

14 April 2020  
Pastoral Nature Notes  
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## ***Wondrously Mysterious Whitetails***

Few creatures are more iconic to the northwoods than the white-tailed deer. For many years in the not so recent past, the whitetail was seldom to be found except in the deepest tamarack woods and marshes. In more recent years these graceful animals have made a comeback of biblical proportions. Whitetails have adapted to life along side of our contemporary living practices. As a result, we see them regularly in the woods, farm fields, and even in our backyards under our bird feeders. If you watch them, whitetails are always extremely vigilant about their surroundings. Often while munching on a mouthful of alfalfa they will raise their heads extend their ears and carefully observe their surroundings. They remain vigilant. Deer also have the most interesting way of showing up; most of the time you do not see them come out of the woods, they simply appear. They have an incredibly graceful quiet way of making themselves present. It is seemingly mysterious. Deer also have the most graceful movements even at high speeds. Many of us have seen them glide effortlessly through wood, thicket, and over fences. Finally, deer are a staple in North American art. We have seen that iconic look of a deer with front legs spread wide as they drink from a cool, babbling brook. The whitetail deer is a creature that inspires wonder and awe in many of us. For this reason, the deer throughout the scriptures is celebrated and is a great natural sign of the Resurrection. Psalm 42 begins with as the deer longs for running streams so my soul longs for you my God! Easter is the season of Baptism. We all know what it's like to be physically thirsty, like the deer we are called to humbly bend at the cross of the Lord to receive the grace that flows from his side to refresh us not as a babbling brook but through the grace of our Baptism. Baptism is the beginning of eternal life with in us. We will go through difficult times in this life the refreshing stream of God's grace is meant to refresh us and strengthen us. The early Christians who experienced the risen Jesus never quite knew where he would show up! He appeared often quietly, mysteriously, coming seemingly out of nowhere; much like how deer emerge from the woods. This is the importance of vigilance. We never know when the Risen Lord may come to us, to

walk with us, to talk with us, or most simply, and most importantly, to be with us. Often, he is there but just as we can miss deer coming into our presence due to some other bright light or flashy object, so too we can be distracted and can miss the Lord coming to be with us.

Habakkuk 3 speaks of the difficulty of trusting the Lord in difficult times, yet the image used at the end of the chapter is the deer. The Lord will make us swift as the deer climbing the heights. This is not just the height of the present difficulty but ultimately the heights of heaven. Like the deer, we too can be gracefully bounding towards heaven where we will one day be glorified like our Lord Jesus Christ! Happy Easter!