



# BOONE AND CROCKETT WYOMING MOOSE

# A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

BY JOEL W. HELMER ■ B&C Associate ■ Department of Geography ■ Oklahoma State University

When Europeans began their exploration of the northeastern coast of North America, they undoubtedly encountered a long-legged, gangly, and massive-antlered creature that resembled the elk of their homeland. Common across a wide swath of northern Europe and Siberia, these animals were vital to the survival of people during the region's harsh winters. As one can imagine, this large ungulate was highly esteemed by the people living in the northern reaches of the Old World and formed an integral part of hunting life.

For the indigenous people living in the boreal forests of North America, this animal was a primary provider of not only food, but also bone, hide, and fur. The natives had numerous descriptive names for this big-game animal, including the Algonquin word *moosu*, meaning, "he strips off young tree bark." The name "moose" stuck, creating a remarkable mix-up in terminology between North America and Europe. The moose of North America is called an "elk" in Europe, and an animal resembling the wapiti or elk of North America is called a red deer or a stag in Europe. Confusing, huh?

Historically, Europeans can actually claim "first dibs" on the name game, since moose (which the Europeans call "elk") migrated to North America via the Bering Strait land bridge. This millennia-long process eventually produced four distinct North American subspecies of moose occupying a vast boreal habitat from Alaska to Newfoundland. The Boone and Crockett Club's records book includes two of these subspecies, the Alaska-Yukon (*Alces alces gigas*) and the Wyoming (*A. a. shiras*), as distinct categories. The records book combines the two remaining subspecies of moose, the Eastern (*A. a. americana*) and Northwestern (*A. a. andersoni*), into one category called Canada moose.

When Lewis and Clark crossed the northern Rockies on their 1803-1806 expedition, they did not encounter any moose as this animal did not exist in the region. During the following 150 years, moose migrated south along the spine of the Rockies, aided by the green corridor of national parks and forests that were eventually established.

General distribution map of the three different species of moose in North America.

**MOOSE** Alaska-Yukon  
**STATE** Alaska  
**HUNTER** Mark Graham  
**LOCATION** McKinley Creek  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 212-6/8 Points



**MOOSE** Canada  
**STATE** Maine  
**HUNTER** Jack R. Tindall  
**LOCATION** Somerset County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 190-4/8 Points



**MOOSE** Wyoming (Shiras)  
**STATE** Washington  
**HUNTER** Shawn K. MacFarlane  
**LOCATION** Pend Oreille County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 144-6/8 Points



**STATE** MONTANA  
**HUNTER** Glenn M. Smith  
**LOCATION** Beaverhead County  
**YEAR** 1998  
**SCORE** 164 Points



**STATE** MONTANA  
**HUNTER** Spence J. Jahner  
**LOCATION** Park County  
**YEAR** 1994  
**SCORE** 161-4/8 Points

**STATE** WYOMING  
**HUNTER** Russell W. Hews  
**LOCATION** Teton County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 147-4/8 Points



**STATE** WYOMING  
**HUNTER** Danny R. Hart  
**LOCATION** Sheridan County  
**YEAR** 1996  
**SCORE** 161-2/8 Points



**STATE** IDAHO  
**HUNTER** Mary A. Isbell  
**LOCATION** Bonneville County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 185-5/8 Points

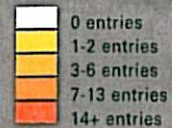
**STATE** WYOMING  
**HUNTER** Allan E. Kaas  
**LOCATION** Lincoln County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 150-2/8 Points



**STATE** UTAH  
**HUNTER** Catherine D. Mower  
**LOCATION** Summit County  
**YEAR** 2002  
**SCORE** 160-6/8 Points



**STATE** UTAH  
**HUNTER** Lee Wahlund  
**LOCATION** Weber County  
**YEAR** 1998  
**SCORE** 141-6/8 Points



**TOP WYOMING MOOSE STATES**

1. Wyoming	211 entries
2. Idaho	127 entries
3. Montana	121 entries
4. Utah	91 entries
5. Colorado	32 entries
6. Washington	19 entries

Wyoming moose now inhabit seven western states. Wyoming, which had no moose in 1900, currently has about 14,000 animals. The other three subspecies have also thrived, helping to double the continent's moose population in the last 50 years. Moose are now found in Massachusetts and Connecticut for the first time in perhaps three centuries.

The antlers of the Wyoming moose are generally the smallest of the three categories recognized by the Boone and Crockett Club. To qualify for the records book a Wyoming moose must score at least 140 points for the

**STATE** COLORADO  
**HUNTER** Lawrence M. Kochevar  
**LOCATION** Jackson County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 147-7/8 Points



