

## FACTSHEET

## MOOSE

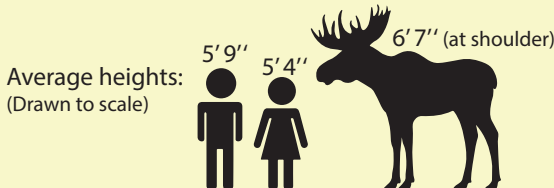


## SPECIES PROFILE

## ALCES ALCES

- ▶ In North America, there are four subspecies of moose: *Alces alces gigas* (in Alaska, western Yukon, and northern British Columbia), *A. a. andersoni* (located south of *A. a. gigas* to the Canada-US border, and east to central Ontario), *A. a. americana* (extending east from the range of *A. a. andersoni*), and *A. a. shirasi* (located roughly from Washington southeast to Colorado).
- ▶ Moose are semiaquatic and have a unique nose equipped with muscle and fatty tissue that allows them to seal their nostrils while diving for food. They also have large hooves to facilitate walking on marshy ground.
- ▶ Many moose are migratory and can travel up to 124 miles on land. They can also swim up to 12 miles at a time!
- ▶ Moose are poorly adapted to heat stress, making moose located further south particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Moose are the largest of all antlered game species!



Moose (*Alces alces*) are a member of the Cervidae family, which, in temperate North America, also contains mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and caribou. Moose, however, are the only living member of the genus *Alces*, which makes them unique from an evolutionary perspective. Unlike caribou, mule deer and white-tailed deer, which found a refuge from the last ice age in North America, moose likely colonized North America via the Bering land bridge, following the deglaciation of the continent approximately 11,000 - 14,000 years ago.

Moose were very important to many Indigenous groups in North America who used the entire animal following a harvest for food and tools. These practices would put many hunters following the "Nose to Tail" eating principle to shame. For example, the Gwich'in ate nearly every part of moose including ears, lungs, nose, and eyes. Other parts of the animal were used as tools: the stomach was used as a storage vessel, and the hide to build canoes. Many groups also exhibited conservation practices to maintain the moose population, including self-imposed harvest quotas and setting aside land as wildlife refuges.

European colonists in North America initially saw very few moose and moose may have been in low abundance in many areas during the colonial period until the 1800s. The reason for this low abundance is debated in the literature but reasons include an insufficient time to colonize the continent, poor climate conditions, disease, predation, and colonist influence. Nonetheless, after the moose population rebounded in the 1800s, hunting pressure from colonists increased and moose numbers rapidly declined in the late 1800's. Luckily, this was followed by restrictions on moose harvesting during the American Conservation Movement to restore population numbers.

Following improved regulations to harvest laws, moose exhibited unprecedented population growth and spread. Currently, the moose population in North America is estimated to be 1 million, which has not changed since moose abundance rose to this level in the early 1990s. Moose populations naturally fluctuate through time and are currently estimated to be increasing in 9 jurisdictions and decreasing in 11. Moose are classified as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List, meaning there is no forecasted extinction risk.

