EHD Has Affected Whitetail Deer in Iowa

By Laura DeCook
Naturalist

Wildlife populations rise and fall over the years for a variety of reasons. Hunting and trapping pressure, severe weather such as blizzards and floods, loss of habitat and disease are among some of the reasons. This summer and fall, it has been noticeable to some people in the Midwest that the Whitetail deer population has dropped. A causing factor in the change in deer population is due to a virus called *Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease* (EHD) which is transmitted by the Culicoides biting midge.

EHD has an incubation period of approximately one week, during which the affected deer may transmit the virus to biting midges. These infected midges can then infect other deer. The deer may die within 8 to 36 hours after becoming infected and experiencing a variety of symptoms. Infected deer become physically weak, dehydrated, develop a high fever, and even experience cellular breakdown in the cell walls in their heart, lung and diaphragm which results in internal hemorrhaging.

Dr. Tom Litchfield, the Iowa DNR Deer Biologist, has shared some of his findings about EHD affecting the deer population in Iowa. He stated that in 1998, a total of 457 deer deaths due to EHD were reported to the Iowa DNR. This year, 2,867 deer have been reported to have died from EHD. Many of the people that reported were bow hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. It has been common to find dead deer affected by EHD lying in or near water trying to rehydrate and cool off from their fever. The 2,867 dead deer reported this year is likely only 10-20% of the total number of deer that actually died from EHD. Not every sick or dead deer was found was reported to authorities. Some areas within the counties across Iowa.
Deep in the ground in rural Mahaska County lay bones to an incredible animal species that lived nearly 13,000 years ago – the Wooly Mammoth. This last summer and fall, many bones were dug up and verified to have belonged to a woolly mammoth. The dig has recently ended for the winter, but not without exciting news! A few days before the dig ended for the season, a large tooth was extracted from the ground that belonged to a second woolly mammoth. Now with winter setting in, we must wait and wonder what will be discovered when the dig resumes next spring.

What is a mammoth? The mammoths are extinct animals closely related to the living elephants, especially the Asian elephant. Wooly mammoths are a species of mammoths that were large in size; ranging from 10-12 feet at the shoulder and weighed 6-8 tons as adults. These animals were thought to have been primarily grass eaters. Mammoths may have used their tusks as shovels to clear snow from the ground and reach the vegetation buried below.

Wooly mammoths had a number of adaptations to the cold, most notably their fur. Their fur covered all parts of the body and consisted of an outer layer of long, course “guard hair”. They also had a dense inner layer of shorter, slightly curly underwool. The woolly mammoth had many sebaceous glands in their skin which secreted greasy fat into their hair, improving its insulation from cold weather. It is likely the woolly mammoth molted their fur seasonally, and that the heaviest wool was shed during the spring.

There are many more interesting facts about mammoths. Look for more information in upcoming Prairie Star newsletters!

Iowa seemed to have a localized significant impact on deer populations. Mahaska County has not appeared to have been affected by EHD as much as other counties. Only 22 dead deer were reported and verified having EHD, with the latest report on November 15th. Mahaska County also appears to be on the northeast edge of the Iowa's most affected counties. The disease is also showing up in Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri and Michigan. With the cold weather and frost setting in, the most of the midges will die and no longer actively feed on hosts.

If you hunt deer and harvest one that has been affected by EHD, the meat will not harm humans. If the harvested deer has been stressed from the virus, the meat may appear the same way as if it was stressed by any other causes.

Facts About the Culicoides Midge
- Mouthparts are developed with cutting teeth and are adapted for blood-sucking in females, but not in males.
- Females lay their eggs in large masses in a range of habitats such as water vegetation, slow running streams, damp soil or piles of manure.
- The eggs hatch into tiny, white larvae with four pairs of anal gills.
- Adults emerge after 3–7 days.
- They are also known as “no-see-ums”.

Nature Notes

Wooly Mammoths
(Mammuthus primigenius)
LATE PLEISTOCENE: 150,000 - 10,000 years ago

By Laura DeCook, Naturalist

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There are many more interesting facts about mammoths. Look for more information in upcoming Prairie Star newsletters!
John White
Thank You for Serving On the Mahaska County Conservation Board!

