

Fawning Time is here for the White-tailed Deer

With springtime come many wonderful things sponsored by Mother Nature. The flowers and trees are in bloom all around us. Wildlife, both small and large, is being born in the woods and fields. One of the most beautiful creatures born in the spring is the White –tailed deer fawn.

The White-tailed fawn is as amazing as it is beautiful. After a gestation period of 200 to 210 days, the average fawn weights between 5 and 8 pounds at birth. Depending on when the doe is bred in the fall, she will give birth in late May or early June. While their length is about 18 inches, they appear to be all legs. In fact, its dimensions are way out of proportion to that of an adult. Even though they are wobbly on their long legs, they can walk on them within half an hour and for several hundred yards within the first hour of life. My kids didn't walk for 10 months!! It is vital that the fawns be able to walk so soon after birth since the doe will move them constantly to different bedding sites to avoid predators. The fawns also grow quite rapidly gaining 10 percent of their birth weight per day for the first week before slowing down to around 5 percent per week. This is due to the 11 to 12 percent butterfat in the doe's milk. A fawn usually nurses about 4 to 6 times in twenty four hours. At first, fawns need about 2 to 4 ounces of milk every four hours. After one week, they are taking about thirty ounces a day. At three weeks, they are both nursing and eating green vegetation. Now you might think that the fawn's beautifully spotted coat is designed just for good looks. Actually, it is an excellent camouflage when fawns are in the woods lying among the leaves and branches. The white spots provide the same effect as sunlight filtering through the trees and casting shadows. For the first 7 days or so, this is the fawn's primary defense against predators along with its ability to lie completely still. If you come across a fawn while hiking through the woods, please leave it alone. You might think it has been orphaned by its mother, but that is not true. A doe will keep her fawns bedded 25 to 250 yards apart while she feeds. You may not see her, but she is not far away. Admire their beauty, but do not attempt to handle them as they may imprint on you (adopt you as their mother), although the experts are still undecided about this.

Spring is here and soon too, will be the fawns. Seeing my first fawn of the year is something I look forward to every spring. I hope you enjoy and admire these beautiful creatures as much as I do.