



(Photo: BC Parks)

2.9 MOOSE: Alaskan Moose, Northwestern Moose and Shiras Moose

(*Alces alces*: ssp: *andersoni*, *gigas*, *shirasi*)

Appearance and Size

All three moose subspecies found in British Columbia are similar in appearance. The biggest moose live in northern B.C. while the smallest ones live in the southeast. Adult bulls stand nearly 2 m tall at the shoulder and have the most massive antlers of any member of the deer family. They are larger and have longer legs, a shoulder hump, and a dark brown to blackish coat. They have no rump patch, but they have a bell of skin and hair under the throat and a large, overhanging upper lip. Adult cows weigh on average about 340 kg to 420 kg;



(Photo: Jeff Foott, US National Park Service)

adult bulls weigh 450 kg to 500 kg. The maximum recorded weight is 595 kg. Moose have long legs to help them travel through fallen timber, muskeg, and deep snow. Their winter coat of long guard hairs and undercoat of fine wool allows them to survive in cold climate.



(Photo: Sgt. Joshua Strang, Eielson Air Force Base)

Life History

Moose are essentially solitary animals. Their only lasting social bond is the bond between mother and calf, which lasts for only a year. During that time the cows protect the calves from predators and lead them to the best habitats. In expansive northern shrublands, Moose commonly form groups of up to eight to ten during the rutting period. This habit is less common in forested habitats. Moose mate from September to November, but more than



(Photo: US National Park Service)

80 percent of calves are conceived during two weeks in late September and early October. Moose have a gestation of about eight months. In late May and June, the birthing period approaches and pregnant females seek seclusion and chase away their young of the previous year. Under normal conditions, single births are generally most common. The proportion of adult cows that produce twins is closely associated with their nutritional condition.



(Photo: BC Parks)

Abundance and Distribution

Moose are one of the most widely distributed ungulates in British Columbia. Found across almost the entire interior of the province, they are most abundant in the central and sub-boreal interior, the northern boreal mountains, and the boreal plains of northeastern British Columbia. (Map 2.9) Moose are also common

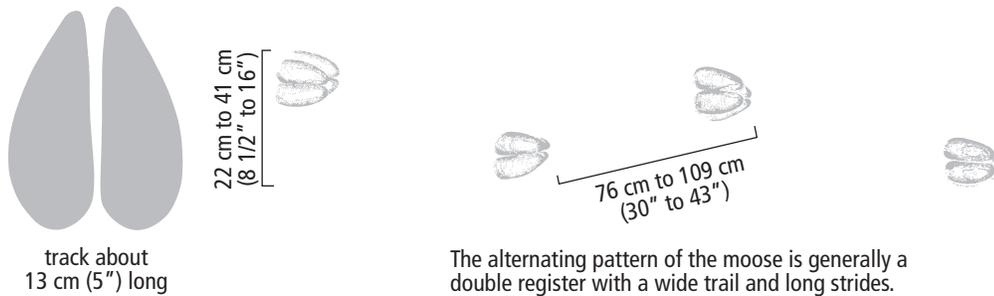
in mountainous valleys, except for a few dry southern valleys like the Thompson and Okanagan. Moose are not found on Vancouver Island and are usually absent from the coastal regions, but they penetrate as far as the tidewater at the heads of several inlets from Bute Inlet northward. British Columbia is estimated to have about 175,000 Moose.

Over 70 percent live in northern British Columbia and the rest in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Thompson-Okanagan, and Kootenay regions. Population densities vary greatly from place to place, mostly in response to snow depth and the supply of winter browse. Moose move about within familiar summer and winter home ranges. In a given season, their home range seldom exceeds 5 km² to 10 km².



(Photo: Cantor, US National Park Service)

Text and map adapted from: British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 2000c.



Adapted from: McDougall (1997); and Sheldon and Hartson (1999).



(Photo: Colin Leake)

Characteristic Features



(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)



(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)

Map 2.9