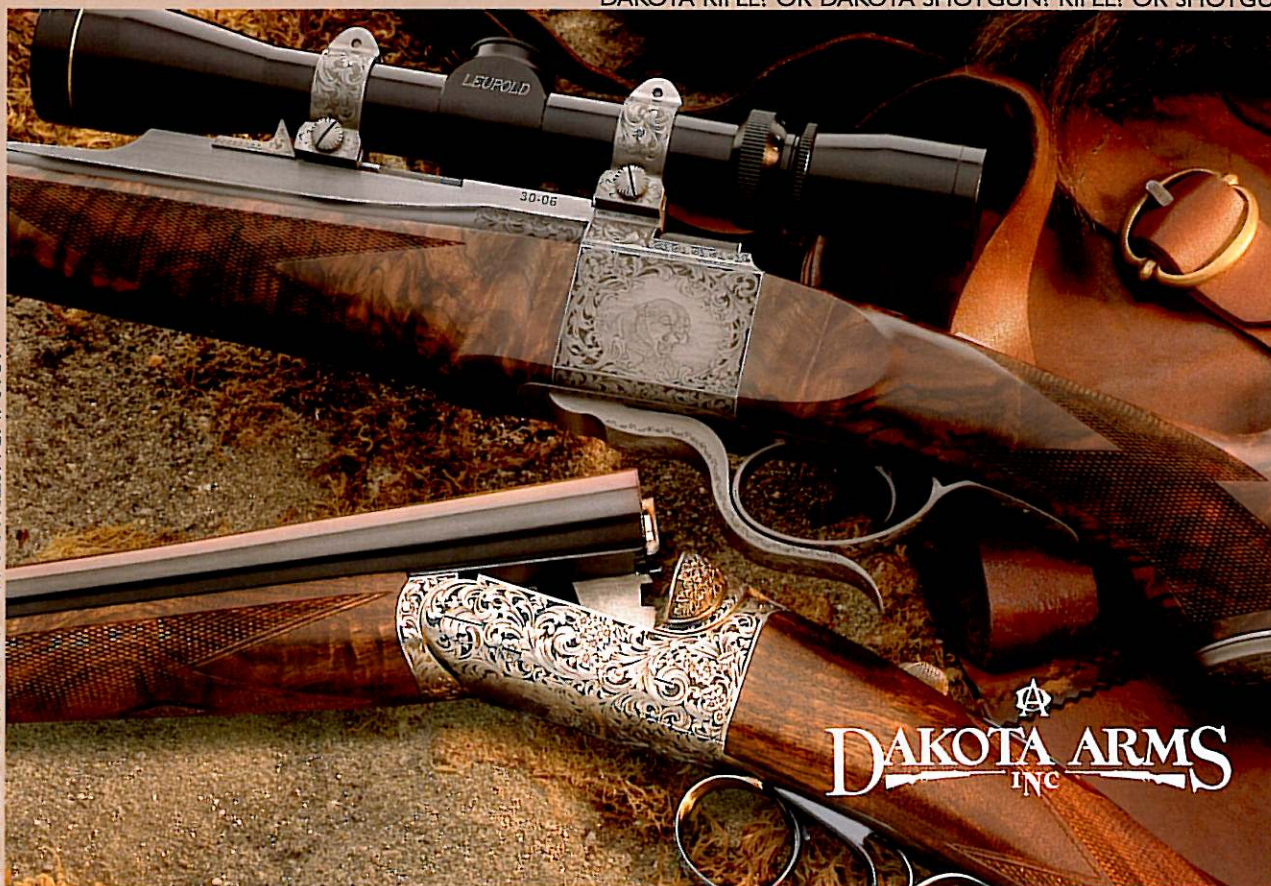
Awards Program and 155 points for All-time records book. The World's Record Wyoming moose was shot by John M. Oakley in 1952 near Green River Lake, Wyoming, scoring an impressive 205-4/8 points. This trophy currently resides at the Jackson Hole Museum. Comparatively, a Canada moose must score at least 185 and 195 points for the Awards and All-time records books, respectively, while the largest subspecies in body size and antler mass, the Alaska-Yukon moose, must score a minimum of 210 and 224 points for the Awards and All-time records books, respectively.

In this article I mapped the geo-graphic distribution of Wyoming moose listed in the Boone and Crockett Club's records book. The entries span the years 1900-2002, with all but 197 of these being entered since 1980. I could not map 79 entries, including 67 from Wyoming, 7 from Montana, 3 from Idaho, and 2 from Utah. The remaining 601 entries were geocoded using county names and ArcView GIS software, creating a distribution map with entries from 6 states and 61 counties. Appropriately, Wyoming has the most Wyoming moose entries with 211, followed by Idaho (127), Montana (121), Utah (91), Colorado (32), and Washington (19). It is important to note that there were no Wyoming moose in Colorado until the 1970s when a vigorous reintroduction effort was implemented.

The map reveals several clusters of counties producing high numbers of moose qualifying for the records book. The four best counties are clustered in western Wyoming and eastern Idaho, and account for 33 percent of the records book. This cluster includes Teton County, Wyoming, the highest ranked county with 87 entries, followed by Sublette, Wyoming (46), Bonneville, Idaho (34), and Lincoln, Wyoming (31). Extreme northeastern Utah is another good area, claiming three counties in the top 10; Weber (27), Cache (21), and Summit (17). Montana has three counties that rank in the top 10; Lincoln (27), Flathead (18) and Beaverhead (18), while Colorado has 1 top 10 county in Jackson (24). Other top 10 counties include Caribou, Idaho (20) and Sheridan, Wyoming (18).

Mapping the Boone and Crockett Club's records book for Wyoming moose provides insight into the natural history of moose in North America, and counties producing trophy-caliber bulls. As the moose populations increase in North America, the opportunity to hunt these animals should continue to improve. Currently, an estimated 90,000 moose are harvested annually by hunters in North America, a number that ought to stay stable or increase if this big-game animal has access to quality habitat and proper management. ■

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