

## FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS

### Moose

(*Alces alces*)

ORDER: Artiodactyla

FAMILY: Cervidae

Moose are large and heavy, with massive heads and long noses. They have short tails, a hump on the shoulders, and large ears they can rotate. Adult males have a long, floppy dewlap – its purpose unknown – that hangs below the throat, and they grow enormous antlers each summer and shed them each winter. Moose can move through deep snow with their long legs, insulated from the cold by a thick coat of hollow hairs. They have good senses of smell and hearing, but are not noted for their eyesight. They eat up to 20 kg of plants each day, and may migrate seasonally looking for freshly growing plants. The total North American population is about 800,000–1.2 million animals. Hunters take about 90,000 Moose annually. Their only other predators are bears and wolves



Image includes representation of bark shredded from tree by antler rubs and of muddy wallow

Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)

#### Sexual Dimorphism:

Males are heavier than females.

#### Length:

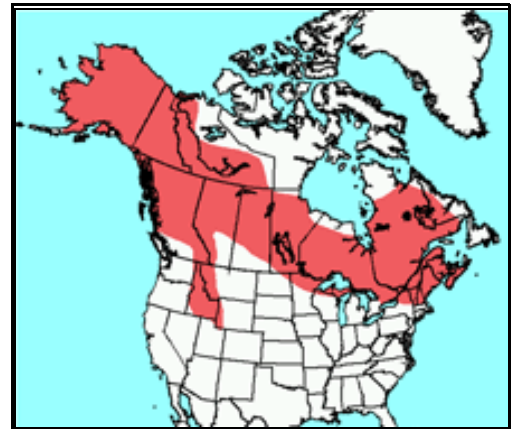
Average: 3.1 m males; 3.1 m females

Range: 2.5–3.2 m males; 2.4–3.1 m females

#### Weight:

Average: 430 kg males; 350 kg females

Range: 360–600 kg males; 270–400 kg females



### FIELD NOTES

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## FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS

### Elk

#### (*Cervus elaphus*)

ORDER: Artiodactyla

FAMILY: Cervidae

There are more than 750,000 Elk today, many living on federally protected lands in the United States and Canada. They have prospered due to good conservation and management practices, and also perhaps because of the decline of large predators. Herds can include 200 or more animals. Males and females usually congregate in separate herds until the breeding season, in late September or early October. Then adult males use a variety of ostentatious behaviors to distinguish themselves and compete for access to reproducing females. They use their elaborate six-tined antlers, which may measure nearly 2 m in length along the main shaft, to clash with one another, they call loudly, and they spray urine. A calf weighing about 14 kg is born after a six-month gestation period. The future of Elk seems secure, so long as the interests of hunters, livestock managers, and tourists can be balanced.

#### Also known as:

Wapiti

#### Sexual Dimorphism:

Males are larger than females.

#### Length:

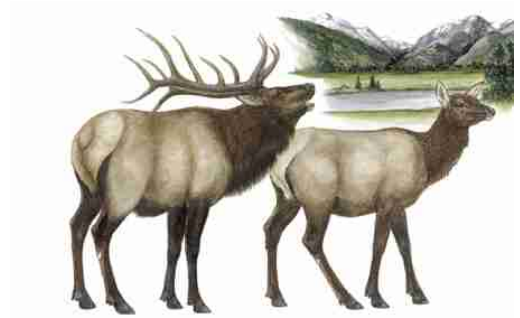
Average: 2.4 m males; 2.2 m females

Range: 2.1–2.6 m males; 2–2.5 m females

#### Weight:

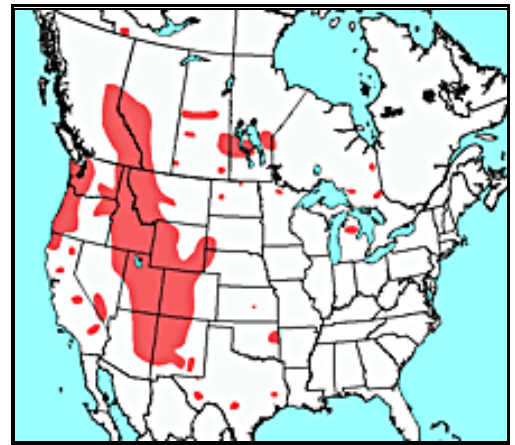
Average: 331 kg males; 241 kg females

Range: 178–497 kg males; 171–292 kg females



*Cervus elaphus* – male, bugling, left; female, right

Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



### FIELD NOTES

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## FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS

### Mule Deer

(*Odocoileus hemionus*)

ORDER: Artiodactyla

FAMILY: Cervidae

Mule Deer live in a broad range of habitats – forests, deserts, and brushlands. Mountain populations migrate to higher elevation in warmer months, looking for nutrient-rich new-grown grasses, twigs, and shrubs. They maintain separate summer and winter ranges, connected by a migratory pathway. In milder climates, they do not migrate. They live in small social groups of about three, except during the winter, when large groups may come together to feed in open meadows. Females tend to stay close to where they were born. Males disperse farther, establish their own territories, and compete for access to females during the October and November breeding season. The males lose their antlers after breeding and grow new ones yearly, with each set becoming larger than the previous one. Newborns, with spotted coats, are well-camouflaged.

#### Also known as:

California Mule Deer, Black-tailed Deer

#### Sexual Dimorphism:

Males are usually heavier than females.

