

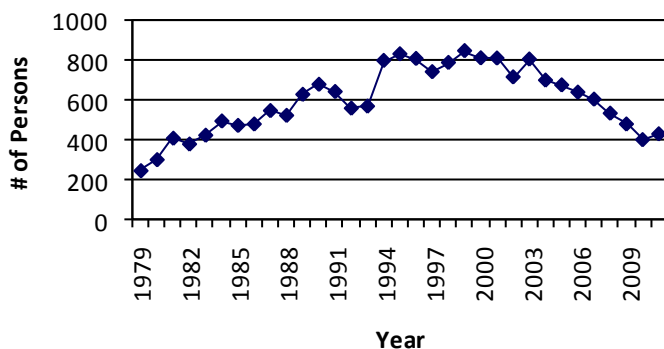
MOTOR VEHICLE-DEER CRASHES IN 2011



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 2011, 5 people died in 5 fatal motor vehicle-deer crashes. In addition, 81 people suffered incapacitating injuries; less serious injuries totaled 220; and 126 people were possibly injured.¹ A recent study by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation made the following discoveries:



**Figure 1:
Motor Vehicle-Deer Crashes:
Persons Injured or Killed
(1979-2011)**

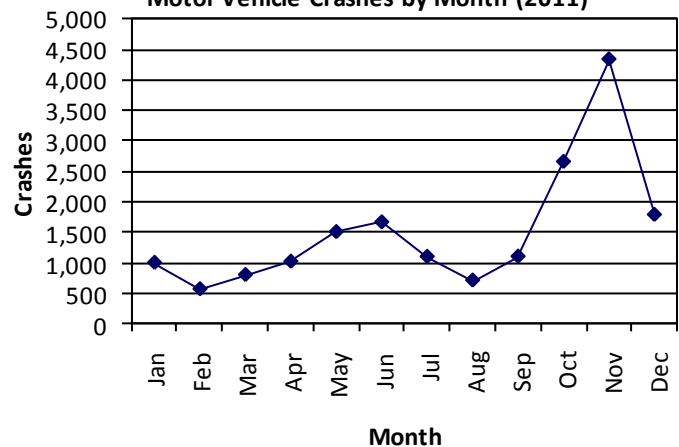


- **The number of persons injured or killed in deer crashes has increased since the late 1970s.** Since 1979, there has been a general increase in the number of persons injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes with deer. However, during the last eight years there has been a steady decline. The 432 people injured or killed in 2011 is the 7th lowest annual total in 33 years of record keeping. 1999 was the highest with 847 (Figure 1).

- **Deer crashes peak in October-November with a secondary peak in May-June.** In 2011, investigating officers reported 18,176 motor vehicle-deer crashes.² Of those, 6,981 (38.4%) occurred in October and November. The secondary peak time of May-June included 3,158 crashes (17.4%) (Figure 2).

- **While October and November are the peak months, June often accounts for a surprising number of injuries.** In 9 of the last 16 years, June ranked as the worst or second worst month for injuries. In 2011, injuries were the worst in June with 73 injuries, 69 in July and 61 in October.
- **Deer crashes follow time of day patterns based on the season.** In 2011, deer crashes from April to August were most likely to occur between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and from March to June from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.; in October to January, they were most common between 5 p.m. and midnight and from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m.

**Figure 2:
Motor Vehicle Crashes by Month (2011)**

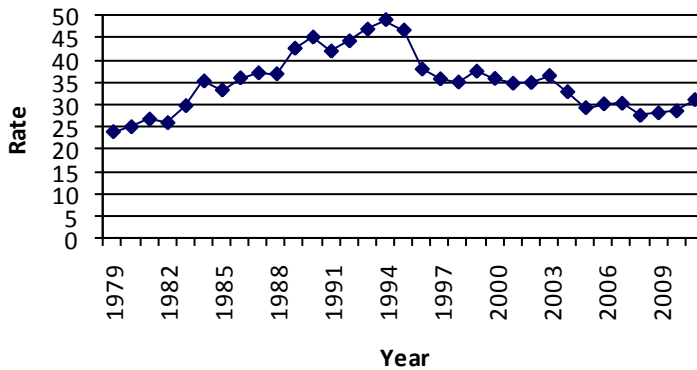


¹ "Possible injury" is defined as any injury that is not evident at the scene but that is claimed by the individual or suspected by the law enforcement officer.

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.

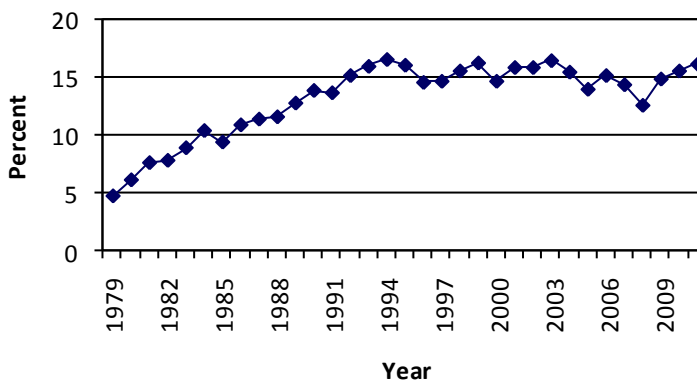
- **In two Wisconsin counties, motor vehicle-deer crashes outnumbered non-deer crashes.** In Green Lake and Shawano Counties, more than half of all police-reported crashes involved deer in 2011.
- **Dane, Shawano, and Waukesha counties had the highest number of reported deer crashes.** Dane County had the most motor vehicle-deer crashes reported in 2011 with 846. Shawano followed with 762 and Waukesha had 714.

**Figure 3:
Motor Vehicle Crashes per 100 Million VMT
(1979-2011)**



- **The number of reported deer crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled peaked in 1994.** In 1996, the rate declined sharply, tapering off through 2003, with a further decline to an average of 28 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2008 thru 2010. There is a noticeable increase in 2011 (Figure 3).

**Figure 4:
Deer Crashes as a Percentage of All Motor
Vehicle Crashes (1979-2011)**



- **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. From 1996 to 2011, the number of deer crashes as a percentage of all yearly crashes averaged 15.2% (Figure 4).
- **Deer crashes typically occur in rural settings.** In 2011, 16,437 of the 18,176 (90.4%) deer crashes occurred on rural roads.

- **Motorcyclists need to be particularly alert to deer.** In 2011, while only 7.9% of passenger cars and 5.3% of utility trucks involved in deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to an occupant, 70.5% of motorcycle-deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to a motorcyclist. Four of the 5 motor vehicle/deer crash fatalities in 2011 were motorcyclists.
- **Another indicator of motor vehicle/deer crashes is the number of deer carcasses removed from Wisconsin's roadway system.** These figures are compiled each fiscal year (July through June) by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. For Fiscal Year 2011, a total of 26,114 carcasses were removed. The DNR figure is much higher than the WisDOT figure because the WisDOT figure only includes crashes reported by law enforcement officers. For more information on deer carcass figures, please call Dan Hirschert, Wisconsin DNR at (608) 246-6023 or by email at Daniel.Hirschert@wisconsin.gov

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. Questions or comments may be directed to: Wisconsin State Patrol/Bureau of Transportation Safety at (608) 267-5179.