

School-to-Nature

White-Tailed Deer



White-tailed deer are common in our area. Male deer are called bucks, females are called does, and babies are called fawns. Males grow antlers in summer, but shed them in winter after the autumn mating season. The antlers regrow each year.

White-tailed deer are 6 to 7 ½ feet tall and weigh 110 to 300 pounds. They live 4 to 5½ years on average, but can live to be 11 or 12.

White-tailed deer are reddish brown in the spring and summer, but turn grayish brown in autumn and winter. That gray winter coat has hollow hairs that keep them warm. The fawns' white spots camouflage them from predators for their first months. Does often leave fawns alone while they hunt for their food; and fawns will lay low and still during that time. They have no scent, so their camouflage works well.

Most does have 1 baby, but can have 2 or three, born in May or June. Fawns usually weigh 44 to 77 pounds by the first 3 months. They are able to graze with mom after 1 month and are weaned after 8 to 10 weeks.

“White-tailed” refers to the white underside of the tail which the deer displays and wags when it senses danger. They are able to jump 10 feet high and 30 feet wide in one bound. This helps when followed by predators, who have to run around objects, while deer jump over them. Deer can run up to 30 miles per hour. They are prey for bobcats, mountain lions, coyotes, wolves, and man.

White-tailed deer are herbivores which means they eat plants such as; leaves, twigs, fruit, nuts, grass, corn, alfalfa, lichens and other fungi. They feed mostly at dawn and dusk. Their footprints can be found on all of the Conservancy properties. (They have also eaten many young trees that the Conservancy has planted!)

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