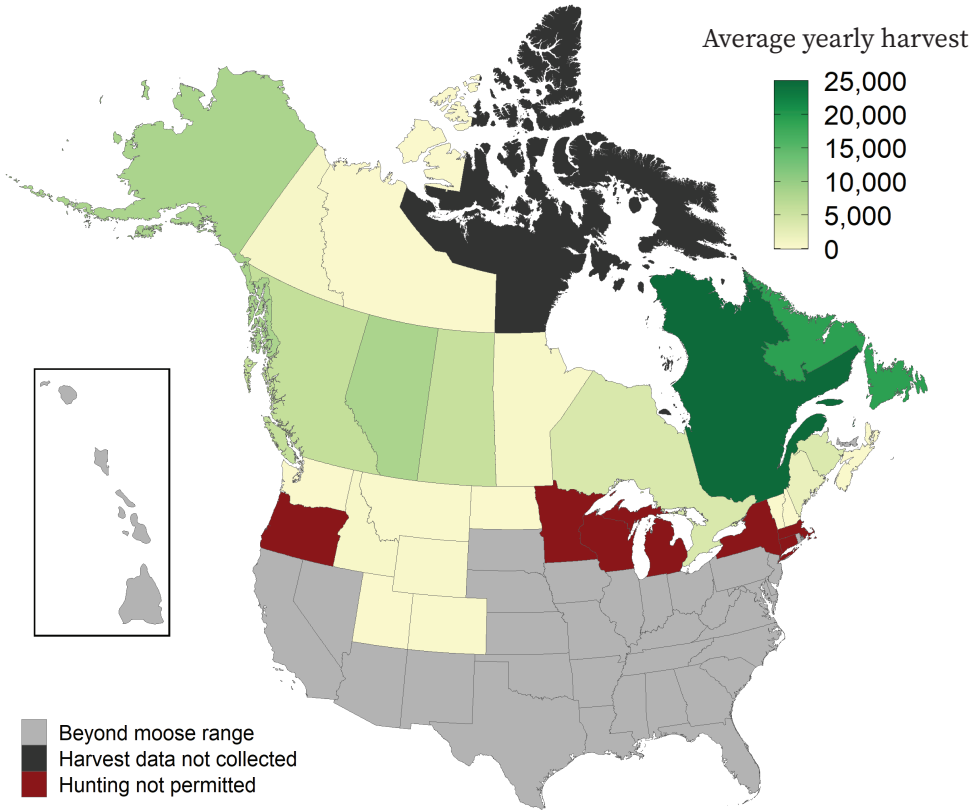
AVERAGE YEARLY WEIGHT  
OF MOOSE HARVEST IN  
THE US AND CANADA

(2014/15-2015/16)

	Live Mass (lbs)	Edible Mass (lbs)	Number of Meals (6 oz servings)
CANADA	69,887,017	25,508,949	68,024,000
US	13,234,730	4,830,756	12,882,042

Please cite as: Conservation Visions. 2022. Moose factsheet. St. John's (NL): Conservation Visions, Wild Harvest Initiative®

## DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF MOOSE HARVESTS IN NORTH AMERICA



More than 171,000 moose were harvested in the US and Canada during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 hunting seasons (an average of nearly 86,000 per year).

### Moose Subspecies in North America: Nature or Nurture?

While four moose subspecies are widely recognized in North America, the scientific community has not yet come to a consensus. There is strong evidence that moose subspecies differ in terms of physical traits, such as fur coloration, body size and antler size: *A. a. gigas* is the largest and *A. a. shirasi* is the smallest subspecies, in terms of body and antler size. However, scientific studies often do not show any genetic differences between moose subspecies. Body and antler size are influenced by genetics, but they also influenced by the environment. For example, when food is scarce, moose exhibit smaller body and antler size. Therefore, some scientists suggest that the differences among "subspecies", such as the larger body and antler size observed in *A. a. gigas*, may be due to differences in environment, instead of genetics.



### FOOD VALUE

One male moose provides enough meat to feed a family of three a 6 oz portion of meat for dinner, every day, for one year!



	Live Mass (lbs)	Edible Mass (lbs)	Meals (6 oz servings)
Male	1140.9	416.4	1110.5
Female	898.4	327.9	874.4
Juvenile	207.2	75.6	201.7

### ABOUT THE WILD HARVEST INITIATIVE®

The Wild Harvest Initiative® is the first effort to synthesize and evaluate the combined economic, conservation and social benefits of recreational wild animal harvests in the United States and Canada. The program's combined primary emphases on food security and wildlife conservation is tailored to change conversations and provide new ways of communicating the relevance and benefits of recreational hunting and angling.

### Moose Vehicle Collisions



Due to the large size of moose, moose-vehicle collisions are 13 times more likely to result in human death than deer-vehicle collisions. Moose-vehicle collisions result in roughly 16 deaths per year, in Canada. That is over 5 times more than the ~3 deaths caused each year, in all of North America, by black bears, grizzly bears and polar bears combined! Hunters play a key role in managing moose populations and preventing human casualties.