

# The Way of White-tailed Deer (Deer Behavior/ Scouting)

**Theme: To teach the participants all about the ways white-tailed Deer survive in their environment(s). Everyone will also learn different techniques to pattern deer, and their behavior.**

## Background

Learn the basics of how White-tailed Deer are patterned, and how their temperaments make them, them. Deer are fascinating animals, and there are very few people who understand the full complexity of how white-tailed deer live. White-tailed deer, the smallest members of the North American deer family, are found from southern Canada to South America. In the heat of summer, they typically inhabit fields and meadows using clumps of broad-leaved and coniferous forests for shade. During the winter they generally keep to forests, preferring coniferous stands that provide shelter from the harsh elements. White-tailed deer are herbivores, leisurely grazing on most available plant foods. Their stomachs allow them to digest a varied diet, including leaves, twigs, fruits and nuts, grass, corn, alfalfa, and even lichens and other fungi. Occasionally venturing out in the daylight hours, white-tailed deer are primarily nocturnal or crepuscular, browsing mainly at dawn and dusk. In the wild, white-tails, particularly the young, are preyed upon by bobcats, mountain lions, and coyotes. They use speed and agility to outrun

predators, sprinting up to 30 miles per hour and leaping as high as 10 feet and as far as 30 feet in a single bound.

## Program Activities

### Introduction (3 minutes)

1. Introduce ourselves and the park

#### -Age

All ages

#### Time

1-2 hours

#### Outline

Set up

-Introduction (3 minutes)

-Power point (20 minutes)

-Deer sign hike along with different techniques to pattern deer. (1 hour)

- Wrap up (5 Minutes)



2. Ask visitors how much they know about white-tailed deer and their behavior.

## PowerPoint, with footage of white-tailed deer in their own environment. (20 minutes)

Objective: To teach the participants about the different behavior that white-tailed deer use to live, attract females, and eat.

### 1. Deer Scrapes

- a. We will go over what deer scrapes look like, and why they create them.
- b. Deer Scrapes are made usually along tree lines by Male white-tailed deer from August- December. Male White- tailed deer will use their antlers to rub against an over-hanging branch to break the tip, and scrape the leaves off of it. They usually only tend to create scrapes on tree branches that are alive. Once they have made a branch bare of leaves, they will create a dirt spot right under the tree branch that varies in different sizes. Once they have scraped a certain tree, and created a dirt spot, they will go onto their hind-legs and stick that branch into their eye where they have a certain scent gland. They also have scent glands on their hind legs, so on the dirt spot they will urinate on their scent glands onto the dirt spot. They do this several times along a line of trees so that females know they are in that area, and the males will continuously check their scrapes to keep them active, and fresh with scent.

### 2. Deer Rubs

- a. Deer rubs are basically scrapings off of smaller trees. In the PowerPoint I will have different examples of what these look like
- b. These are always made by males due to the fact that they have antlers, and the reason they create rubs is because, they need a way to rub the velvet off of their antlers in the early fall. They also do this for different reasons for example to show other male deer that they are in the area. You can also say it is a dominance trait they use to show up other males.



## Hike (1 hour)

Objective: To show the participants the different signs that deer create, and what other forms of behavior that they do that is unique to their species.

1. This hike will be extended to other trails rather than just the vista loop so we can find more sign off the beat and path.
2. We will look at deer tracks, and explain how the different tracks mean different things, such as age, gender, and if they were running or just walking minding their own business.
3. We will also talk about how deer react when they sense danger, and the different signs, and noises they make.
  - a. Most people think that when deer feel in danger they will just run away, but deer have many different characteristics, and tell-tale signs that let you know that they feel uncomfortable with what you are.
  - b. When deer don't fully understand what you are, they will either stomp, snort wheeze, or even pretend that they are feeding and jerk their head up right to see if you move. They are tricky animals that have a lot of subtle behaviors that are fascinating.
4. On our hike we will also discuss bedding areas, and feeding areas. White tailed deer are considered edge species that go back and forth from 2 or 3 different spots.
5. I will bring different attractants, and calls used to attract deer in certain ways. We will talk about the different situations deer make different noises. I will bring a grunt call, rattling antlers (used to mimic two males sparring with their antlers), and I will bring attractants such as female urine, scrape spray.
6. On our hike we will also discuss the different food sources that deer favor. I will emphasize that acorns are the number one food source for deer, and they provide the most nutrients. Deer will also eat corn, beans, and many other different plant species.
7. I will also talk about a white tailed deer sense of smell, and how to avoid them detecting you with their amazing nose. I will show wind direction techniques, and it will effect let's say a hunting trip.

## Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Objective: To review what the visitors have learned about how white-tailed behave in nature, and what makes them such a unique creature.



## Backup/Additional Activities

- Show the participants the different tools to call in deer, or attract them by using scent tools. Grunt calls, bleat calls, rattling antlers. Female urine, male urine, doe in heat estrus.
- Scent control- Explain all of the different methods to control your scent to avoid being detected by deer.
- Show the participants the different parts to a deer. Such as the antlers, skull, pelt, and the anatomy of a deer.
- Videos of different deer noises, and calls they make, and the situations they make these noises.
- <https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2010/Deer-in-Rock-Creek-Park>

## REFERENCES

Patrick Rubendall

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/w/white-tailed-deer/>

