Hunters and hunting are viewed by some as barbaric, while others live for opening day. Is hunting simply a pastime leftover from the time when our ability to hunt and gather was necessary? Or is it a tool to manage our natural resources?

Some History

Before answering this, let us consider the environment in which we live. Whether you live in the town or in the most remote part of this beautiful commonwealth, humans have a great impact on the environment surrounding you. Humans have always modified our environment. In fact, we have modified so many plant and animal communities essential to forest health.

It’s That Hunting Time of Year

By Jason Fisher and Adam Downing, Virginia Cooperative Extension

We are not the only creature to modify our surroundings. All animals, to one degree or another, affect the environment in which they live. Whether they are plants, especially woody plants. With high populations, they can significantly alter the environment. In high population numbers, they degrade habitat quality, negatively affecting many plant and animal communities essential to forest health.

Deer are what wildlife biologists call a generalist species. Generalist species thrive in a wide variety of environments. In general, can adapt to different habitats. Rabbits, foxes, squirrels, raccoons and mice are also generalists. Many forest-dwelling generalists have learned to live close to humans…in habitats we have modified with buildings, yards and exotic plants, especially woody plants. With high populations, they can significantly alter the environment. In high population numbers, they degrade habitat quality, negatively affecting many plant and animal communities essential to forest health.

As a result of over-growth, the deer have eaten almost everything in the understory. This is not what a natural or healthy forest looks like. This is the result of an overabundance of deer, but we still need to ask ourselves why the deer have increased in number.

Some reasons are beyond the ability of the hunting community to address. But, generally, the perception of hunters and hunting is something the hunting community can and should address. Hunters must follow the law and take measures to be safe. This means inquires improve basic hunting etiquette also improves image. Hunters should check the property owner and offer them some game if the hunt was successful. If possible, they should alert adjoining landowners to their presence. And, hunters should pick up litter…even if it isn’t theirs.

If the hunting community shores up for the land, landowners, and wildlife, then the future of our hunting heritage will continue to be bright. People interested in learning how or where to hunt should start by contacting the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries’ Hunter Education Program, or the local Conservation Police Officer.

Help Virginia’s deer population to be healthy. Become an educated hunter and carry on a traditional pastime. A good hunter can also be called a wildlife manager. If you are unable or choose not to hunt, support it as the tool it is for forest management. Learn more at www.dgif.virginia.gov/hunting.

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We have started a monthly trivia contest - on the first of each month, be the first to answer a forestry-related trivia question, and win a free prize! If possible, they should alert adjoining landowners to their presence. And, hunters should pick up litter…even if it isn’t theirs.

We are not the only creature to modify our surroundings. All animals, to one degree or another, have an impact on the environment. Fewer, thus reducing the over-browsing. For more information on the science, search for Virginia’s Forest Stewardship Program. 3808 Augusta Ave, Richmond, VA 23230.

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**37th Annual Fall Forestry & Wildlife Field Tour**

**County**
- [Roanoke](https://example.com)
- [Patrick](https://example.com)
- [Loudoun](https://example.com)

**Dates**
- Oct. 3
- Oct. 26
- Oct. 27

**Location**
- Roanoke: A privately owned property.
- Patrick: acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County.
- Loudoun: In scenic and historic Culpeper County. The tour will showcase mature hardwoods, warm-season grasses, and management planning.

**Cost**
- [Roanoke](https://example.com): Free
- [Patrick](https://example.com): $45*/person; 434/872-4580
- [Loudoun](https://example.com): $25*/person; 540/948-6881

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**Invasive plants**

Invasive plants are like weeds on steroids: hard to control, fast to establish and quick to spread. Callery pear establishes easily in urban areas such as along roadways and in hayfields that perhaps don't receive as much management as they should. In these areas, invasive plants are wont to do. And, perhaps fittingly, the most common Callery pear seed-diners are European starlings, an exotic invasive bird that often frequents suburban areas.

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**Callery pear**

Callery pear (Pyrus calleryana) is a tree that is spreading fast in suburban areas. It has been developed (there are at least 16 different Callery cultivars). One of these cultivars is the cultivar Bradford, which has become very popular in recent years.

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**Identifying characteristics**

*Fruit:* Small (1/2 inch diameter), round, brown pome, very bitter.

*Identification kit:* With so many cultivars in so many places, there are plenty of opportunities to cross-pollinate and produce fertile seed. And two different cultivars can breed and produce fertile seed. So far so good.

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**Cost-sharing opportunities**

The Open Lands Tree Planting Initiative can help landowners pay to reforest open areas. For more information on this site or to discuss planting options with your local specialist, please call [VDOF Mapping and Outreach Specialists](https://example.com) or available cost-share options, please call [Virginia Cooperative Extension](https://example.com).