



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Pwalxkn (Mule Deer) Mortality Monitoring Project

CAPTURE THE WILD

OVERVIEW

The diminishing population of mule deer in Region 8 has raised substantial concerns among hunters, conservationists, First Nations, and local wildlife managers. Recently, members of Hunters for BC observed what seemed to be elevated mortality rates inside a high fence erected to safeguard both people and deer from collisions with vehicles and wildlife along a busy section of Highway 97 south of Peachland. Upon discussion with the Okanagan Nation Alliance, it was revealed that some members of their wildlife team had observed the same issue.

In February 2023, Hunters for BC and Okanagan Nation Alliance initiated a monitoring program for an 11 km stretch of high fence where it appears that sənklip (coyote) are using the fence as a prey trap to hunt pwalxkn (Mule Deer). The encroachment of habitat, human-induced degradation of habitats, and a general reduction in critical mule deer ranges have altered predator-prey dynamics, granting predators a competitive edge. It is crucial to thoroughly investigate all these impacts to promote the establishment of robust and stable mule deer populations.

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to precisely quantify mule deer (pwalxkn) mortality, ascertain the cause of death whenever feasible, and collaboratively identify suitable mitigation measures to decrease wildlife mortality in the Highway 97 winter range corridor.

PHASE 1 – FEBRUARY TO MAY, 2023

In the period from **Feb 6 to May 29, 2023, 47 deer mortalities were observed in the study area**. Peak mortalities in this timeframe occurred between Feb 6th and the 14th with 14 carcasses identified (Figure 3 and 4). **An additional 135 carcasses and carcass remnants were identified** and thought to have occurred before 2023. Most carcasses were deer, but one sʔwʔiʔ (mountain goat) carcass was observed. (1)

PHASE 2 – DECEMBER 2023 – DECEMBER 2024

The initial volunteer training session is set for December 5th, 2023. During this session, Okanagan Nation Alliance biologists will instruct volunteers on camera placement, camera setup, and data collection procedures aligned with Phase 1. The objective is to sustain the assessment of mortalities in this area. The aim is to conduct ongoing monitoring of this fence line for one year, aiming to identify peak mortalities. By expanding the deployment of cameras, the intention is to precisely capture the dynamics of interactions between deer and coyotes with the fence line. preserving

(SEE DIAGRAM PAGE 3)



Volunteer Job Description: Wildlife Monitoring and Conservation

Responsibilities:

- Attend training sessions for camera use, maintenance, and SD card retrieval.
- Participate in scheduled fence walks, including data collection at deer carcass sites.
- Collaborate with other volunteers, H4BC, and ONA to maintain consistency in fence walks and data collection.
- Ensure that project obligations are met within established guidelines.

Requirements:

- Active membership with Hunters for BC (required for insurance purposes).
- Self-motivated individuals with a passion for science and conservation (must hike in pairs).
- Possess suitable cold-weather clothing, hiking boots and suitable physical fitness.
- Proficient in using apps like ihunter or similar to photograph and record waypoints of deer carcasses, camera placements, and other relevant data.
- Maintain open communication within the volunteer group regarding attendance for scheduled field sessions.

Benefits:

- Gain valuable skills in wildlife monitoring and conservation efforts.
- Contribute to meaningful scientific research and habitat preservation.
- Field kit provided, including written procedures, camera codes, and combination locks.
- Burger & bevy nights guaranteed.

Join us in making a positive impact on mule deer populations and their habitats!