#### Length:

Range: 1.3–1.7 m males; 1.3–1.6 m females

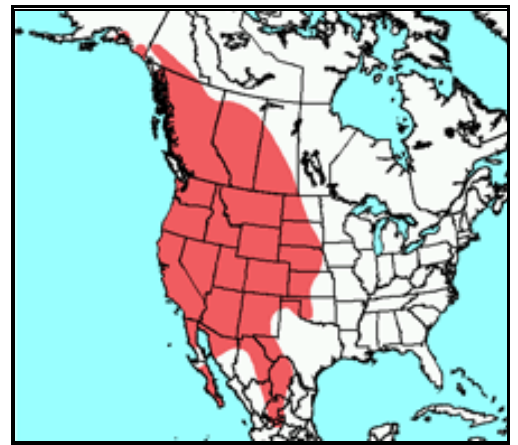
#### Weight:

Range: 40–120 kg males; 30–80 kg females



*Odocoileus hemionus* – coastal summer variation, left (male); inland winter variation, male (center) and female (right)

Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from *Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



### FIELD NOTES

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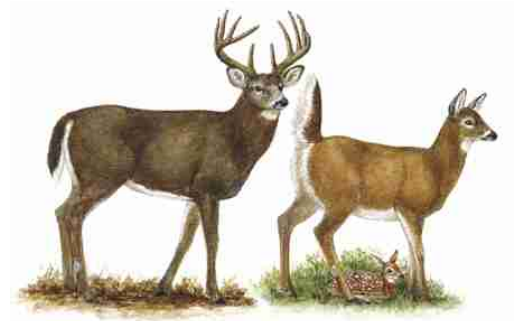


**White-tailed Deer**  
*(Odocoileus virginianus)*

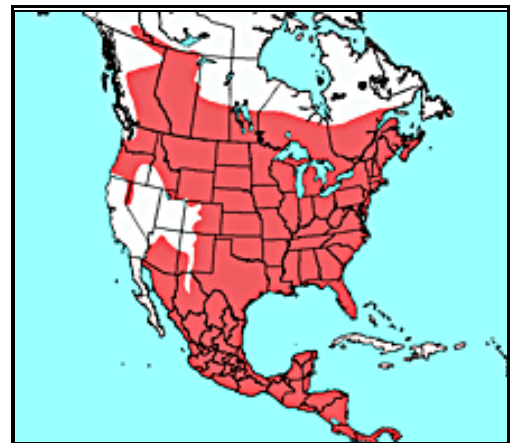
ORDER: Artiodactyla  
 FAMILY: Cervidae

**Conservation Status:** The Key deer, *Odocoileus virginianus clavium*, is an Endangered subspecies and the Columbian white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*, is Near Threatened.

The White-tailed Deer is distinguished from the Mule Deer by the smaller size of its ears, the color of its tail, and most strikingly, by antler shape. In Whitetails, the main beam of the antlers grows forward rather than upwards, and each tine develops as its own separate branch rather than being split into a forked pair. The two species also run differently when they are alarmed. Mule Deer stot, a boing-boing-boing motion in which all four feet leave and hit the ground with each bound, whereas White-tailed Deer spring forward, pushing off with their hind legs and landing on their front feet. Today White-tails are very widespread in North America: there may be as many as 15 million in the United States. These Deer are adaptable browsers, feeding on leaves, twigs, shoots, acorns, berries, and seeds, and they also graze on grasses and herbs. In areas where they live alongside Mule Deer, the species naturally separate ecologically, the Whitetails staying closer to moist streams and bottomlands, the Mule Deer preferring drier, upland places.



*Odocoileus virginianus* – male, winter coat, left; female, summer coat, right, with fawn  
 Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



**Also known as:**  
 Deer, Whitetail

**Sexual Dimorphism:**  
 Males are about 20% larger than females.

**Length:**  
 Range: 0.85–2.4 m males

**Weight:**  
 Range: 22–137 kg males

**FIELD NOTES**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*)

ORDER: Artiodactyla

FAMILY: Cervidae

**Conservation Status:** The Peary caribou or reindeer, *Rangifer tarandus pearyi*, is an Endangered subspecies.

Caribou, or Reindeer, is the only deer species in which both males and females have candelabra-like antlers. They live in large, migratory herds along the tree line of northern forests, eating mostly grass-like plants and shrubs in summer, and lichen, which carpets the snow-covered forests, in the winter. Getting at winter feed by digging through the snow can lead to intense competition, which may explain why females also carry antlers. During the breeding season, males compete with one another for access to females, using their antlers in jousting matches. They become completely devoted to the rituals of mating, failing even to eat, and losing their built up energy reserves in the process. Females give birth at traditional calving grounds on the open tundra during the spring, after a gestation of seven months. Then they pour all of their energy reserves into nursing their calves for a month. There are more than 2,000,000 Caribou in North America, but they are less successful in the southern parts of their range where they must cope with humans and other predators.

**Also known as:**

Reindeer, Caribú

**Sexual Dimorphism:**

Males are larger than females.

**Length:**

Average: 1.8 m males; 1.7 m females

Range: 1.6–2.1 m males; 1.4–1.9 m females

**Weight:**

Average: 110 kg males; 81 kg females

Range: 81–153 kg males; 63–94 kg females



*Rangifer tarandus* – male Woodland Caribou, left; female (center) and male (right) Barren Ground Caribou  
Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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