

Deer Exclosures in Wilber Park

ex·clo·sure: an area from which unwanted animals are excluded. *Merriam Webster Dictionary*

The overabundance of white-tailed deer has caused problems for humans, the natural environment, and the deer themselves (*see list at end*). By excluding deer these exclosures will allow us to:

- observe over months and years what **could** be growing in an area without excessive deer browse (plant species, height of seedlings and flowers, and wildflower flowering rates);
- monitor the area outside of the fence as the deer population is reduced to a sustainable level, comparing it to the ecosystem inside the fence;
- educate the public about the effects of one species that has become dominant in an ecosystem.



Exclosures aren't needed in order to know that there is a problem. Listed below are signs that a forest may be suffering from too many deer. How many of these can you identify as you walk through Wilber Park?

- An open, park-like appearance under the trees
- Lack of spring wildflowers like trillium and jack-in-the-pulpit
- Forest floor covered with grass, ferns or invasive plants
- Lack of young trees between 1 and 5 feet high
- A visible browse line: no green leaves below 5 feet off the ground
- Signs of deer browse on things they normally don't eat (eg. Beech trees)

Problems caused by too many deer:

- Impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to destruction of the forest understory, reduction in native plants, increase in invasive plant species, loss of habitat for many bird species and other animals
- Health of the deer herd affected by competition for resources and greater transmission of disease and parasites in high-density populations
- Injuries to deer through interactions with human environment (eg. animals injured by fencing, soccer nets, etc.)
- Damage to forests, fruit trees, gardens, and landscaping
- Lyme and other tick-borne diseases
- Deer/vehicle collisions
- Erosion and flooding caused by overbrowsing
- Decreased biodiversity

