

White-Tailed Deer

(Odocoileus virginianus)



DID YOU KNOW:

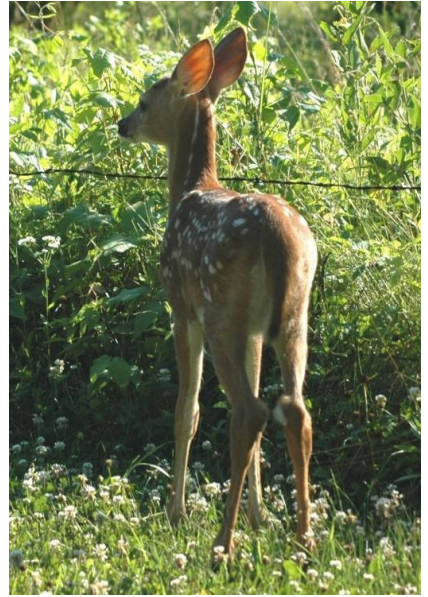
White-tailed deer are named for the white fur on the underside of the tail. The deer raises its tail straight up when it senses danger. As the deer runs to escape, it wags its tail from side to side to show this white flag to alert other deer of a potential threat. .

EATING HABITS:

Deer are all herbivores (plant eaters). Food includes leaves, twigs, grasses and farm crops. Fruits and mushrooms are favorite foods. Winter acorns, hickory nuts and corn left on the ground after harvest become essential food for winter survival.

THE YOUNG:

In late May or June, mom deer gives birth -- often to twins. The spotted, well-camouflaged babies remain hidden with mom on guard nearby. Mom licks the fawns to clean them. She nurses them for three to four weeks, and then the fawns begin following mom and nibbling green vegetation.



HABITAT (HOME):

Deer prefer forested areas bordered by open fields. As common as deer are today, it is hard to believe that deer were once gone from most of Missouri. Thanks to good conservation measures, deer are now abundant.

DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Deer first try to remain hidden. Their grayish fur blends in well in the forest shadows. If they are threatened, deer run fast to escape, zigzagging to throw off the predator. If forced to fight, deer kick out with powerful legs and sharp hooves that can kill an attacking coyote. A mother deer will fight fiercely to defend her helpless fawns.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Bucks shed their antlers each January. Squirrels, rabbits and other animals chew on these shed antlers for calcium and other minerals. That's why you rarely find antlers on the ground when you go hiking.
- Deer use a complex series of scents to identify each other. Scents are produced by glands on different parts of their bodies.
- Male deer are called bucks; females are called does; babies are called fawns; and young deer are called yearlings.
- There are more deer in Missouri now than there were when the settlers first arrived.

