

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

Double The Speed Limit

Prosecutors: Driver
had modified BMW
before deadly crash

A4



PARKE FAMILY

Alexa Duryea, left, and Lindsey Parke, both 19, were killed in the Jan. 23 crash.

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

Challenges Of Short-Term Rentals

Often profitable,
but lots of obstacles

LI REAL ESTATE

DEER STRIKES SURGE ON LI

75% increase over 8 years amid
severe overpopulation



Southold is a hot spot for deer collisions, which have hit a record high on Long Island.

ELIZABETH SACAVIN

A2-3 | INTERACTIVE MAP AT [NEWSDAY.COM/DEER](https://www.newsday.com/deer)

HOW TO GET THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY FASTER

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ROAD STRIKES WITH DEER HIT RECORD ON LI

75% rise in 8 years is blamed on lack of predators, suburban sprawl

WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

- Reported deer strikes rose 75% over eight years on Long Island, from around 570 in 2016 to about 1,000 in 2024, the highest number on record, according to data from the state Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Long Island faces a severe deer overpopulation problem, with the largest concentrations on the East End and the North Shore, though populations are moving west.
- Drivers are advised to use precautions such as driving slowly. But biologists say the most effective way to reduce deer crashes is through hunting and deer culls, though some say restrictions have reduced culling's effectiveness.

BY PETER GILL
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ONLY IN NEWSDAY

The number of cars hitting deer on Long Island rose 75% over eight years to the highest level on record, a consequence of what biologists say is severe overpopulation of deer on the East End and North Shore that's spreading west.

Southold Town Highway Department worker Fred Friedberg, a 42-year veteran, has seen the aftermath firsthand — he's had to remove an increasing number of dead deer from roadways, as many as six a day. More than 220 deer, roughly one per mile, were killed on town roadways in a single year, according to police.

"It can be nasty, gruesome," the 60-year-old maintenance mechanic said.

"The deer are literally running into cars," said Jean Thatcher, the mayor of Lloyd Harbor, a village in the Town of Huntington that also has a large deer population. "It's an extremely serious problem of public safety, public health and environmental degradation."

Around 570 deer strikes were reported in 2016, increasing to about 1,000 in 2024, according to data from the state Department of Motor Vehicles, which goes back to 2009. Crashes are most common in Suffolk County, but in Nassau, deer strikes rose from 11 in 2016 to nearly 70 in 2024. All the figures may be undercounts, since

drivers are required to report deer-vehicle crashes only when there is significant property damage or injury, and even then, they don't always do so.

Biologists say that with the elimination of their natural predators, and suburban landscapes providing plenty of food, the cervids likely number in the tens of thousands across the Island — though no one knows the exact number because there is no large-scale census, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

The increase in deer strikes is not explained by changes in traffic volume or worsening driving behaviors alone. Over the same period that deer-vehicle crashes rose 75% on the Island, the cumulative miles driven stayed roughly steady. Meanwhile, the total number of non-deer crashes did rise, but only by about 21%.

'You're in jeopardy'

After hunting nearly wiped out white-tailed deer in the 19th century, deer overabundance became a problem in New York in the 20th and 21st centuries, according to a DEC report. Overpopulation was caused by the elimination of wolves, cougars and other predators, as well as suburban sprawl. Suburbs are sometimes called "deer factories"

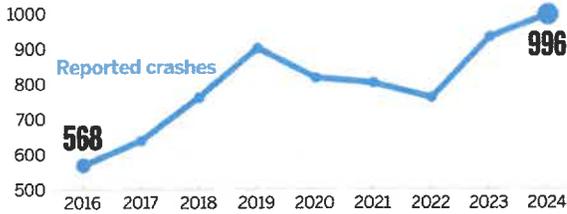
because the combination of yards interspersed with forest and fields make ideal habitat for them to thrive.

Too many deer wreak havoc on ecosystems by overconsuming native plants and tree seedlings, which in turn diminishes other animal species, like songbirds. Many people are familiar with the damage deer cause to crops and gardens, and the public health risks of the ticks they host, like Lyme disease and alpha-gal syndrome, which causes a red meat allergy.

No person has been killed in a deer-vehicle crash on Long Island in recent years, but 44 were injured in 2024, according

DEER CRASHES ON THE RISE

Road strikes on Long Island have nearly doubled since 2016, with most occurring in Suffolk. Data reflect only reports by police or drivers, typically filed when there is significant property damage.



SOURCE: CRASH REPORT DATA COMPILED BY DMV

to DMV data, and many of the animals involved die.

Lloyd Harbor resident Mary Smith recently hit a buck at night — an experience, captured on her dashcam, that left her shaken.

“You’re in jeopardy every time you go out,” she said. She’s since put a deer whistle on her grill, which creates a high-frequency sound with the wind as she drives, but she’s not sure it does much to repel the animals.

