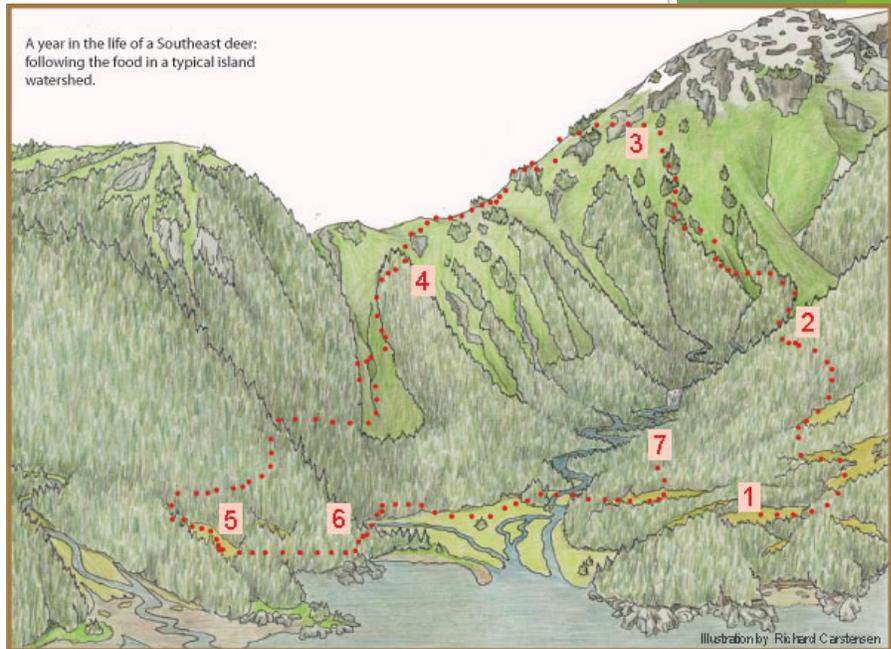


# Deer Habitat Use

Migratory Deer- Schoen *et al.* (1985) found that roughly three-fourths of the deer in their study on Admiralty Island made distinct migrations between low elevation winter range and high elevation summer range. Mid-elevation habitat is used during mild winters (average snow deer winter range). Migratory deer tend to shift between higher elevation habitats in summer and lower elevations habitats during winter.

Resident Deer- resident deer may use low-elevation habitats year-round (B.C. Ministry of Forests 1996a, 1998). Resident deer that concentrate use within remnant patches of low-elevation forested habitat may be more prone to increased predation pressure or may resort to using lower quality habitats (McNay and Vollner 1995, B.C. Ministry of Forests 1996c).



- 1. Fawning** -In late May and early June, black-tailed does drop their fawns. During late spring, deer are scattered from sea level to 1,500 ft. in search of new plant growth. Deer use old-growth forest and increase their use of open-canopy stands, fens, tidal meadows, and young clearcuts at this time.
- 2. Upward Migration** -Throughout June, migratory deer continue to disperse off their winter ranges following the receding snow line on to upper forest slopes. Resident deer generally remain at lower elevations but use more forest openings for feeding.
- 3. Subalpine Summer Ranges**-Migratory deer generally reach their ranges by the end of June or early July depending on weather and residual snowpack. On subalpine meadows between 1,800 and 3,000 ft., deer find abundant and nutritious herbaceous forage interspersed among stunted stands of Sitka spruce and mountain hemlock.
- 4. Fall Migration**-Following the first high-country frosts in mid to late September, forage plants die and migratory deer move into the upper elevation forests. Throughout the next month, many deer move down to lower elevations as snow accumulates in the high country.
- 5. The Rut**-The breeding season, or rut, begins in late October and continues through November. Deer are widely dispersed from sea level to 1,500 ft. Old-growth forests are important foraging habitats, but deer also make use of forest openings, and muskeg fringes during the rut.
- 6. Winter Range**-Deer distribution is most limited during winter. From December through March, deer in Southeast are generally confined to old-growth forest winter ranges below 1,000 ft. Southern exposures generally accumulate less snow and provide greater access to evergreen forbs such as bunchberry dogwood and trailing raspberry. Deer move up and down forested slopes following changes in the snow pack throughout the winter. During deep snows, medium and large-tree old growth hemlock spruce forests provide the best winter habitat.
- 7. Spring Snow Melt**-Spring is a transition period as deer begin to expand their movements beyond the confines of their winter range in search of new plant growth. Wet, open-canopy forests with newly emergent skunk cabbage shoots are important foraging sites for deer in spring. Deer can also be seen foraging along upper beaches and young clearcuts during spring.