

## How do you determine how many different Bucks you Have

In my other articles I indicated how we must use our trail cameras to determine approximately how many individual (different) Bucks we have. Anyone can set up a camera and count their number of different Bucks but like I have indicated previously the more acreage you have then the more representative your results will be. If you have 50 acres then it is impossible to estimate your resident Bucks if you even have any. Even though you may get pictures of a few different Bucks it's unlikely that many if any of them spend most of their time on your property. On the other hand if you can count the number of different Bucks each year it does give you something to compare to season to season. Just like I recommended in my management articles if you can get some neighbors together and come up with 1000 acres or more then you can come up with more representative counts, Doe to Buck ratio and a Fawn Recruitment rate.

Some of you may not use trail cameras today but they are definitely a valuable management and monitoring tool. They are actually quite easy to use so don't let the technology intimidate you. I am actually writing a separate article on using trail cameras titled "**How I use my Trail Cameras**". If you use trail cameras today then you will have a better understanding of what I am describing below. If you don't use trail cameras today then I will do my best to explain what I am doing in laymen terms. Please keep in mind that I am describing how to determine the number of individual Bucks only. If you are also doing your total deer count of how many Does you see, how many Fawns you see and how many Bucks you see I am not discussing that here. It is just fine if you are also doing a total deer count at the same time as you are analyzing your Bucks. I actually do this for four weeks where I'm counting our total Does, Fawns and Bucks and at the same time I'm pulling out the pictures of different Bucks. The additional two to four weeks that my cameras are out I'm just focusing on Buck pictures. Remember that you may only need a couple of weeks to get a good survey but you need to decide this based on your own situation. I would rather err on having the cameras out for too long instead of not long enough.

I will now go into more detail on how to determine how many individual Bucks you have. You should put your cameras out in September/October sometime for two to six weeks or more depending on how long you think it will take to get a picture of most all of your Bucks. Our Bucks start shedding their velvet in September which makes it a little easier to consistently identify them. It's a little more difficult if you have some pictures when they are in velvet and then have some pictures after they shed their velvet. I do understand that some of you aren't very computer literate and you may have no desire to use a computer but like I have said previously, you may have a spouse, a child, a friend or know someone who is comfortable using a computer and they could do this stuff for you. My son and my nephews love going through the pictures! The ultimate goal is to establish approximately how many different Bucks you have on your property. For our situation I have to put our cameras out at our feeders for two to three weeks and then out on the edge of a food plot with corn in front of them (legal in Georgia) for two to three weeks. Let me explain **our situation**. Because we have wild hogs on our property we had to fence in our feeders with hog wire fence. So our feeder consists of a feed trough, a roof over the trough to prevent rain from ruining the feed and a hog wire fence covering a good size perimeter around the trough. As a result of one or more of these things we have a few Bucks that do not go to our feeders so I will not get pictures of all of our Bucks at just the feeders. This is why I also put the cameras out along the edge of a field or food plot with corn in front of them. This usually gets us pictures of not only the Bucks that don't go to the feeders but also some of the Bucks that we've already seen at the feeders.

