

BOOK REVIEW

Deer of the Southwest. Jim Heffelfinger. 2006. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas, USA. xx + 282 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 13:978-1-58544-515-8 (flex-bound).

DOI: 10.2193/2007-121

Interested in deer? Forgot (or never knew) that interesting tidbit about abnormalities, antlerogenesis, classification, dentition, or scent glands? Don't remember if deer are color blind, how much they weigh, sizes of home ranges, or if they hybridize? Want to contrast deer and their management in the Southwest with deer from other regions? If so, then this is a book for your library. The subtitle of the book is more descriptive: *A complete guide to the natural history, biology, and management of the southwestern mule deer and white-tailed deer.*

The author, Jim Heffelfinger, is a regional game specialist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and adjunct Assistant Professor of Wildlife Conservation and Management, University of Arizona. He is also a top authority on deer in North America. Heffelfinger has spent over a decade reviewing published literature, state game department reports, field notes from active and retired biologists, unpublished theses and dissertations, grey literature, and information from Native Americans and biologists from Mexico as background for the book.

The book is not just about deer in the Southwest. Many of the topics relate to deer throughout North America. In the preface, Heffelfinger states, "The purpose of this book is to provide biologists, natural resource managers, students, hunters, landowners, and nature enthusiasts a source for nearly all things related to southwestern deer in a format and style that is easy to digest." This, he does well.

The compact text has 4 general sections: taxonomy and background, physical characteristics, biology, and management. There are 9 chapters that are well illustrated with 47 figures, 19 tables, and an appendix of scientific names for plants. Scientific names for animals are presented in the text.

Chapter 1 is an overview of taxonomy and the arrival of modern deer. Heffelfinger provides a bit of history about the taxonomic process before introducing the stars of the book: 7 subspecies of mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and 3 subspecies of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). However, further references are primarily to species, not subspecies. Some readers may be disappointed in the

distribution maps advertised in the preface as "...the most accurate currently in print" because they do not show the approximate boundaries for subspecies.

The background section of the text also discusses the role deer played in Native American cultures and the era of exploitation leading up to contemporary management. The latter material could have been placed in the management section.

Chapters 3 and 4 are descriptive and contrast body mass, dentition, pelage, senses, vocalization, scent glands, and antlerogenesis. The latter chapter is chock full of interesting tidbits of antlerology often requested by deer enthusiasts. What factors influence antler size? Was Aristotle really an antlerologist? Why do deer have antlers?

The biology of deer is covered in chapters 5–8. Chapter 5 outlines forage use by deer and reviews the controversy related to providing water for wildlife. Color photographs illustrate some important forage species. Other biological data include density, home range, and movements (chapter 6), reproduction (chapter 7), and mortality (chapter 8). Does mortality from predation regulate deer populations? Is predator control worth the effort? Chapter 9 covers management in each southwestern state and northern Mexico. Are deer really managed differently in Texas than elsewhere?

Heffelfinger concludes *Deer of the Southwest* with an epilogue in which he writes "... our challenge is to wisely manage deer populations and to preserve and enhance their remaining habitat for future generations ..." Who can disagree?

Most people enjoy seeing deer and observations can be enhanced with knowledge about the subject. *Deer of the Southwest* is a great place to obtain that information and its organization allows easy access to topics of interest. This is certainly a book for the lay public as much as for wildlifers. Readers interested in obtaining more detailed information can use the excellent list of approximately 550 citations in the book. About the only item not covered that readers can often find in books about deer is the author's favorite recipe for venison. For that omission, I thank the author!

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