

Guwakaan

Sitka Black-tailed Deer

RL Grade 3.6

What are Sitka deer?

Sitka deer are also called Sitka black-tailed deer. Their name comes from Sitka, Alaska. They are related to Mule deer. Sitka deer have black tails and large ears. In the summer they are reddish-brown. In the winter they darken to a gray-brown. Sitka deer are good swimmers. Sometimes you can see them swimming between islands. Their average life span is about 10 years.

Where do Sitka deer live?

Sitka deer live in Sitka and other places in Southeast Alaska. They also live in Canada. Usually Sitka deer live in the rainforest along the coast. Some Sitka deer live on islands. In the winter months Sitka deer live below 1,500 feet. In the summer they live higher up the mountains.

How big are Sitka deer?

Sitka deer are smaller than other types of deer.

Fawns are baby deer. Fawns are born in early June. Fawns weigh around 6–8 pounds.

Bucks are male deer. Bucks can weigh up to 120–200 pounds.

Does are female deer. Females can weigh 80–100 pounds.

What do Sitka deer eat?

Sitka deer eat green plants. Sitka deer like to eat bunch berry, foam flower, trailing raspberry, fern leaf, hemlock/cedar, and salmon berry bush. In winter they might also eat bark and lichen.

Sitka deer digest their food by grinding it between their upper and lower molars.

Sitka deer have a four-chambered stomach. They must re-chew their food to digest it completely. Their stomach contains bacteria to help break down the food. Sitka deer cannot digest many types of food. They can die of starvation with their bellies full of food.

In the summer and early fall Sitka deer prepare for winter. This is when the deer eat a lot and get fat. The extra fat will help the deer survive when there is little food.

What eats Sitka deer?

Many animals eat Sitka deer. Humans, wolves, brown bears and black bears all eat Sitka deer. The time to hunt Sitka deer is in the fall after they've had the chance to pack on the pounds. This is when the deer meat is in its prime.

Respect for Nature

For thousands of years the Tlingit people have hunted Sitka deer. The deer meat provided protein. The deer skin became clothing and drums. Hooves were used to make rattles. The horns were used for tools. Nothing was wasted. Sitka deer were very important to the Tlingit people.

It is believed that plants and animals have spirits. If you don't treat them with respect the spirit will tell the others to stay away. Then that person will always have bad luck when hunting.