



## white-tailed deer

*Odocoileus virginianus*

Kingdom: Animalia  
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
 Class: Mammalia  
 Order: Artiodactyla  
 Family: Cervidae

## FEATURES

The white-tailed deer is a large mammal, weighing 100 to 300 pounds. Color varies seasonally. During the summer, the hair has a reddish tint, but during the fall and winter, it is gray-brown. The belly is white. The large tail has a white underside. Young white-tailed deer have white spots on their back. Males grow and shed antlers annually. There are no canine teeth on the upper jaw.

## BEHAVIORS

The white-tailed deer lives in wooded areas but may be seen feeding far from such locations. This mammal is an herbivore, feeding on fruits, grasses, grains, vines, mushrooms, nuts and the leaves and twigs of trees and shrubs. It chews its cud, that is, bringing up material that it had chewed once and swallowed to be chewed and swallowed again. When this animal is startled, it runs and flips up its tail to show the white side. The male's antlers are shed and replaced each year. There is a "velvet" covering over the antlers which provides nourishment and protection while they are growing. After the antlers are done growing in the fall, the deer will rub this "velvet" off on small trees. The white-tailed deer is active mostly at night and during

the sunrise and sunset hours. The female and her offspring may stay together for several months. The male white-tailed deer is called a "buck," and the female is a "doe." A male will mate with several females. Mating occurs October through January. The gestation period is about seven months, and the doe usually produces two offspring. Young deer, fawns, are able to run just a few hours after birth. Males drop their antlers during February and March.

## HABITATS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> swamps              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan                        | <input type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marshes                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> peatlands                 |   |

## ILLINOIS STATUS

- |  |                                     |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic     |                                     |

## ILLINOIS RANGE

statewide

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.  
*Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.