

Moose: derived from Algonquin “Moosewa”: Eater of Twigs



KEY FEATURES

- **Height:** 5-7 feet at the shoulder
- **Length:** 8-10 feet
- **Weight:** Males: 850-1200 LBS. Females: 600-800 LBS
- Both sexes are dark rich brown in color with long gray legs, short neck, humped shoulders, large round bulging nose and a bell hanging from the neck (dewlap).
- Calves have a reddish brown coat with a dark stripe down their backs.
- Bulls have massive flat antlers resembling an opened hand. Cows do not have antlers.
- Lifespan: 15-24 years

VIEWING TIPS

- Moose are active during the day with activity peaks at dusk and dawn.
- Moose are extremely curious and may approach humans. Don't be fooled. Moose are formidable animals and need their space in the wild.
- Stand at a safe distance away at least 300' (about 1 football field length) and behind some large object. The object will serve as camouflage and a barrier if a moose feels provoked and charges. It will take a moose about 15 seconds to travel one football field length.
- Keep pets away. Moose can get aggressive around other animals.
- Avoid animals that are behaving belligerently or abnormally.
- If threatened by a moose, stay calm; do not run away; talk, make your presence known and slowly back off in direction you came.
- If charged by a moose, run fast for cover.
- If knocked down, get up and run for cover.

BREEDING

- Breeding season is called the rut and occurs in late September and early October.
- During the rut, bulls spar with other bulls using their antlers and can be extremely aggressive and dangerous.
- Impregnated cows give birth in 8 months.
- Calves are born in late May through June, weighing 22-35 LBS.
- Cows often have twins in years of good food supply.
- Calves walk a few hours after birth and follow their mother on her routine when they are 2 weeks old.
- Moose calves often become prey for mountain lions, coyotes and black bears. Adult moose have few natural predators.
- Calves stay with their mothers about one year until their mothers give birth in the following May- June.

WHERE DO THEY LIVE:

Widely but thinly distributed over the 3 river drainages of the Valley and primarily found in riparian habitats with willows and aspen, their main food sources.

BEHAVIOR

- Can swim up to 10 hours
- Run as fast as 35 mph
- Dive to the depths of 20 feet and remained submerged for up to 1 minute
- Unpredictable and aggressive particularly during the rut or with calves
- Signs of aggression: bulging eyes making eye contact with you; laid back ears; lowered head; swaying back and forth; licking its snout
- If the hairs on the back of a moose's neck and shoulders stand up, a charge is imminent.
- Moose are very athletic animals with flexible joints and sharp, pointed hooves and are capable of kicking with both their front and back feet in all directions.

FUN FACTS



- The term moose is derived from the Algonquin Indian word “moosewa” meaning “eater of twigs”.
- Moose were reintroduced into Colorado in 1978. The State-wide moose population is more than 2000. Locally, there are approximately 8-14 adults living in the three river drainages (Crystal, FryingPan, and Roaring Fork). Approximately 1-3 calves are born each summer.
- Moose are solitary animals and move independently. Two or more individuals sometimes can be found feeding along the same stream. The mother and the calf form a strong social bond.
- A bull moose in his prime will have antlers weighing 50 pounds and spreading 5-6 feet across. Antlers are a sign of male fitness and health.
- Antlers are shed every winter after the breeding season in December. Shedding antlers helps a bull moose to conserve energy and promotes winter survival.
- Antlers take 3 to 5 months to grow beginning in the late winter with the formation of “velvet”, the blood-rich skin that nourishes antler growth. Velvet is rubbed off in the fall (August-September) in preparation for breeding season when bulls compete for mates.
- So focused are bulls during the mating season that they stop eating for a couple of weeks, and may lose 100 or more pounds.
- In summer, moose eat aquatic vegetation, grasses, sedges and forbs. In the summer an adult moose patiently feeds eight hours a day and consumes approximately 30-40 pounds of food. That would be like eating 7 pounds of salad every day. Moose increase their body weight by as much as twenty-five percent. Imagine gaining twenty-five percent of your body weight by eating only vegetable salads – no salad dressing, just the salad.
- In the winter, moose eat leaves and twigs of willows, woody browse species of gooseberry, buffalo berry and aspen. An adult moose consumes approximately 10-15 pounds per day in the winter.
- Moose can survive frigid winter temperatures because of superior insulation...thick hides and warm coats. A fine undercoat of grey wool and coarse, scaly guard hairs helps the moose retain heat. In the summer hollow guard hairs increase buoyancy.

Have a question? Send your email to askanaturalist@forestconservancy.com