

Deer overpopulation is real. Its impact on the forest ecology is devastating. Deer eat tree seedlings faster than they can be replaced. Without sufficient tree canopy, the forest floor becomes less humid, raising the temperature of the soil, making it not only more difficult, but nearly impossible for wildflower and native forest understory shrubs to survive, taking with them birds who require the thick underbrush. What survives are plants unpalatable to deer such as invasives and low, dense stands of ferns. And as lovely as ferns are, they limit the light available to the forest floor, further reducing the likelihood of tree saplings to survive, and even if they do, they are now in an intense competition with root systems which have the ability to produce allelopathic substances which are chemicals poisonous to other species. Sounds like a science fiction movie. Well, it is science. It's not fiction.

Doing nothing is actually doing something. Doing nothing allows the devastation to not only continue but increase exponentially.

The good news is, we as a community can address the issue of deer overpopulation. By encouraging enhanced deer hunting opportunities through Deer Management Permits and the Deer Management Assistance Programs, as recommended by Mike Clark and Selinda Brandon, representatives from New York Department of Wildlife and Conservation, we can begin to limit the growth of the local deer herds.

The bad news is, we are on a limited time line. The deadline for applying for the Deer Management Assistance Program is August 1. Not addressing this issue for yet another year has consequences. It's serious. It's devastating. And it's real. The time to act is now.