




Cow moose in Colorado near North Park. (Photo courtesy of Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Moose in Colorado



Tips
from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

When I think about moose, the first image that pops into my head is that of Bullwinkle, a cartoon of my youth. Even though Bullwinkle did not look much like a moose, he still kept me entertained for hours. Bullwinkle was also a nickname that we secretly assigned to my grade school principal, but that's another story.

Up until about 30 years ago, the only moose you saw in Colorado, other than in the Denver Zoo, was probably a member of the Wyoming herd who got lost and found himself in the northern part of the state by accident.

In 1978, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) transplanted 12 moose to the North Park region of the state, near Walden. In 1979, another 12 were released in the same area, near Illinois River drainage. These transplants all came from Wyoming.

These initial transplants began to reproduce and move into the Laramie River Valley. In 1987, another dozen Wyoming moose were placed there to help the herd grow.

During the 1990s, the North Park moose were doing so well that some were moved to the Rio Grande drainage. Later 100 moose were



A bull moose moving through the timber, enjoying North Park as his home. (Photo courtesy of Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

released near Creede.

The Grand Mesa relocation effort began in 2005 and ended two years later with a total of 91 moose transplanted from Utah. Today, there are over 400 moose that call the Grand Mesa home.

The moose has done so well in Colorado that the population now exceeds 3,000 and is one of the biggest success stories for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The state legislature named Walden the "Moose Viewing Capital of Colorado" in 1995.

Colorado moose are the Shiras species (*Alces alces shiras*). While not as big as the Yukon moose, the Shiras can reach 1,200 pounds in

weight and exceed 6 feet high at the shoulder, making them Colorado's largest mammal. The male, or bull moose will grow flattened, palmated antlers with points around the edges. These antlers may reach 5 feet in width and can weigh as much as 40 pounds. The bulls shed these antlers in early winter and re-grow each year.

With their size comes a healthy appetite. Moose are browsers and can casually eat 70 pounds of vegetation during a normal summer day. During the winter months, a moose still consumes around 30 pounds of vegetation daily. Their diet can include shrubs, woody plants and aquatic vegetation.

The name "moose" is an Indian word that means "eater of twigs." The most common place to find a moose is the heavy willow or brush riparian area in river drainages. Because the moose have such long legs, they can move about in thick brush or deep snow quite well.

The rut, or breeding season, begins in mid September and runs through October. The bulls become territorial and attract cows through calling with a low grunting sound. The bulls will fight head-to-head until the winner drives off the non-dominant bull, even injuring or killing him in the process. During the rut,

bulls and cows become very aggressive so caution must be exercised when around them during that time.

The natural enemy of a moose in the wild is the wolf. Because of this, moose associate dogs with wolves, so people should keep their dogs on a leash when in moose country. A 1,200 pound moose will stomp a dog into something not fit for a sandbox in short order, so keep Rover under control.

The Colorado moose is doing so well that Colorado Parks and Wildlife has hunting seasons open for them for archery, muzzleloader and rifle. The licenses are only available through the draw so must be applied for during the spring license application time. There is a lifetime bag limit of one antlered moose per person.

I would point out that the successful introduction of moose to Colorado was completely funded by sportsman's dollars through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses. The efforts of CPW in introducing and managing the moose herd serves as a role model for other states that manage wildlife.

If you get a chance to view a moose in the wild, you are one of the lucky ones. Let's hope the moose continues to enjoy success in Colorado.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and an avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.



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After the loss of...

Abby, our lab/heeler, back in the winter, we just had one dog - a 115 lb. white German Shepherd. One dog is foreign to us, and Rio had no one to play with. Enter a 12 week old, 30 lb. white German Shepherd puppy, Jacob. We are now back in the world of Band Aids because of little sharp claws, racing a puppy outside for pee breaks, and my husband taking a shower one morning and realizing the commotion at his feet was Jacob standing in the shower with him. All is back to normal ... complete chaos!



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