



March 3,2025

As I think most of you know, Berkeley Lake has won the Tree City Award every year for over two decades now. We recently gathered over near our children's park to celebrate Arbor Day by planting two Paw Paw trees to replace some lost shrubbery.



There has been some discussion recently among some citizens concerned about deer overpopulation who would like the City to "cull" them. In response, the staff, Mayor ProTem Rebecca Spitler (she is also president of the Georgia Piedmont Land Trust) and I have been studying this issue which is very complex and for which there are no easy answers. That does not mean in my view that we should not continue to study and explore what might be done. It does mean that our citizens need and deserve to understand all the ramifications and options. To that end, I am

sharing the information that we have discovered below for your consideration. The major sources of this information are our own city ordinances, the Deed of Conservation Easement given many years ago by our city to the Georgia Piedmont Land Trust to protect the greenspace, the state Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) chiefly Ben McCullar, the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) chiefly Odin Stephens, and conversations with other municipal and county leaders. As you can see, a lot of work has gone into this already. There is more to be done.

It is significant that although other cities are also encountering concerns about deer, no city in the state of Georgia has opted for a culling program. This may be because of the extraordinary expense, possible liability issues, the necessity of ongoing programs, or differences in citizen attitudes toward deer.

The Deed of Conservation Easement on our greenspace has specific language in the Prohibited Activities section, page 5, section 3(j) that states “no killing or harming in any way any species of wildlife ...” and also prohibits the use of motorized equipment that would be required to remove deer carcasses. The land trust would not give a waiver on this prohibition.

In our Berkeley Lake city ordinances, Chapter 32 prohibits hunting in the greenspace. Chapter 46 prohibits hunting throughout the city based on separation from roads, houses, and so on to include not only firearms, but other weapons such as bows, crossbows and so on. Chapter 10 prohibits wildlife feeding.

DNR believes the problem, in part, stems from many communities banning hunting for safety reasons, but that it is also due to our proximity to the Chattahoochee Corridor. The river is a highway for animals who are being pushed out of developing areas, particularly in North Georgia. They can travel along the edge of the river without being hit on highways. If deer are removed in our small (one square mile) city, we must be prepared for them to immediately move in from elsewhere.

USDA operates a culling program and was working with St. Ives (gated community off Medlock Bridge) to investigate culling, but there was not broad community buy-in to support implementation of the culling program, so it was abandoned.

DNR doesn't offer any culling program. Their current role is with public outreach/education about exclusionary techniques and hazing, including scare tactics, netting, etc. They are investigating other ways to assist local communities with this issue. They estimate that it could take approximately 12 months to be prepared to offer additional services.

I met recently with Mike Mason, the mayor of Peachtree Corners and asked about their consideration of deer overpopulation. Simpsonwood Park within their city is similar to our greenspace, but it is owned by the county which after due consideration has forbidden any hunting there. PC will continue to explore options, but they are in the “early stages.”

According to Ben McCullar of DNR, Georgia forbids fertility control, and in any case it would be extremely costly. So I asked him what can be done? He suggested putting netting or chicken wire over plants and chasing deer off when you see them. Also that I remind you all of our city ordinance which forbids feeding them. His agency will continue to work on this as will we and other cities. Meanwhile the following, which I hope will be helpful, is the result of very intensive research by Rebecca Spitler. Additionally, it is my hope to bring a wildlife expert to City Hall in the near future to meet with any of you who have further questions or thoughts about this issue.

- [Ideas presented by Walter Reeves, The Georgia Gardener:](#)
- From GA DNR, a digital PDF document – [Controlling Deer Damage In Georgia](#)
- From UGA Cooperative Extension and UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources – [Repellents and Wildlife Damage Control](#). This does not just spotlight deer it highlights other wildlife that could damage landscapes and be considered “nuisances”.
- A digital PDF document – [Repellents and Wildlife Damage Control](#) – produced by UGA Cooperative Extension and UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources
- From Georgia Urban Ag Council, [Deer and Rabbit Control](#)
- [Presentation \(140 page slideshow with notes\) from Southern Regional Extension Forestry](#) prepared by UGA College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and the UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources.



The newest winner of our Lens contest is Eric Chan with his beautiful photo 'Lights and Snow'. He has selected the Georgia House Rabbit Society to receive his winner's check, provided by Ginny Nevins.



*Lois D. Satter*