John White has served on the conservation board since January 1996. His dedication toward MCCB over the years has been greatly appreciated.
John lives near Oskaloosa with his wife Carol Jean. We wish you the best, John!

The new MCCB board member will be featured in the spring issue of the “Prairie Star” newsletter.
Winter Public Programs

Winter Day Camp
Friday, December 28
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

Kids, get out of the house during your winter break and come out to the conservation center to have fun and learn about nature on a winter day! Dress for the weather because having fun in winter is spending some time outdoors. Indoor activities (including a movie and popcorn) will also be held so we can warm up our fingers and toes. This event is for all ages. Please pre-register by calling (641)673-9327.

Jr. Naturalist Party
Featuring the Artwork of Russell Wildlife Animals

Monday, January 7
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

Kids ages 6-12 and their families are invited to come out to a party to kick off the New Year and start earning Jr. Naturalist patches for 2013. This party will also honor all the kids that have achieved an Iowa Jr. Naturalist patch for the year 2012. All participants will be able to create a painting with one of the snakes or turtles that live at Russell Wildlife Area. Please pre-register by calling (641)673-9327.

MCCB’s Annual Bird Food Giveaway

Saturday, January 12
8:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

Bring your buckets out to the conservation center to get free cracked corn for bird feeding. Each family will be limited to 10 gallons of cracked corn. Information about bird feeding and bird houses will be available. For more information, call MCCB at (641)673-9327.

After School Fun: Winter Hike

Wednesday, January 16
3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

For many schools in the area, school is let out early on this day. So come out and join the naturalist on a winter hike adventure. Please dress for the weather! This event is for all ages.

Mahaska Fan Club NWTF Banquet

Saturday, January 19
Center Court Area at Penn Central Mall, Oskaloosa
Doors open at 5:30 p.m.
Dinner begins at 7:00 p.m.

Come out and support a local conservation organization in a fun, family atmosphere! Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for raffle games, silent auction bidding and dinner will be served buffet-style at your own leisure from 6:00 – 8:00 pm, at which time the live auction will begin. For tickets, more information and how to reserve a table, contact Roger DeMoss at (641)204-2450.

Ice Golf
A Fundraiser for Friends of Mahaska County Conservation

Saturday, January 26
Tee times at 9:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation is hosting a fundraising event for the Environmental Learning Center that will be built at Caldwell Park near Oskaloosa. An Ice Golf Tournament will be held at the ponds at the Russell Wildlife Area. Equipment will be provided. For more information, read the article on page 6 or check out the website www.friendsofmccb.weebly.com. Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 for questions and registration.

Izaak Walton League Wild Game Feed

Saturday, February 4
Doors open at 5:00 p.m.
Oskaloosa Eagles Lodge
215 High Ave. E, Oskaloosa

For more information about this event, contact Ron VanPolen at (641)295-1860, Larry Gay at (641)295-0331 or Steve Heaton at (641)660-3798.

Would you like to volunteer at a program or event for MCCB?

Contact Laura DeCook, Naturalist at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacounty.org.
Winter Public Programs

**After School Fun: Turtle Races**
Wednesday, February 6
3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

For many schools in the area, school is let out early this day. So come out and join the naturalist on a winter hike adventure. Please dress for the weather! *This event is for all ages.*

**Basket Class**
Saturday, February 23
8:00 a.m. - Noon
Russell Wildlife Area

Naturalist Laura DeCook will share her hobby of hand-weaving baskets with you. She will teach participants the history of basketry and the art of creating a basket with a wooden base and mold. Class size is limited to 10 people. *Pre-registration is required and the cost is $20.00 per person. This class is for ages 10 and older. Call (641)673-9327 to sign up.*

**Maple Syrup Festival**
Saturday, March 2
Noon – 4:00 p.m.
Eveland Access

Throughout the afternoon, MCCB staff will demonstrate how to tap trees, and boil it to make maple syrup. You can explore the black maple sugar bush, the old barn and Native American sugaring camp. Park at the Eveland Access Campground and catch a hayride up the hill to the sugar shack. The hay ride leaves every half hour. Bring your appetites for fresh maple syrup on ice cream! *This event is for all ages.*

**Turkey Hunting & Safety Seminar**
Saturday, March 23
10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area

Are you interested in learning about hunting wild turkeys this spring? MCCB is offering this seminar to help turkey hunters of all skill levels learn about turkey biology, turkey hunting laws and ethics, preparing for the hunt, calling, hunting techniques and field dressing. There is no cost to attend. Lunch is provided by the Mahaska Fan Club NWTF chapter through a free-will donation. Space is limited. For questions, call MCCB at (641)673-9327. Pre-registration is required at the website www.iowadnr.gov/training.