Deer-vehicle crashes can be expensive. A State Farm study found the average claim for a deer collision was over \$4,000 in 2017.

When a deer is hit in Southold, usually overnight, police inform the highway department for retrieval.

Friedberg prefers painting traffic stripes — or fishing for tuna with his buddies off Montauk, for that matter — but removing roadkill “does not bother me, not one bit,” he said.

He and his colleagues use a 6-foot welded rebar hook to haul the body by the belly onto a mechanical liftgate and into their truck. Then it’s off to the Southold Town dump, where the carcass is added to a giant compost heap along with other organic and yard waste.

“Basically, they just ferment,” Friedberg said on a recent rainy afternoon as he showed a reporter the pile of dark, decaying material, towering many yards high.

Fertility control not enough

The most effective way to reduce deer crashes is by reducing the deer population, according to the DEC.

Unfortunately, fertility controls are “not a silver bullet,” said Leslie Lupo, a biologist at the department’s Stony Brook office. Vasectomies for males require near-total coverage, since one male can mate with many females. Does can be given a vaccine contraceptive

that prevents reproduction for several years, but darting animals is costly and, given that they live up to 20 years, does little to immediately reduce population size.

“Some folks are hesitant to discuss anything that involves lethal removal of deer,” Lupo said, although it’s often necessary.

Recreational hunting, using either a bow or shotgun, is an important check on the deer population, but it’s allowed only in certain areas in Suffolk, and it’s completely banned in Nassau County.

Many hunters prefer to hunt bucks, though doing so has a smaller effect on the population than killing females. Craig Jobes, Southold’s environmental analyst, said the town implemented an “earn a buck” program, whereby hunters must take two antlerless deer before being permitted to harvest a buck on town property.

In 2024, recreational hunters were responsible for about three-quarters of all deer hunted on Long Island. The remainder were killed in culls using so-called “nuisance” permits, which are allowed in both Nassau and Suffolk.

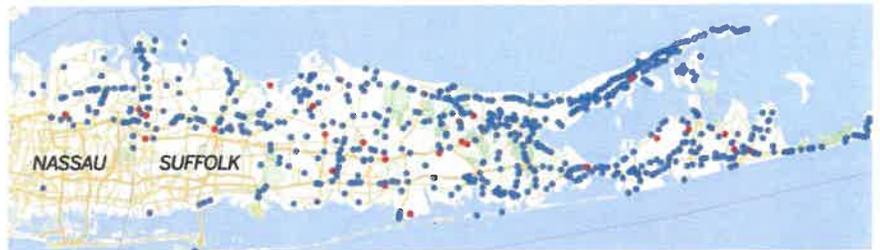
During culls, municipalities or private landowners hire sharpshooters who can use special tactics like bait, traps and spotlights. Until recently, professionals were also allowed to use rifles, which allow them to shoot from longer distances and more efficiently kill deer. Rifles are otherwise banned from use in hunting on Long Island, since their bullets can travel much farther than a shotgun round or arrow.

But in 2017, a DEC legal review determined rifles were not allowed even for professionals.

Thatcher, the Lloyd Harbor mayor, said before the change, professional hunters harvested thousands of pounds of

WHERE THE STRIKES HAPPENED

Look at an interactive map that shows reported deer crashes involving property damage and human injury. [newsday.com/deer](https://www.newsday.com/deer)



NEWSDAY



ELIZABETH SAGARIN

Southold highway department worker Fred Friedberg makes signs warning drivers of deer crossings.

venison each year in the village and donated it to food pantries. But the change made hiring professionals no longer financially feasible.

“They can’t operate because they can’t get the results they need to get. It winds up being so expensive per deer,” she said.

New legislation

Thatcher said she supports a bill introduced by Sen. Mario Mattera (R-St. James) that would grant professional marksmen greater powers for hunting within Huntington Town, although the legislation does not explicitly say rifles would be allowed.

Despite the DEC’s legal reinterpretation, the department actually supports allowing professional hunters to use rifles on Long Island, Lupo said. It would also like to establish a recreational hunting season in Nassau County — but both changes require legislation

from Albany.

More and more-visible signage is another solution. Friedberg and his colleagues are working to update the town’s hundreds of deer signs to a higher reflectivity standard, using a machine that cuts the stickers in their office.

They place the signs where there are frequent deer sightings. In recent years, they say, newly installed deer fencing around vineyards and private properties have funneled deer onto certain stretches of road.

Deer crashes are most common during mating season, when they are most active, from October to December — especially around sunset.

AAA advises drivers to be extra vigilant, use high beams when appropriate and remember that deer travel in groups — so if you see one, expect others.

Friedberg’s advice? “Just pay attention . . . be aware and slow down.”



Leslie Lupo, a wildlife biologist for the New York State DEC.

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