



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### LONG-LOST DEER FOUND ON WEST COAST BY SERVICE NATURALIST

Big-game experts had believed the Pacific white-tailed deer to be an extinct species for many years, but last year, Victor B. Scheffer, a naturalist of the Fish and Wildlife Service, discovered a band of about 600 of these long-lost animals in southern Washington and northern Oregon.

Now the Service is trying to save the species before it really does become extinct, according to a recent report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

How the country's best naturalists missed this subspecies of white-tailed deer remains a puzzle. Lewis and Clark and explorers who followed described these deer in the same locality in which the whitetails were found but for some reason naturalists completely overlooked this herd during the past 25 years.

Local farmers and fishermen have long known about these herds and call the animals "tideland, or cottontail, deer," but they did not know that scientists considered the deer extinct. Scheffer heard descriptions of the deer from various sportsmen and farmers he met and decided to investigate.

Heretofore, no complete specimens of the Pacific whitetails had ever been preserved in museums, but recently specimens were collected from local residents who had hunted these animals, and are now installed in the Fish and Wildlife Service mammal collection.

The Pacific whitetail differs from the dozen or more subspecies of whitetails in the United States in that it is dark-colored, has slender antlers that are more incurved than the antlers of other whitetails, and is medium in size.

About 400 to 500 of these deer are in southern Washington and between 100 and 200 in northern Oregon. The animals range in low, bushy islands and tidelands. Since a large part of their range has been cleared for livestock, grass is now an important item in the diet of these deer. Although the whitetails frequent the vicinity of pastures and buildings, they are not tame. The scent of a man coming down wind is enough to cause the animals to retreat to a distance of 100 yards or to seek shelter in the woods.

Farmers consider the animals somewhat of a nuisance because they occasionally invade truck gardens, especially during severe winters.

Service experts attribute the fact that the deer have survived despite usurpation of their range to three things: Lack of competition for range from black-tailed deer; the absence of predatory animals; and freedom from excessive hunting. To preserve the species, they believe, it will be necessary to move a breeding stock to nonagricultural areas. Whitetails are easily trapped, and the Service naturalists have hopes that the animals may be moved.

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