At this point we are ready to start going through all of the pictures. This process can be tedious but it's also fun when you start to see the Bucks that are on your property. There are many different ways to do this and you may already have your own process in place which allows you to segregate your pictures of different Bucks. For those people who are not currently doing this I will simply review the way that I do it so you have an idea of what you're trying to do. As I go through the pictures I am noting which pictures have a Buck in them so I can save them in a folder on my computer all in one place. I may call this folder *2015 Buck Pictures*. I do not save all of my pictures because I may have 30,000 pictures or more by the end of my survey. I just keep most of the Buck pictures and also some of the cool, funny or unique pictures of Does or some other animals. You will have many pictures of just Does, raccoons, possums, birds, etc. that you don't need to worry about saving unless you want to. Trust me when I say that after you have looked at pictures of the same Buck 10 or 20 times you will start to remember him. When I know that I have saved a few different pictures of the same Buck I then get more selective in that Buck's pictures that I am going to save. I don't need 50 pictures of the same Buck. I only need a few good pictures preferably from different angles. I need side views for ageing the Buck and front and side views for analyzing the antlers later. You may be analyzing one week's worth of pictures or four week's worth of pictures. You do what works best for you. If I am getting 3,000 pictures a week then I will probably swap out the camera cards that store the pictures after one week so I don't have 6,000 or more pictures to go through at one time. So I may go through camera cards six different weeks because of the six weeks that I left the cameras out and swapped the cards. So for me I have five cameras out for six weeks which means that I go through 30 camera cards. When I say swap out the camera cards what that means is that I actually have two camera cards for every camera so I am able to pull out the card that is in the camera and put in a blank card. For those of you who aren't familiar with the cards they are reusable. After I review all of the pictures on a card and save out the pictures that I want to keep I simply erase the card so I can use it again. This process seems like a nightmare the first time you do it but like anything else the more you do it the better you get at it. So when I feel that I have gotten pictures of most of our Bucks and I have saved them all in one place I can now start segregating the different Bucks. This is the most difficult step in the process but ultimately you want to determine how many different Buck's you have. There's a good chance that as you were saving the pictures of these Bucks you may have actually nicknamed some of them. I know that this sounds weird but we have names such as "Floppy", "Tall 10", "Wide 8", "Drop Tine 9", "Big 9pt", "Shooter 9", "Piebald" etc... The following requires a little bit of computer knowledge and I don't know how else to describe it but I'll do my best. At this point I set up a separate folder for each Buck and move all of that Buck's pictures into his own folder. If you only have a dozen or so different Bucks this isn't too difficult but if you have a whole bunch of Bucks (54+ for me) it can be a little difficult. We may have several 8 points so I need to distinguish each of them somehow. I may name one folder "Tall 8pt" and another folder "Wide 8" but sometimes you don't really have a nickname for them. I may come up with the name "8pt G1 6" which tells me that he is an 8 point with G1's that are 6" long. I may have another 8pt I call "8pt LG1 3 RG1 5" and what this tells me is that he is an 8pt whose left G1 is 3" long and his right G1 is 5" long. I may name a 9pt "9pt G1 4 L5R4" which tells me that he is a 9pt with 4" G1's and he has 5 points on his left side and 4 points on his right side. Yearlings can be difficult if you have a few spikes that look alike. I may call one "Y 6" or "Y L5 R2" which means yearling with 6" tines or yearling with Left Tine 5" and Right Tine 2". I'm just trying to make it easier for me to know where I need to put each individual Buck's pictures. I know that this sounds crazy but when you have a lot of different Bucks it's a bit difficult segregating them and this works best for me. What's nice is when I'm done I can count (estimate) how many different Bucks we have. Just do the best that you can! Ultimately I end up with a folder for each different Buck that we have. I may have saved 5 pictures for one Buck and 30 pictures for another Buck. I usually print out the best picture for each Buck. For the older Bucks I like to print a picture that shows a good side view for aging the Buck and a front and side view that

shows his antlers real well. There is certainly a margin for error here. I may inadvertently count one Buck twice because of a different camera angle and in the same token I may not count a Buck because of a difficult camera angle or I may have 2 spikes that both have 6" tines and they have no other marking that distinguishes them. This is ok because I have still come up with a good estimate! With the computer literacy of all of our kids today you could probably just give the camera cards to a kid, tell them what you are trying to do and they will figure it out. Even though this is time consuming it is a good feeling to know that you are able to come up with a good estimate of how many different Bucks you have. As a result of this you may be able to come up with a good estimate of your total deer population **if** you are under high fence or have a large amount of acreage.

In summary you need to determine if you think you can get a good estimate of how many different Bucks you have on your property. If you can then estimate how many of those Bucks are resident Bucks (Bucks that spend most of their time on your property) you can then estimate your deer population and harvest requirements. Regardless, you should still be able to do a total deer count though which will give you an estimate of your Doe to Buck Ratio and Recruitment Rate **if** you have large enough acreage. If you are interested in what I am doing please read my article "How we estimate our Deer Population and Harvest Requirements" to see the special analysis that I have to do!