



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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BIG GAME ANIMALS INCREASE 25 PERCENT IN THREE YEARS

Big game animals in the United States increased their numbers by 25 percent in the three-year period from 1943 to 1946, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

According to a recently completed tabulation of figures received from Federal, State, and private agencies, the estimated populations of all animals classified as big game totaled 8,240,400 in 1946, compared with 6,598,422 animals in 1943.

As an aid to the conservation of the Nation's living resources, the Fish and Wildlife Service began compiling the populations of big-game animals in 1937 and continued it on an annual basis through 1941. During the war years only one compilation was made, in 1943. With the exception of the refuges of the Fish and Wildlife Service, all the data for these inventories are supplied by the various organizations under which they are listed. The Service does not make an independent survey.

Estimates or counts are made while the animals are on their winter range, as near to the last day of the calendar year as possible, although for a few species it has been found better to wait until early spring. The estimates given cannot be considered as exact counts because, as the Service points out, wild animals are difficult to count even under ideal conditions and on small areas.

Of the total big game, 67 percent was on state and private lands, 28 percent in National Forests, 3 percent in Grazing Districts, 1 percent in National Parks, 1 percent in Indian Reservations, and less than 1 percent in Fish and Wildlife Service refuges. The latter are managed largely for waterfowl, not big game.

The state with the largest big-game population in 1946 was Michigan, with 880,600 animals, nearly all of which were deer. Wisconsin ranked next with 795,600, followed by Pennsylvania with 679,600; Texas, 631,900; Minnesota, 622,600; California, 591,300; Colorado, 463,900; Wyoming, 343,600; Maine, 328,300; New York, 301,100; and Oregon, 299,200. Kansas is the only state that has no big game. Delaware has only 135 and Rhode Island 500--all white-tailed deer.

Deer greatly outnumber all other big-game animals, the white-tailed, mule and black-tailed deer together accounting for 7,375,200 of the total of all animals. Populations of deer in the United States reached their lowest point about 1915 when

there were only three million of these animals in the country. Although the present distribution of deer is less than a quarter of their ancestral range, the general trend of the population has been upward during the period covered by the surveys.

The white-tailed deer, the most numerous and most widely distributed species, totaled 4,965,000 individuals in 1946. In 1943 the number was 3,649,739. Mule deer and the Columbian black-tailed deer, both of which had recorded slight declines from 1941 to 1943, were tabulated at 2,007,900 and 402,300, respectively, in 1946. In 1943 there were 1,756,801 mule deer and 309,090 Columbian black-tailed deer. The latter species is found only in the three Pacific Coast States where the 1946 total is divided as follows: California, 220,100; Oregon, 86,000; Washington, 96,200.

In addition to the deer, big-game animals found in the United States in numbers exceeding 100 thousand are elk, prong-horned antelope, peccary and black bear. Relatively scarce animals with populations ranging from one up to 24,000 are the moose, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, European wild boar, grizzly bear, buffalo, and woodland caribou. There are reports of a few caribou straggling across the Canadian border into Minnesota, Idaho, and Washington.

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep topped the list in rate of population increases, showing a gain of 75 percent, from 9,152 in 1943 to 16,000 in 1946. The second largest rate of increase was recorded for moose, with a gain of 57 percent from 14,803 to 23,300. Elk gained 24 percent from 233,714 to 288,800. European wild boar declined 30 percent from 2,436 to 1,700. The buffalo lost 17 percent, going from 6,047 to 5,000 animals. The Desert Bighorn dropped 11 percent, from 8,732 to 7,600, and the prong-horned antelope lost 5 percent, down to 233,900 from 246,090.

A total of 923,600 big-game animals was killed throughout the United States during the 1946 season, according to the records supplied to the Fish and Wildlife Service by the various State game and conservation commissions. Most of the kill records were for the legal kill in open season. The illegal kill over the country as a whole is no small item and in some localities may equal more than half the authorized kill.

The appended table gives the summary by states of the 1946 big-game population.

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TABLE 17.—Summary by states of big-game animals in annual inventory, 1946.

State	White-tailed deer		Columbian black-tailed deer		Woodland caribou	Elk	Moose	Frons-horned Antelope	Rocky Mountain bighorn		Desert bighorn	Mountain goat	Fecceary or javelina	European wild boar	Black bear	Grizzly bear	American bison or buffalo	Total	
	deer	deer	deer	deer					bighorn	bighorn									
Alabama	32,500					6,600					2,200		14,600		125			32,600	
Arizona	34,000					1,700		7,200							1,300		208	45,500	
Arkansas	45,300					729		4,700	460		1,500			160				51,300	
California	342,000		220,100			55,800		7,300	5,900						10,800	36	26	463,900	
Colorado	384,000																	6,000	
Connecticut	6,800																	135	
Delaware	38,400																	40,200	
Florida	19,200																	20,100	
Georgia	28,600				10	36,200	2,200	10,500	2,100			3,700			925			40,200	
Idaho	5,100																	238,400	
Illinois	3,300																	5,300	
Indiana	2,000																	2,000	
Iowa	2,100																	2,100	
Kentucky	51,300														900			52,200	
Louisiana	303,200						5,000								20,100			328,300	
Maine	1,500														25			1,500	
Maryland	15,000																	15,000	
Massachusetts	872,700					250	600								7,100			880,600	
Michigan	509,700				15	160	4,500								8,200			622,600	
Minnesota	21,800														25			21,800	
Mississippi	22,000																	22,000	
Missouri	37,500					40,700	3,900	37,800	1,500			5,300			8,400	772	1,300	241,400	
Montana	200					119	2,000	8,700			3,400							22,000	
Nebraska	113,200					655	40								40		358	126,000	
Nevada	57,800					25									1,400			59,300	
New Hampshire	29,900							39,900	107				1,800					29,900	
New Jersey	36,600					6,100					468				5,800		18	264,900	
New Mexico	300,100														1,000			301,100	
New York	48,200					5								575	7,300			56,100	
North Carolina	15,500					52		2,500										18,800	
North Dakota	8,500														12		27	8,500	
Ohio	9,500					268		77							10			10,500	
Oklahoma	500					20,600	500	9,600	10						9,900		676	299,200	
Oregon	676,000					17									3,500		60	679,600	
Pennsylvania	500																	500	
Rhode Island	33,600														456			34,100	
South Carolina	22,400					2,300		9,700	8									42,400	
South Dakota	4,500																	4,500	
Tennessee	511,100					500		12,000			75		100,200	1,000				631,900	
Texas	74,800					7,900		1,300	435						50		50	230,700	
Utah	46,600														910			47,500	
Vermont	20,300					175												20,300	
Virginia	120,000				15	20,800		30	20			6,400			21,100		25	244,600	
Washington	791,000														4,300			795,600	
West Virginia	5,900					88,700	7,100	80,600	5,500						5,400	187	1,000	343,800	
Wisconsin	5,900					285,900	23,300	233,900	16,000		7,600	15,700	116,600	1,700	353,100	1,400	5,000	8,240,400	
Wyoming	5,900																		
Total	5,985,000	2,007,900	402,300		40	285,900	23,300	233,900	16,000	7,600	15,700	116,600	1,700	353,100	1,400	5,000		8,240,400	