

White-tailed Deer

Michigan White-tailed Deer

[Graphic: White-tailed Deer]

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo]

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Species: *Odocoileus virginianus*

Family: *Cervidae*

Life Span: Highly variable; most live only one to three years in the wild, but can live up to 15 years.

Home Range: Home range size varies throughout the state and is dependent on available food and cover as well as the number of other deer in the area.

Habitat: Generally able to thrive in: forests, grasslands, farmlands, backyards and city green spaces.

Average number of fawns: Twin fawns are most common for adults (more than 2 years old); yearling females typically have a single fawn.

Vocalizations: They will grunt, bleat and snort.

Appearance: Reddish-brown (summer) or grayish (winter) fur with a white patch on their throat. A fawn has white spots on its coat until about 4 months of age. Male deer grow antlers every spring. Antler size is dependent on diet and age of the buck. White-tailed deer get their name from the white tail that they raise when startled.

Size: 100 – 300 pounds; Total body length is 5 to 7 feet.

[Graphic: 6 foot person standing next to a male deer and female deer] Average size comparison.

Living with Deer

White-tailed deer are found in every county in Michigan and can easily adapt to their surroundings. Deer can be found in just about every habitat type, including urban and suburban areas.

Deer are active year-round and will move to different areas based on food availability. You may see an individual deer or a group of deer moving through an area. Deer breeding occurs in the fall, and during this time, the deer are often less wary of traffic or other human activities.

Does have their fawns the following spring in May or June. During the first weeks of a fawn's life, the mother will hide her young while she goes to find food. A fawn has very little scent and its spots create excellent camouflage, allowing it to remain well-hidden from predators. Does will often hide their fawns

near residential areas or in backyards where predator activity is less likely due to the proximity to humans. If you find a fawn, leave it alone. The mother will be back to feed the fawn when she feels it is safe. She may leave her fawn unattended for eight to 12 hours at a time.

In urban and suburban areas, white-tailed deer will take advantage of gardens and landscaping for food. If you remove potential food sources and protect gardens with fencing, deer may move to other areas for food. NEVER intentionally feed or try to tame a white-tailed deer.

Hunting is one option communities may use to help manage deer populations in their area. If hunting isn't currently an option in your area, try some non-lethal deterrent methods to discourage deer. Examples of deterrents include fencing to keep deer out of a specific area, using noise and visual scare tactics, applying taste deterrents to ornamental plants, removing feed and making bird feeders inaccessible to deer. Try using multiple deterrents to keep the deer from becoming accustomed to one tactic.

White-tailed deer are enjoyable to observe and hunt, but can become unwanted guests in residential settings. Here are some tips for staying smart about deer:

- S – Safe to enjoy from a distance.
- M – Make loud noises to scare them away.
- A – Apply barriers or fencing around gardens to keep deer out.
- R – Repellents may deter deer from browsing ornamental plants.
- T – Take down bird feeders or make them inaccessible to deer.

Preventing Conflicts with Deer at Home

[Graphic: human hand holding feed] Do not intentionally feed deer.

[Graphic: bird feeder] Remove or modify bird feeders to prevent deer from accessing the food.

[Graphic: tree with a fence] Construct fences or put wiring around gardens or individual plants to protect from damage.

[Graphic: a person with their arms up] Use scare tactics to frighten deer away.

[Graphic: a spray bottle] Try repellents or modify landscaping. Use plants that are less likely to be eaten by deer.

[Graphic: a fawn] Leave fawns in the wild; it is not unusual to find a fawn by itself.

Know the Laws

Opportunities to hunt for white-tailed deer are abundant in Michigan, and hunting can be an effective tool for managing deer populations. Hunters can pursue deer with archery equipment or firearms, depending on the open season and the hunter's location in the state. Season dates, bag limits and other deer hunting information can be found in the current Hunting Digest available at Michigan.gov/Deer.

Community leaders in areas experiencing problems with deer are encouraged to contact their local DNR wildlife biologist to discuss options for reducing damage. Biologists can help communities develop a management plan and outline tactics that could be implemented. For example, some municipalities may open parks or other green spaces to archery hunters during the deer season(s) to help reduce the local deer population and lessen conflicts.

Feeding and baiting of deer is not allowed in the Lower Peninsula and in select portions of the Upper Peninsula. For detailed feeding and baiting regulations, please see the current Hunting Digest.

A fawn's best chance for survival is in the wild. If you find a fawn alone, do not touch it. The mother deer will return for her fawn when she feels it is safe. Only licensed wildlife rehabilitators may possess abandoned or injured wildlife. Unless you are licensed, it is illegal to possess a live wild animal in Michigan. A list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators is available at Michigan.gov/Wildlife or by calling your local DNR office.

Learn more about white-tailed deer at: Michigan.gov/Deer

DNR Offices

Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or visit us online at Michigan.gov/DNR.

Baraga
427 US-41 North
Baraga, MI 49908
906-353-6651

Bay City
3580 State Park Drive
Bay City, MI 48706
989-684-9141

Cadillac
8015 Mackinaw Trail
Cadillac, MI 49601
231-775-9727

Crystal Falls
1420 W. US-2
Crystal Falls, MI 49920
906-875-6622

Detroit Metro
1801 Atwater St.
Detroit, MI 48207
313-396-6890

Escanaba

6833 US-2 41 & M-35
Gladstone, MI 49837
906-293-5131

Gaylord
1732 W. M-32
Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-3541

Lansing
4166 Legacy Parkway
Lansing, MI 48911
517-284-4720

Marquette
1990 US-41 South
Marquette, MI 49855
906-228-6561

Naubinway
PO Box 287
W11569 US 2E.
Naubinway, MI 49762
906-477-6048

Newberry
5100 M-123
Newberry, MI 49868
906-293-5131

Norway
520 W. US-Hwy 2
Norway, MI 49870
906-563-9247

Plainwell
621 N. 10th St.
Plainwell, MI 49080
269-685-6851

Roscommon
I-75 & M-18 South,
8717 N. Roscommon Rd.
Roscommon, MI 48653
989-275-5151

Sault Ste. Marie
PO Box 798

2001 Ashmun
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
906-635-6161

Traverse City
2122 South M-37
Traverse City, MI 49685
231-922-5280

Michigan DNR Wildlife Division – 517-284-9453