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Is it for real? Moose and Birds

To see photos and even some videos of moose and magpies together, go to the book's links as described above.

Flies, ticks, and insects are drawn to moose. Magpies eat the bothersome creatures, making the moose more comfortable. This easy food may be why magpies and other birds are commonly seen following moose around.

However, animals don't really talk to each other like they do in this book. Nor do animals read books or use hair brushes like the illustrations show!

Magpies, however, really do gather man-made things to put in their nests! They seem to like shiny things. Sometimes they will even weave shiny things into the nest itself.

What do moose eat?

Moose spend most of their time eating. They are **herbivores**, meaning they only eat plants.

During the summer months, they eat grass, leaves, and water plants. They will even dive into the water to get the plants.

In the colder months, they eat twigs, barks and roots. They especially seem to eat willow and aspen trees. They will also eat conifer (pine) tree needles and branches.



Moose Antlers

Unlike horns, antlers grow and are shed every year.

Moose are not the only animals that grow antlers. Male deer and elk also grow antlers.

When a male calf is about six or seven months old, he will start to develop little antler buds.

When antlers first start to grow, they are covered with a soft dark fuzzy skin called velvet.

Antlers are bones that grow out of the skull. They are made from calcium, just like our bones.

By late summer, the antlers reach full size, the blood supply dries up, and the velvet drops off, leaving the whitish antlers that are so recognizable.

Between December and early February, the males' antlers fall off, and the new ones start to grow in immediately.

Match the Moose Body Part to its Adaptation

Match the moose body adaptation description to its body part. Answers are upside down on the bottom of the page.



a.

They can't see very well; usually they just see things that are moving.

They have an excellent sense of smell.

Their fur keeps them warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

Moose have high humps on their backs that make them look hunchbacked.

Moose have a bell (also called dewlap) under their chin. While there are several theories about what it is used for, scientist don't really know.

A moose has excellent hearing and can turn its ears 180 degrees to hear all around.

Their front legs are longer than their back legs, making it easier for them to step over fallen trees and to walk through deep snow.

Cloven hooves help them walk on soft ground or through snow. Some other animals that have cloven hooves include deer, elk, goats, and cows.

e.



f.



g.



h.



Answers: 1c, 2a, 3b, 4e, 5f, 6h, 7d, 8g

Moose Fun Facts

Moose are related to deer. In fact, they are the largest member of the deer family.

Moose are the state animals for both Alaska and Maine.

The word "moose" is both singular and plural. It comes from an Algonquin word meaning "twig eater."

Moose may migrate up and down mountains.



Moose Life Cycle

Moose breed from early September to late October. *What season is that?*

A cow (female moose) is usually a little over two years old when she gets pregnant for the first time.

Calves are born in May or June. They can outrun humans and swim when only a few days old. *In what season are calves born?*

Just like human mothers, cows can have twins.


Calves weigh 28 to 35 lbs. (13 to 16 kg.) when born. *How much did you weigh when you were born? How much do you weigh now? Do you now weigh more, less, or about the same as a newborn moose calf?*

Moose are mammals, like us, so the calves drink milk from their mothers. They start to eat food when they are a few days old. Calves are completely weaned off their mother's milk by fall, when she will probably get pregnant again.

By the time they are five months old, they can weigh as much as 300 lbs. (136 kg.). *Is this more or less than you weigh? By how much?*

The migration for breeding takes place in the fall. Bulls (male moose) that are at least two years old will rut or will fight to prove their strength. Generally the strongest male, or the one with the largest antlers, is considered to be the best catch as a mate.



An illustration of a brown moose with a small skunk and a blue bird perched on its back. The moose is looking towards the right. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with trees and a large, faint image of a moose's head in the upper right.

Moose may die of diseases or by being hit by cars—especially during the rutting season.

Predators include wolves and bears—especially if moose are caught in snow that is too deep for them to move through easily. Some humans hunt moose to eat the meat and use the hides.

Half of all moose die within the first year. The moose that survive the first year can live 15 to 20 years.

Moose in Alaska are the biggest moose, and a bull may weigh up 1,600 lbs. (726 kg.).

A full-grown cow is shorter than the bull but can weigh up to 800 lbs. (363 kg.).

It is possible for a bull's antlers to grow 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m.) across!

A mother cow will chase the calf away when it is almost a year old. By that time, the young moose is old enough to take care of itself.

At the end of the rutting season, the moose will all return to their own wintering territories.

Cows attract bulls with their strong calls and scent.