

DEER TALES

Why are all those cars pulling alongside the road? If you spend any time at Forest Lake, you would know that often the people in these cars are deer watching. For many of us, there is nothing more thrilling than seeing an animal in its natural habitat. One summer a four-point buck drew a crowd near the spillway. Several people, myself included, were lucky enough to be able to pet him. Feverish and with large cuts on his front legs, he was trying to keep cool.

Over the years I've learned a lot about our white-tailed friends. Although deer are inherently curious, they mostly keep to themselves. I've only heard them bleat loudly a few times and that's because they were scared or felt threatened. Mostly, they just snort and paw the ground a few times when they want attention. One problem for Forest Lake residents is a deer's ferocious appetite for cultivated plants. I've learned from Mary Ann Terhorst that a few shavings of Irish Spring soap sprinkled around flower beds will keep them away.

I remember the first time I saw a doe. It was feeding at the end of our driveway. I was surprised at how small it seemed. Somehow I expected all deer to look like the huge buck one sees in television commercials. Once I almost stepped on a deer while trying to outrun a rainstorm. She reared up in front of me, I yelped, and we both ran away in opposite directions.

Ruth Rice like to talk about the time she witnessed the birth of a fawn right outside her back door wall. The fawns are so beautiful to look at and the funny thing is, we found out they actually do act like children. One summer Tom had been working a lot on the outside of our cottage. After a while, the deer became used to him and started hanging around. It was then he noticed deer, just like humans, have different personalities. For instance, one of the more experienced does knew how to handle her offspring. When she pawed the ground and snorted, her fawns immediately came running. The fawns of a younger doe, however, always seemed to misbehave. When this doe would paw the ground and snort, her fawns would just look at her and then run away. Once in a rainstorm, the fawns even stood next to our cottage trying to stay dry while their mom frantically pawed the ground nearby to no avail.

Over the years we have seen many unusual or injured deer - one we dubbed "limpy" because it only had three legs yet seemed to get around pretty good. Lately, we've noticed one with a misshapen mouth. Sadly, we've also seen deer that were killed strictly for their horns. Once someone even hit a fawn with their car right in front of our cottage. It's mother stood nervously by as we lifted it to the side of the road out of the glaring hot sun. We thought for sure it would die, but just as we were about to call the DNR, it struggled onto its feet and limped away. We were thrilled to see it many more times that summer doing quite nicely.

Deer watching and just exchanging stories about deer seems to be a favorite pastime with many people at Forest Lake. When you think about it, what could be more fun!

Submitted by:

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