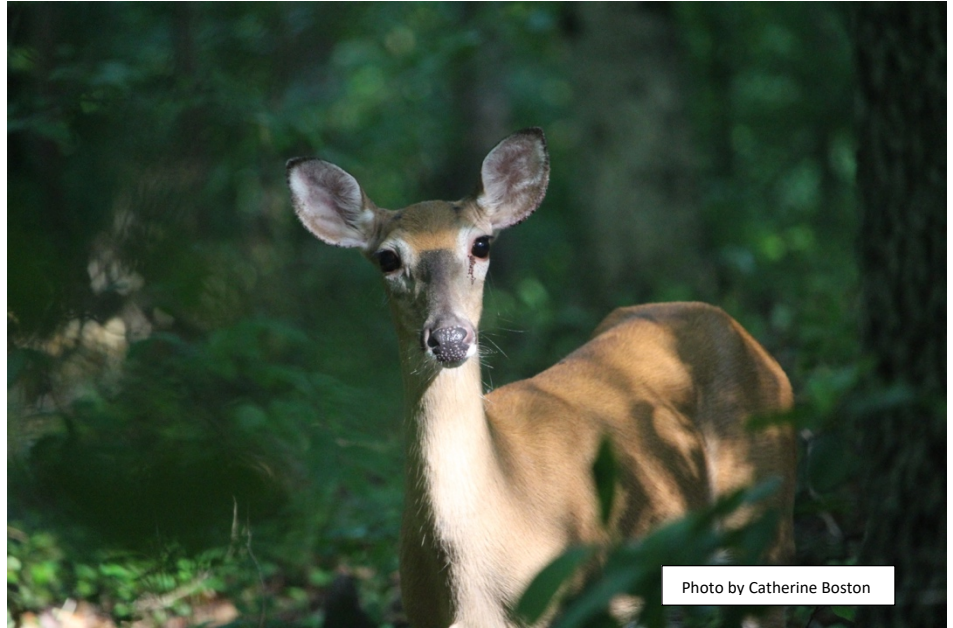


# White-Tailed Deer at Ivy Creek

Created for use by the Ivy Creek Foundation

White-tailed deer are one of the mammals you might encounter at Ivy Creek if you are in the natural area early or late in the day. They are graceful animals to watch. They can be found near the edge of the forests, or out in the fields, browsing for food early in the morning or toward dusk.



You may watch them from afar, but they will disappear into the woods if they sense you nearby. You must be still and very quiet so as not to frighten them. Deer watching is fun and allows you to learn about them and their behaviors. If you do not see any deer on your visit to Ivy Creek, you can usually find signs that deer have been in the area. Read on to learn some interesting facts about deer and the tell-tale signs that they are near.

## INTERESTING FACTS about Deer:

- A female deer over one year old is called a doe.  
A male deer over one year old is called a buck.  
A newborn to one-year old is a fawn.  
Adult deer are about 3 ½' at shoulder height, with males weighing up to 300 lbs. and females up to 125 lbs.

- Only male deer grow and shed antlers yearly. As bucks age, they grow more points on their antlers. Soft fur, called velvet, covers the antlers as they grow and then falls off. The antlers are bone growths that start in the spring and fall off in the winter. The antlers are important in the fall and winter. Bucks use them to fight other bucks during the mating season. Shed antlers are usually eaten by rodents.



- The white-tailed deer are so named because of the white fur on the underside of their short tails. When startled, they hold their tail up as they run away. They are camouflaged by the color of their fur. During the summer season, they are reddish brown. They turn grayish during the winter. This makes it hard to see them in the woods. Their coloring protects them from hunters and animal predators such as wolves, mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes.



- Though their legs look slender, they are actually very muscular. The deer can jump seven feet high from a standing position, 8 feet high on the run! That means they can easily jump over most fences. White-tailed deer can also run up to 40 miles per hour. They are very agile and can zig-zag while running to evade predators. They can also protect themselves by stomping enemies with their cloven (split) hoofs.
- They are alerted to predators by their excellent senses of hearing, sight and smell. They can swivel their large ears to listen in different directions at the same time. Their large eyes are positioned in their head to have a wide range of view to the front and side. They have sharp eyesight and can see any movement. They can smell other animals' scents and even scented products on humans such as soap, deodorant or fragrance.

