



White-tailed Deer Ecology

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**TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE**

Basics of Deer Ecology

- Texas- ~4,000,000 deer
- Cover most of the state
- WTD are very adaptable species



Deer Are Highly Reproductive

- ~95% of does are bred each year
- On average does have 1.59 fetuses
- Twins typical after first breeding season
- Potential for rapid population growth



What Is Native Deer Habitat?

- Soils
- Plant communities
- Plant diversity
- Water
- Arrangement of resources
- Space to live
- Deer prefer ~50-60% brush cover



JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE BRUSH ON YOUR PROPERTY..... DOESN'T MEAN IT'S ALL GOOD

What Do Deer Eat?

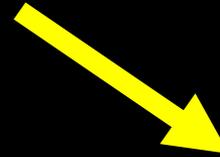
Deer prefer **forbs**, but forbs are seasonal and rainfall dependent so **browse / brush** is the most stable part of the habitat that supplies forage AND cover

Table 2. Estimated relative percent of forage classes (grasses, forbs, browse) consumed by selected livestock and big game animals on herb-dominated and on browse-dominated ranges, Edwards Plateau Region, Texas.¹

Animal Species	Herb-dominated Range			Browse-dominated Range		
	Grass	Forbs	Browse	Grass	Forbs	Browse
Beef cattle	90	5	5	80	5	15
Mouflon (x) sheep	60	30	10	50	30	20
Domestic sheep	60	25	15	50	20	30
Axis deer	60	25	15	30	20	50
Nilgal antelope	70	20	10	50	10	30
Aoudad sheep	50	30	20	30	20	50
Blackbuck antelope	50	30	20	50	10	40
Elk/Red deer	60	15	25	25	15	60
Angora goat	60	15	25	25	15	60
Sika deer	50	20	30	30	20	50
Fallow deer	30	20	50	25	15	60
Spanish goat	20	50	30	15	25	60
White-tailed deer	10	60	30	10	30	60

¹Averages based on Ables 1977, Taylor 1981, Butts et al. 1982.

Native Habitats = Nutrition



Supplemental Feeding is not a replacement for native habitat!



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Deer Densities

- **Native Habitat** in good condition
 - 1 deer/10-12 acres
 - Every deer in the population is receiving adequate nutrition without causing degradation in the quantity and quality of native range plants
 - habitat acreage is much less than total acreage of subdivision

Habitat Degradation

A photograph of a forest with many trees and a ground covered in fallen leaves, illustrating habitat degradation. The trees are mostly thin and have sparse foliage, suggesting a degraded or recovering forest. The ground is covered in a thick layer of brown and orange leaves, indicating autumn. The overall scene is somewhat desolate and lacks the diversity of a healthy forest.

- loss of plant diversity
- loss of animal diversity
- loss of overall ECOSYSTEM health

Browse Lines









Indications of Too Many Deer



- Declining body weights
- Sick or dead deer
- Habitat signs
- Biological signs
- Driving is dangerous

Traditional Population Management



Habitat supports all species - not just white-tailed deer





Hunters & Anglers are primary contributors for financial support and contribution to Wildlife and Habitat Conservation