



Deed Please

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A FEW FACTS about Pennsylvania: it's 46,043 square miles (44,888 are land, 1,155 are water); there are 3,368 square miles of state forest, 2,284 square miles of State Game Lands and 1,159 square miles of national forest; it has more than 121,000 miles of public roads; the state animal is the white-tailed deer; it is home to the oldest continuously operating brewery (D.G. Yuengling & Son, 1829); it was the sight of the first commercial production of pretzels in the U.S. (Lititz, 1861); and it ranks highest among all 50 states in the percent of persons born in the state who still reside in the state (more than 84 percent). Who knew?

Now this is supposed to be a column about deer, so what do all those facts have to do with our state animal? Not much, but, now you know why beer and pretzels are part of the culture and why everyone in the state seems to know everyone else. But I digress. The real point is that only 15 percent of Pennsylvania is publicly owned. The rest is owned by those Pennsylvania-born residents. You're still waiting to see how deer fit in, aren't you? Myth 13: All the deer are on private land because everyone hunts on public land. Consequently, there are no deer on public land.

Anyone with basic math skills can see that is impossible. Last year's deer harvest was more than 308,000. If the majority of harvest was coming off of public land, it would be more than a 40-deer/square mile harvest. Don't believe the numbers? Okay, let's look at actual deer, then.

Two hundred and thirty-one does were fitted with radio-collars in WMUs 2G and 4B. Deer were captured on both public and private land. While hunting was the most common cause of mortality, about 80 percent of does survived in 2G and 70 percent in 4B. Bet that 20 to 30 percent killed was on public land? Wrong again.

Living on public land did not necessarily mean a doe was more likely to be harvested by a hunter. On 2G, which has the highest percentage of public land of any WMU, the harvest rate on private land was four times greater than on public lands. For 4B, harvest rates for does on public and private land were nearly identical.

The fact is that a deer is just as likely to be harvested on public land as she is on private land, so there is no need for her to be concerned about whose name is on the deed.