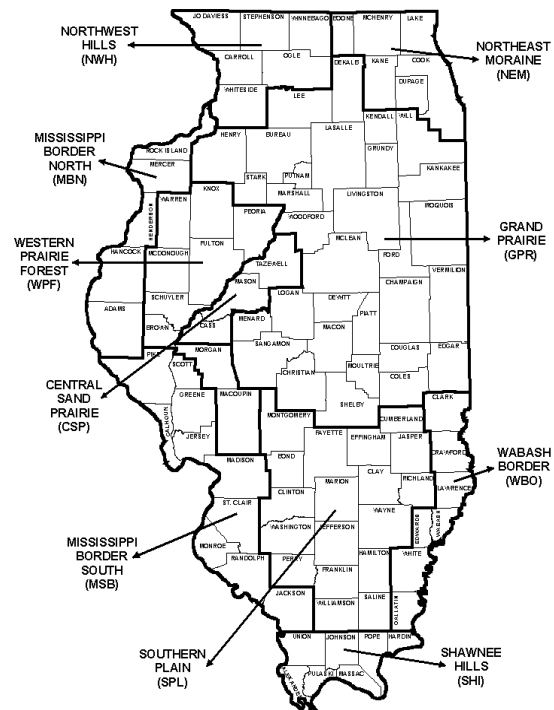
<sup>b</sup> Raccoon dropped from survey in 2011.

Archers harvested 56,767 deer during the 2015-16 season, up slightly from 2014-15 (56,143). The top 5 counties were Pike (2,144), Fulton (1,622), Jefferson (1,264), Adams (1,207) and Williamson (1,095). Archery accounted for 37% of deer harvested by all methods during 2015-16. Combined harvest was 155,229 deer.

Table 2. Numbers of hunter locations and deer seen per 1,000 hours for the 2015 Archery Deer Hunter Survey using hunter-location method of analysis.

Sample area	Number of hunter locations	Deer seen per 1,000 hours
Central sand prairie	47	704
Grand prairie	397	834
Mississippi border (N)	71	981
Mississippi border (S)	183	737
Northeast moraine	47	522
Northwest hills	111	812
Shawnee hills	55	1,059
Southern plain	340	862
Wabash border	46	1,241
Western prairie forest	166	1,107
Statewide	1,463	872

Figure 1. Locations and names of Illinois wildlife management units.



Hunters' wildlife observations are influenced by habitat characteristics. For example, hunters in heavily forested areas of the Shawnee Hills might not detect deer as easily as hunters in agricultural areas of the Grand Prairie. Other factors that affect sighting indices include weather, timing of the crop harvest, food supplies and the number of hunters participating in the survey.

Differences in sighting rates among wildlife management units (Table 2) must be interpreted cautiously, especially for a particular year or a particular area. Variations in weather, food supplies and other factors tend to cancel each other out over time, providing a reliable indicator of long-term population trends. This is the best and most important use of data from the survey.

We thank all bowhunters who participated in 2015 and ask that they consider continuing their participation in 2016. If you haven't had an opportunity to help collect data for the Archer Survey, we ask that you strongly consider doing so. Information provided by the Archer Survey becomes more reliable as the number of observers increases. Thanks again, and good hunting!

For more information about past deer seasons and harvest levels, visit:  
<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/wildlife/Pages/DeerManagement.aspx>