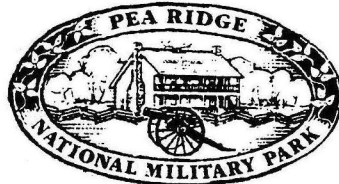


Pea Ridge

National Military Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

WHITE-TAILED DEER Pea Ridge National Military Park



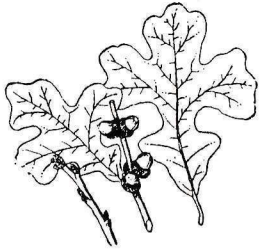
Background



White-tailed deer are common across the Eastern and Southeastern United States. However, you may wonder as you tour the park, why you see more animals here than in other places. For the safety of park visitors, and under the direction of congress, hunting is not allowed in the park. In the absence of hunting, deer have become more abundant here than in other areas. Over time, deer have become accustomed to the presence of both vehicles and people, making the park a great place to view deer in their natural

habitat. While the park was established to preserve the integrity of this battlefield area, park managers also face the challenge of preserving, and when necessary managing the parks natural features. The park is currently studying it's deer herd in order to better understand these animals, and to guide the development of management strategies, should the population grow beyond a healthy level. Below are some facts about the biology and behavior of white-tailed deer.

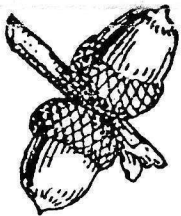
Reproductive Biology



Deer mate in the fall. This time of year is often referred to as rutting season. Deer behavior changes significantly prior to and during the rut. Males and females will leave social groups formed that year and begin establishing territory. Males can sometimes be seen clashing antlers as they battle for the right to breed with females in the area. Often, these disputes are resolved peacefully.

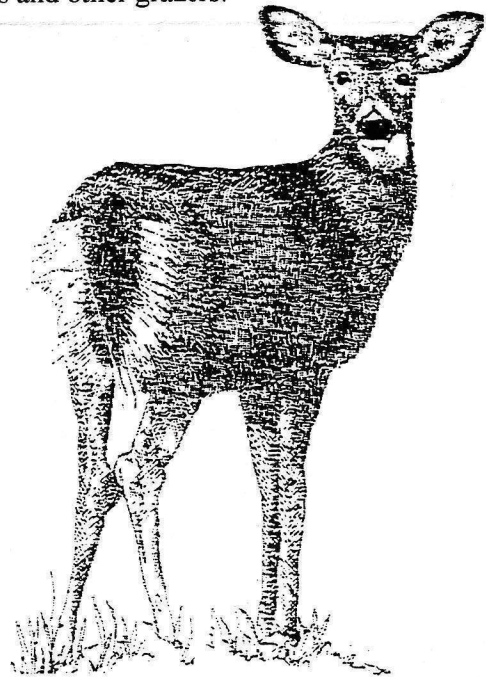
Deer give birth to fawns in the spring. If food is abundant and deer are healthy, a single deer will often have twins. However, mortality due to predation and injury is often high in the first few months of a fawn's life. Fawns will generally stay with the mother for one year, before seeking out their own breeding area.

Feeding Behavior



Deer belong to the *Cervidae*, or deer family, along with other hoofed animals like elk, moose and antelope. Deer browse on plant stems and buds in the spring, through the fall and rely mainly on acorns to sustain themselves through the winter. The abundance an acorn crop may determine the reproductive success and survival of deer in a given year. Because of the size of their stomach and the

slow rate at which they digest food, deer can not sustain themselves on grass and leafy vegetation like buffalo, cows and other grazers.



Abundance and Habitat

Deer have become much more abundant in United States in the last 30 years. Management of these animals for sport hunting combined with the removal of animals that prey on deer, like wolves and mountain lions, has allowed their populations to reach increasingly high levels. Human behavior also favors increased

deer abundance. Deer are "edge creatures." While they prefer patches of forest for hiding and escaping, cleared areas provide them with new plant growth for eating, better visibility and easy walking. Edges, where forest meets field, provide deer with conditions they need to survive.

Over- Abundance?



As our population grows and we continue to develop previously forested land, we create conditions that favor increasing numbers of deer. While hunters and wildlife enthusiasts may like the sound of this, more deer won't necessarily mean more deer in forests and rural areas. These animals are moving into towns

and cities. Deer-vehicle collisions are increasing in many eastern states, and damage to gardens, crops and property are increasing as well. Sadly, these wild creatures have become nuisance animals in some areas of the country.

Commonly Asked Questions:

How many deer live on the park?

Nobody knows exactly how many animals live on the park. We estimate that there are around 250-450 resident deer, or 45-80 per square mile.

If you think you have too many deer in the park, why don't you do something to reduce their numbers?

Counts of the park's deer herd suggest that we have more deer here than in other areas of the state. However, we don't really know how many deer are too many without studying their impacts on the park, and the health of the herd.

Do you allow hunting on the park? Why Not?

Hunting would put park visitors and staff in danger, and is therefore prohibited. In addition, Pea Ridge was established by an act of congress. When congress established the park, they made no provisions for hunting. It would take another congressional act to allow hunting on the park.

Have deer at Pea Ridge become deformed or inbred, due to their high density in the park?

No, this is very unlikely. There are enough deer in the park and deer movement on and off the park to prevent significant levels of inbreeding.

When is the best time to observe deer?

Deer have two activity peaks in the morning and evening. You are more likely to see deer around sunrise and just before sunset, as they move around and feed.

Be Careful!!! Wild animals are dangerous! Although deer may appear tame and may allow you to approach them, they are still wild. Do not attempt to feed or pet the deer.