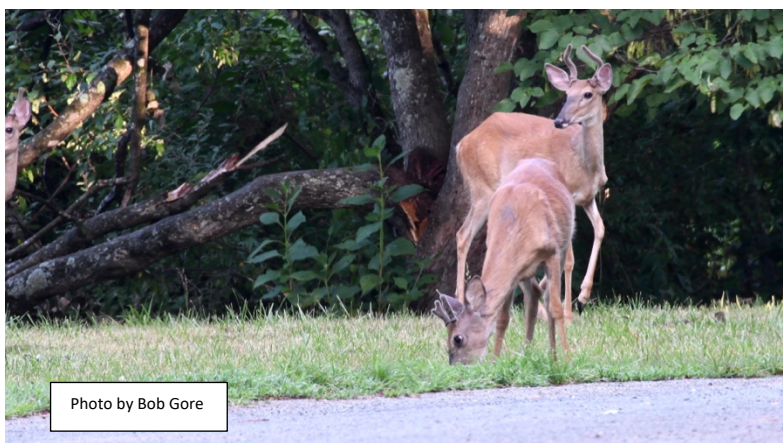




- From spring through fall, deer browse within a home range of one square mile to find food to eat. White-tailed deer are herbivores, eating mainly plant food. They like to eat grasses, leaves, buds, acorns, fruit. During the winter, they survive on twigs and tree bark.
- Deer frequent the same feeding areas and water sources. They will use the same routes to and from these areas.
- Deer are mammals. Baby deer, or fawns, are born in the spring and early summer. Twins are common. They have white spots on their fur coats until the end of summer. They can stand within minutes of being born, and they can walk within hours. They drink their mother's milk for two and a half to four months. The doe may leave her fawn alone for up to 12 hours while she forages for food. She leaves the fawn in a place where it is hidden (camouflaged), but usually stays within 100 yards. When strong enough, at about three months, the fawn follows the mother everywhere.



- Does and fawns live apart from bucks. Does along with their fawns may join a small herd of other does and fawns. In every herd, one doe becomes the leader. She will be the one on alert, watching, listening and smelling the air for danger while the rest of the herd eats or rests. Bucks live on their own or may join a small group of other bucks. While female fawns stay with their mother for two years, young bucks leave after one year. Average life span for deer is four and a half years.



SIGNS that deer have been in the area:

- *Flattened areas of tall grass* may be where they have bedded recently.
- *Tracks* left by their hooves in wet mud or soft moist dirt will give you a clue to their presence and routes. The tracks they leave are shaped like a heart in two pieces. The length of each hoof track is 2 ½" to 3 ½." There are stamps of deer tracks in the Barn at Ivy Creek. If open, you can use them to make tracks in sand to see what they look like.
- *Deer scat or poop* will be observed where they have been. It will be a pile of small round pellets about ¾" long. If fresh, the scat will be black. Older pellets will be brown. Do not touch it.
- Be aware of *tree trunk markings* as you hike. You might find deer fur stuck to a tree. Bark might have been stripped from the tree for food. Tree rubs might be seen where bucks have rubbed their antlers to either rub off the velvet covering on their antlers or to mark their territory during the mating season.

ACTIVITIES:

- Make a set of binoculars to take on your nature walk. Staple or glue two toilet paper rolls together. Punch two holes toward one end, on each outer side of the connected rolls, directly across from one another. For the strap, thread some yarn or string from one hole to the other, and knot. The binoculars can also be decorated with markers or crayons.



- On a nature walk, look for the signs mentioned above that deer leave behind.

RELATED BOOKS:

I am a little deer., by Francois Crozat

Deer at the Brook, by Jim Arnosky

All About Deer, by Jim Arnosky

Deer Watching, A How-to Guide, by Diane Bair and Pamela Wright