Email Robin Unrau (president@huntersforbc.ca)

Project Details: <https://huntersforbc.ca/highway-fence-pwalxkn-mule-deer-monitoring/>

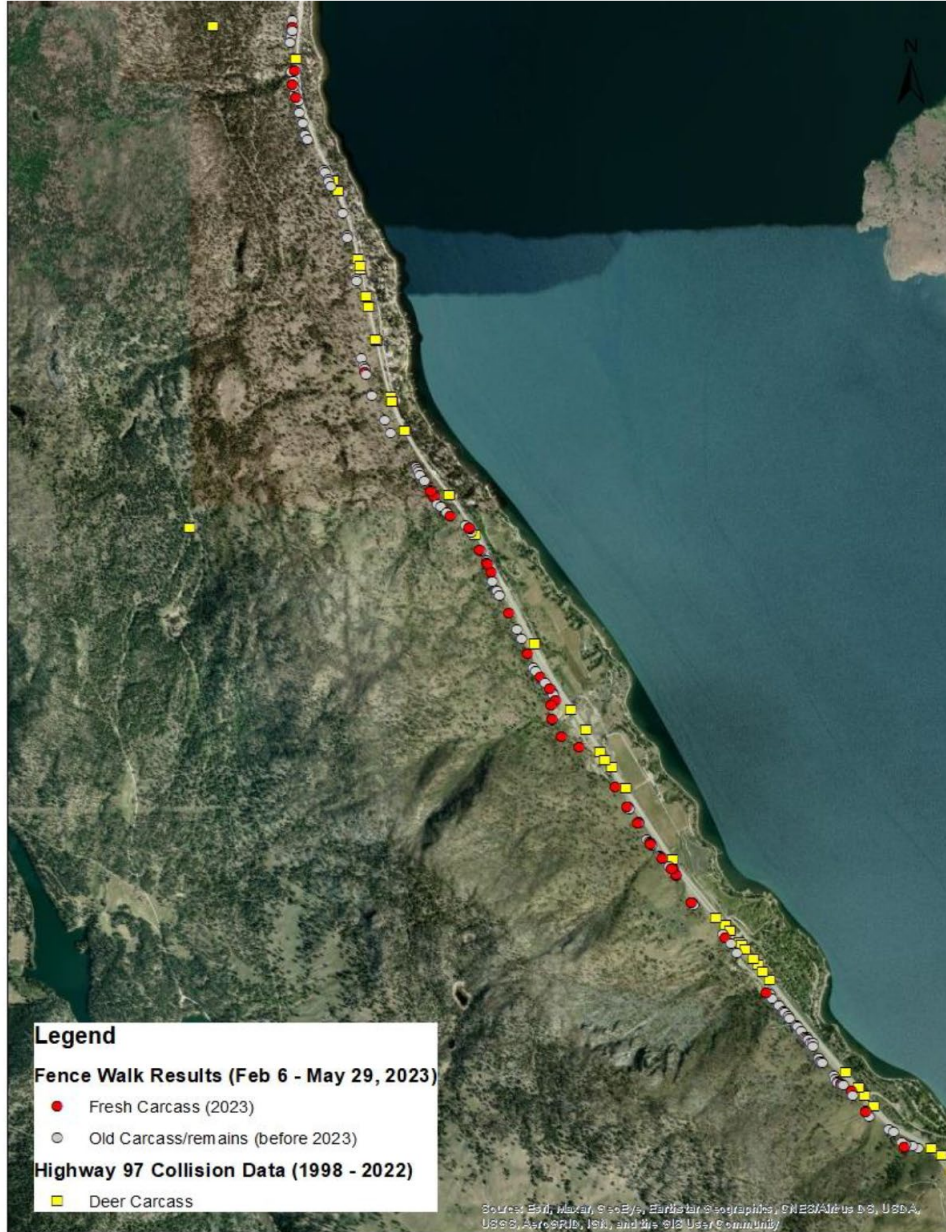


Figure 4 – Fence walk results showing locations of deer carcasses identified between Feb 6–May 29, 2023 and roadkill data from ICBC/MOTI, post 1997.

(2)

Reference 1 and 2: Highway 97- Mule Deer Fence Mortality Project. Prepared by: Kristen Mancuso, RPBio, PhD., Mackenzie Clarke, RPBio, MSc., Marc Steynen, MSc, RPF, Okanagan Nation Alliance - Natural Resources Department. August 2023.