

How do overabundant deer affect Mayne Island's natural ecosystems?

In the absence of hunting or natural predators, deer populations on Mayne Island have increased exponentially. This has led to an unbalanced ecosystem.



With so many deer eating native plants, they are changing the structure of our forests. Natural forest regeneration is disrupted, and the loss of shrubs removes habitat for ground nesting songbirds.

Some plant species are preferred by deer. Many plants such as arbutus, red flowering currant, oceanspray, camas, orange honeysuckle, seablush, fawn lily, and others will disappear from Mayne Island if current deer populations persist or increase over time. All young arbutus seedlings accessible to deer are eaten; this means there will be no new trees to replace the mature ones when they die.



Deer populations not controlled by hunting or natural predators are eventually controlled by starvation as the population outgrows its food source. Maintaining a lower population means individual deer are more healthy.