

Birth Site Selection by White-Tailed Deer in Northern Idaho (Poster)

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Female white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) must select habitats that will offer them the nutrition and protection necessary to successfully birth and raise their offspring. In northern Idaho, these deer are presented with a particularly harsh set of conditions including rugged terrain, varying forage availability, and a full complement of large predators. To manage in these conditions, individuals from a single population may migrate to higher elevations in the summer or may remain year-round on a single range. Migration has many inherent risks, but also offers the opportunity for increased forage quality and improved cover for hiding from predators. Conversely, not migrating may present deer with supplemented nutrition from agricultural lands, while also creating a “predator shelter” by which deer may avoid predation by staying nearer to human development. This study examines the characteristics of selected birth sites in the study area over four years (2019 to 2022; n = 180), comparing these selected microhabitats of both migratory and non-migratory does to all available habitat within the study area. Using a spatial approach, we assess selection by white-tailed does at multiple scales: seasonal home range within the larger study site, and birth site within the seasonal home range. This study aims to address gaps in the understanding of white-tailed deer ecology in northern Idaho, where research and monitoring is challenged by the terrain.