

# Using the Parks During Deer Management

In order to preserve the health of our ecosystems, the Park Commission employs deer management programs at Baldpate Mountain, Mercer Meadows, Mercer County Park and Dam Site 21.

In forested habitats, deer can prevent seedling trees from reaching maturity, leaving behind no replacement generation for the mature trees that fall. In addition, deer foraging on herbaceous and understory plants favor the foliage of native species over non-native ones, giving non-native plants a competitive edge. This pattern often results in the formation of areas dense with non-native species such as Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Japanese Honeysuckle, or Japanese Barberry.

As the plant community suffers from this selective foraging behavior, so do the wildlife that rely on native plants for food and cover. Over the course of just a few years, the forest can change enough to become unsuitable for many species of birds and other wildlife that rely on a healthy forest ecosystem to survive.

## Recommendations for Park Users During Deer Management:

- Regard and obey all posted signage. Parks will be closed to public access when firearms are in use. Specific dates of closures will be posted at trail access points and parking areas.
- Stay on authorized trails. We have established 50-75 foot buffers bordering all authorized trails in the park. No hunting activity can take place within this buffer.
- Wear bright colors, such as blaze orange when walking in the parks during deer management seasons.
- Keep your dogs on leash at all times, not only during deer management seasons.



**In accordance with N.J. Legislative Statute 23:7A-2, it is unlawful for a person to:**

- **block or attempt to block a person lawfully taking wildlife;**
- **Engage in vandalism of personal property;**
- **Engage in any action or activity in order to affect the behavior of wildlife, or disrupt a person lawfully taking wildlife**

**Those found in violation shall be guilty of a petty disorderly persons offense and a fine not less than \$100.**

