



He looks docile, but don't be fooled. He will stomp you into something unrecognizable except for dental records. (Courtesy photo/ USFWS)

Animal attacks are something I have always kept track of. A strange hobby, I guess, but dangerous game has always pegged my adrenaline meter, no matter what continent they are on. Sometimes, an animal attack is from an unexpected creature, and that always puts a little excitement in the mix.

You will always have people killed by Cape buffalo, especially when following up on an injured one. Considering the buff already hates you, it is not a surprise that he actively tries to rearrange your profile.

And of course, there are the animals who are sickly, possibly rabid or distempered, that will come after people.

Then there are those people who visit Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks, where the rangers have clearly warned people of the dangers of the wildlife and done everything short of putting landmines along the road to keep people out of harm's way.

These are the same people whose genetic traits the grizzly bears have tried to eliminate through most active natural selection.

Just ask the widower husband who was supposed to take pictures of his wife as she ran up to



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

a grizzly bear cub. She thought it would make a cute picture for their annual Christmas card, her holding the cub. Bad idea.

Momma grizzly took exception to the entire plan and tore her up into something unrecognizable. Husband got a "Kodak Moment" to be sure, but I doubt it went on their holiday greeting card.

This brings us to attacks from somewhere we are not really expecting, as in the case of the moose. These animals may seem slow, dumb, and unaware of their surroundings as we watch them stand in waist-deep water and graze on the aquatic plants therein.

But friend, make no mistake, a moose will attack you in a heartbeat and can stomp you into something completely unrecognizable except for your dental records.

Colorado moose are the Shiras specie, (Alces alces shiras). While not as big as the Yukon moose, the Shiras can reach 1200 pounds in weight and exceed six 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 five feet in width and can weigh as much as 40 pounds.

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.

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 more than 400 moose that call the Grand Mesa home.

The moose have 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.

Sometimes the season will make moose more unsociable, such as breeding season, which brings about an especially aggressive

time for moose, and they will not hesitate to charge you. The bulls are constantly fighting for dominance, and the cows are just naturally cranky while this is all going on.

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. If you happen by at this time, you may be seen as a threat and be on the receiving side of a charge.

Cows and calves are always a problem, and you never want to get anywhere near them. A woman in Glenwood Springs last August discovered that cows are very aggressive when they have a calf. She was out in the yard with her dog and the cow came after her, severely injuring her in the attack.

In May of 2021, a Steamboat Springs man was knocked over on his back and stomped by a cow moose with two calves. The man stated his dog was outside, unleashed and barking at the moose, just prior to the attack. As the man went after the dog, the moose charged him.

You may notice that a catalyst in any moose encounter seems to be dogs. 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, and during the rut and when the calves are with their mothers, it is probably best to leave the dog at home, inside.

Then there are the attacks that just seem to be "wrong place at wrong time" like the one in 2006. A man from Grand Lake was walking to church, when a bull moose attacked him, apparently unprovoked. The man succumbed to the injuries 10 days later in the hospital.

There are about 10 moose attacks annually in North America. Compare that to an average of two bear attacks each year. Moose attacks generally are not fatal, usually resulting in about one death a year.

However, getting charged by a half-ton of angry bull moose does not rank high on the list of something you want of be on the receiving end of. You could become the star of one of those, "this

happened to my late friend" stories.

Remember that, unlike other wildlife, moose are not the least bit afraid of people, and do not run for cover when people are around. This may lure people into a false sense of security, as they sneak in closer for the picture.

Often times, the moose, without warning, will charge you to let you know he does not want his picture taken. Keep your distance and don't provoke.

If I was to ever be killed in an animal attack while in the field, I would prefer it something spectacular, like a stampeding elephant, or a pride of lions. With my luck, I would get bitten by a rabid chipmunk, get sick and linger for months before kicking the bucket.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world 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 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

Draft decision released for GMUG management plan

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests released the draft record of decision for the revised land management plan and final environmental impact statement.

This will begin a 60-day objection filing period.

A public meeting — at which forest staff will provide information and overviews — is slated for Montrose from 5 — 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 6, at the Montrose County Events Center, 1036 N. Seventh St. The meeting is not for purposes of objections or resolution, but to

share information and provide orientation about the plan and its next steps.

The revised plan details the desired conditions, standards, guidelines and objectives that will provide the foundation for future management activities across the forests for at least the next 15 years.

Consistent with the agency's Wildfire Crisis Strategy, the plan addresses drought, tree mortality and wildfire risk while amplifying forest restoration and resiliency through local and state partnerships. It's estimated the plan will support 3,900 jobs and provide \$125 million in labor

income, add 46,000 acres of recommended wilderness and increase fuel treatment objectives by 60%

For draft record of decision, revised plan, environmental impact statement and other documents associated with this release, including interactive maps, webinar recordings and instructions for how to object or file as an interested person, as well as all past publications and other helpful resources, please visit the planning website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/gmug/forestplan.

The objection process provides an opportunity for those

who have participated in a prior formal public comment period for this plan revision effort to have their unresolved concerns reviewed before the Forest Supervisor issues a final decision. Individuals must have submitted substantive formal comments related to the plan revision during previous comment periods in order to object.

Objection or resolution-centered meetings will be announced upon the determination of objection standing and information.

The objection process also includes an interested persons format for those interested in how objections are resolved.

Interested persons includes any party not named in the objection and individuals who submitted substantive formal comments demonstrating their participation in the planning process. For more information, please see legal notice and the draft Record of Decision.

In addition to the Montrose meeting, the GMUG will host two virtual webinars on:

- Tuesday, Sept. 5, from 10 — 11:30 a.m.; https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87453959663, Meeting ID: 874 5395 9663
- Tuesday, Sept. 5, 5 — 6:30 p.m.; https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88515516068, Meeting ID: 885 1551 6068.