

Habitat loss impacting deer in California

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

An estimated 445,000 deer live in California, or about equal to the city of Sacramento's human population. Which sounds like a lot, until you realize the deer are spread over the entire state: 99 million acres.

If there were only 445,000 people in California, how long would it take you to find somebody you really wanted to hang out with?

Such is the plight of the state's deer population, our most iconic emblem of the forest. Without much notice, the species has declined slowly but relentlessly in virtually every corner of the state.

The decline has been almost too small to see on an annual basis. But since 1990, California has lost nearly half its deer population, according to the state Department of Fish and Game.

"Our deer are surviving, they're not thriving," said Craig Stowers, deer program manager at Fish and Game. "Quite frankly, until people start taking this seriously, we're going to continue to experience these types of declines."

This forest icon is on the wane mainly for one simple reason: habitat loss.

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