**25th Annual Mahaska County Pheasants Forever Banquet**
Saturday, April 6
Center Court in Penn Central Mall, Oskaloosa
Doors open at 5:00 p.m.
Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m.

Come support our local PF chapter on this evening! For tickets and more banquet information, contact Jeff VanDerBeek at (641)660-2671 or go to their website at www.mahaskacountypheasantsforever.org.

**Visit MCCB on Facebook for event updates!**

**I’m a new Prairie Ringneck Snake in the Conservation Center. Come visit me at the Russell Wildlife Area!**
The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation have been very busy in the recent months. We have enjoyed showing “Movies on the Barn” during the summer months at Caldwell Park. It is our closest thing to a drive-in movie theater around this area. Jason Brown put on a wonderful acoustic concert for us in early September. He is looking forward to coming back to Oskaloosa in the future.

The Friends board members have been busy preparing a presentation to share with local businesses as we start the fundraising process for the new Environmental Learning Center. The new ELC will be at Caldwell Park just east of Oskaloosa on Hwy 92. If you want more information about giving donations toward the ELC or fundraising activities hosted by the Friends, please contact the Friends board by emailing friendsofmahaskacounty@gmail.com or call the Mahaska County Conservation Board at (641)673-9327.

We welcome anyone wanting to join us for our monthly meetings. The Friends meetings are held the 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30 pm in the conservation center at the Russell Wildlife Area. Feel free to check out our website http://friendsofmccb.weebly.com/ and “Like” us on our Friends of Mahaska County Conservation Facebook page. We hope to see you at our next activity in January – golfing!

Jennifer Peterson
President of FMCC

Ice Golf
A Fundraiser to Help Build the New Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park

January 26, 2013
at Russell Wildlife Area

Attention golfers and winter sports enthusiasts! The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation will be hosting an Ice Golf outing at the Russell Wildlife Area to raise money and awareness for the future Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park just east of Oskaloosa. It will be a nine-hole tournament with two sets of shotgun tee times; one at 9:00 am and the second at 1:00 pm. The holes will be set up on all five ponds on the property. Hockey sticks and tennis balls will be provided as your “clubs” and “golf balls”. There will be 2 person teams with a registration fee of $10 per person. The event is being planned for January 26, 2013, depending on ice conditions.

For more information or to get your team registered, please call the Mahaska County Conservation Board at (641)673-9327 or stop in and ask for Wyndell Campbell at State Farm Insurance located at 807 A Ave. W in Oskaloosa.
The primary mission of this organization shall be to create an awareness of our natural environment, encourage a state of harmony between people and their natural communities, develop and implement public conservation policy, maintain the public's investment in our natural resources, and strive diligently within the budget restraints to provide adequate services for the environmental education and enjoyment of the citizens of Mahaska County.

The Prairie Star
The Prairie Star is the quarterly newsletter of the Mahaska County Conservation Board and is mailed to those persons on our mailing list. There is no charge of the newsletter, although contributions to help defray printing and mailing costs are greatly appreciated. Please help us keep our costs down and make sure you get your newsletter on time by keeping us informed of any change of address.

"Winter is the season in which people try to keep the house as warm as it was in the summer, when they complained about the heat."
~ Anonymous

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MCCB CALENDAR NOTES: Note: Dates and times are subject to change. Call MCCB at (641)673-9237 for updates.

January 3  Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
January 21  Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
February 7  Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
February 18  Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
March 7  Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
March 18  Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
MAHASKA COUNTY CONSERVATION CENTER HOURS

:30 p.m. Monday through Friday or by appointment.

The Mahaska County Conservation Board meetings are open to the public. Visitors are always welcome and encouraged to attend. The board meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the Conservation Center. Please note: these dates are subject to change.

A large-type version of this newsletter is available on request.

Mahaska County’s programs and facilities are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Mahaska County Conservation Board or the office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 29240.