

Dear Gallatin Residents,

This is the first newsletter coming to you from the Gallatin Conservation Advisory Council (CAC)! CAC members are appointed by the Town Board, and a key component of our work is to engage with the community on important issues related to the conservation of Gallatin's natural resources.

Gallatin is home to large swaths of forest, whose majestic oaks, hickories and other hardwoods make up a large part of the character and beauty of the town. But did you know that our forests are under threat from one of their most abundant inhabitants - the once iconic whitetail deer?

As recently as 1900, deer were virtually extinct in the Northeast, due mostly to unregulated hunting. Sightings remained rare through the 1930s, and during the same period, many areas of our landscape that had been cleared for agriculture began to re-forest. This is not a coincidence!

Efforts to bring deer back to our landscapes are a success story, but today, deer are present in numbers that threaten forests, agriculture, gardens and human health. Have you taken a walk in Gallatin's woods looking for young oak saplings? You might be hard-pressed to find even one.

Deer graze on young native trees, preventing forests from regenerating. Deer overpopulation promotes the spread of invasive plants, and reduce diversity of native plants, insects and birds. Too many deer mean more ticks and tick-borne illness, and more motor vehicle collisions.



Black-and-white Warblers require intact forests with a thick understory layer to breed

<https://blogs.massaudubon.org/distractiondisplays/abundant-deer-are-bad-news-for-understory-birds/>



<https://blog.nature.org/science/files/2013/08/deer-valley-forge.jpg>

A heavily deer browsed forest understory with a nearly bare forest floor with few native understory plants or saplings. All that's growing are the few plants deer don't like to eat, like black birch, hop hornbeam and invasive plant species. As old trees die, with no saplings to take their place, invasive plants will fill the gaps.



A forest with fewer deer and abundant native understory saplings, shrubs, herbaceous annuals and perennial plants. Here, as older trees die, new trees will take their place. This forest can support a wide diversity of insect and birds.

RESPONSIBLE AND SAFE HUNTING on local land is a key tool in managing the negative impacts of deer overpopulation. For more info on the intersection of deer hunting and ecosystem health please go to: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/104911.html>

For any questions on this topic, or for help establishing hunting on your land, please reach out to CAC member Eli Arnow (arnowforest@gmail.com)