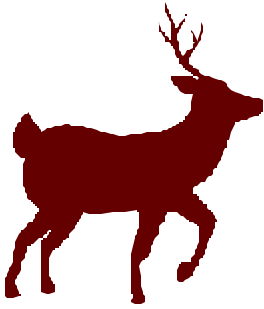


MOTOR VEHICLE-DEER CRASHES IN 2002



Motor vehicle-deer crashes continue to be cause for concern in highway safety. Deer are the third most commonly struck object in Wisconsin (behind striking another vehicle and striking a fixed object). In 2002, six people died in six fatal, motor vehicle-deer crashes. In 595 injury crashes in which a total of 710 people were hurt: 66 people suffered incapacitating injuries; less serious injuries totaled 306, and 338 people were possibly injured.¹ A recent study by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation made the following discoveries:

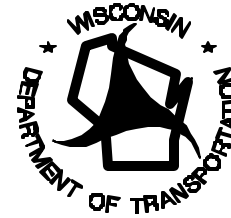
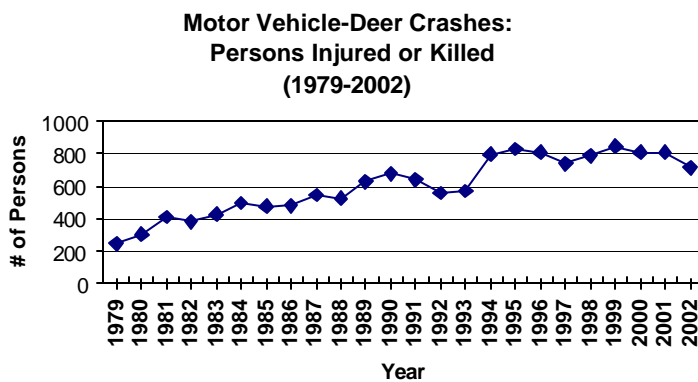


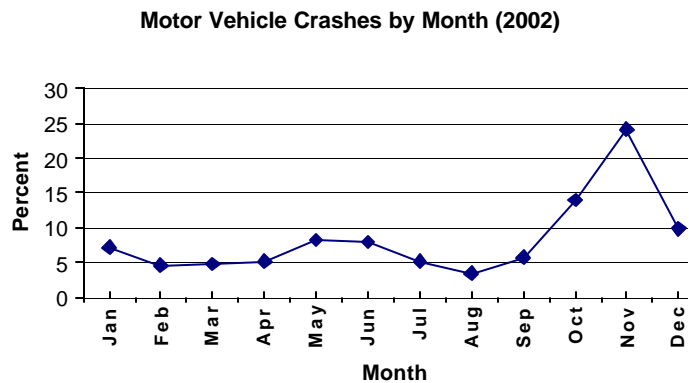
Figure 1



- **While October and November are the peak months, June often accounts for a surprising number of injuries.** In 5 of the last 10 years, June ranked as the second worst month for injuries. In 2002, injuries were the worst in the fall, with 141 injuries in November and 85 in October compared to 113 in June.
- **Deer crashes follow time of day patterns based on the season.** In 2002, deer crashes from April to August were most likely to occur between 8 p.m. and Midnight; from November to January, they were most common between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.

- **The number of persons injured or killed in deer crashes has increased over the past 24 years.** Since 1979, there has been a general increase in the number of persons injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes with deer. The 716 people injured or killed in 2002 was 126 more than in 1992 and the sixth highest in 23 years of tracking. 1999 was the highest with 847 (Figure 1).
- **Deer crashes peak in October-November with a secondary peak in May-June.** In 2002, investigating officers reported 20,470 motor vehicle-deer crashes.² Of those, 7,804 (38.1%) occurred in October or November. The secondary peak time of May-June included 3,306 crashes (16.2%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

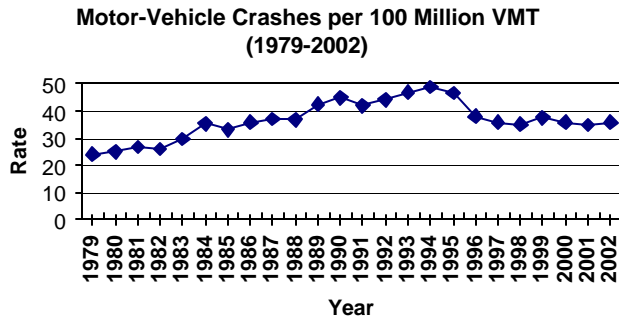


¹ "Possible injury" is defined as any injury that is not evident at the scene but that is claimed by the individual or suspected by the law enforcement officer.

² Effective January 1, 1996, "property damage only" crashes with less than \$1,000 damage need not be reported. Previously, the threshold was \$500. Hence, reported property damage only crashes sustained a substantial drop overall during the past five years.

- **In two Wisconsin counties, motor vehicle-deer crashes outnumbered non-deer crashes.** In Green Lake and Shawano, more than half of all police-reported crashes involved deer in 2002.
- **Dane, Shawano and Waupaca counties had the highest number of reported deer crashes.** Dane County had the most motor vehicle-deer crashes reported in 2002 with 1,178. Shawano followed with 869 and Waupaca with 790.

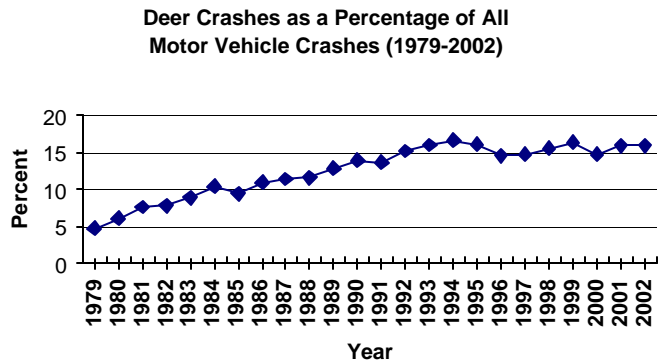
Figure 3



- The number of reported deer crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was on an upward trend from the late 1970s up until 1994. After 1994, the rate declined sharply. Since then, the rates have remained steady, averaging 36 crashes per 100 million VMT over the past five years (Figure 3).

- **Deer crashes account for a growing percentage of all reported crashes.** In 1978 and 1979, deer crashes accounted for only 5.1% and 4.7% of all crashes, respectively. By 2002, the percentage had increased to 15.9% (Figure 4).
- **Deer crashes typically occur in rural settings.** In 2002, 19,077 of the 20,470 (93.2%) deer crashes occurred on rural roads.
- **Motorcyclists need to be particularly alert to deer.** In 2002, while only 2.0% of passenger cars and 1.3% of utility trucks involved in deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to an occupant, 74.5% of motorcycle-deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to a cyclist. Five of the six fatalities in 2002 were motorcyclists.

Figure 4



These statistics are based only on crashes reported to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation by law enforcement officers. Deer crashes self-reported by drivers are *not* included. Also, crashes caused by drivers avoiding deer are *not* included. The information used in this monograph was taken from *The Wisconsin Crash Facts Book* and the Division of Motor Vehicles Accident Database.