



## Nature Note: Fawn Facts

*Photography courtesy of Joe Kosack/P C Photo*

The arrival of summer is heralded by the birth of the fawns of white-tailed deer. In West Virginia the peak fawning time occurs during the first two weeks of June. It is this time of year that many people find apparently abandoned fawns lying in thick vegetation. If you come upon a fawn in the forest or fields, do not disturb it. Chances are that its mother is nearby waiting for you to leave before returning to care for its offspring.

A fawn's spotted coat affords it protection. While the mother is away finding food for herself, the fawn lies motionless in the vegetation. The spots on the fawn's auburn fur coat simulate the sunlight filtering through the trees to the ground. This protective coloration usually prevents detection by predators.

Taking fawns from their natural surroundings can have serious consequences. Humans make poor substitute parents for wild animals and we cannot teach them the skills necessary to survive in the wild. In addition, fawns raised by people lose their fear of humans and come to depend upon them for food. A dependent deer cannot be truly wild and free.

If you do find a fawn lying on the forest floor, consider that its apparent vulnerability is actually a strategy for survival. Leave it alone and give yourself the opportunity to appreciate its wild beauty another day.

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