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**Shiras' Moose Entries
Over the Last 10 Years**



ination:

Shiras' Moose

One Tough Tag...

One Great Opportunity

The Shiras' moose may just be one of our most overlooked conservation success stories. There was a time not that long ago, when the best of habitats were void of these great animals. Today, it is not uncommon to see big yellow signs with the black silhouette of a moose on them alerting drivers to slow down and keep their eyes peeled for large dark forms on stilts staring down passing vehicles.

By Keith Balfourd
B&C Director of Marketing
B&C Professional Member

In this article we will flush out where the opportunities exist today to pursue *Alces alces shirasi*, what you need to know to become one of these lucky few, and take a look at Shiras' moose hunting from a trophy perspective.

State-by-State Breakout of Where the Shiras' Moose Opportunities Lie

WYOMING

Total estimated population: 7,700

Tags offered in the draw: 595

- Antlered 365
- Either sex 65
- Antlerless..... 165
- Non-residents get 20% of the annual quota
- Max. of five auction tags per year
- Preference Point System—Yes
- Offer point only application—Yes
- Max points needed to draw—14
- 5-year wait to apply again if drawn
- For both resident and non-resident, 75% of the quota is issued to applicants with the most preference points and 25% in a random draw for all who were unsuccessful in the point draw
- Lists preference points totals on their web site
- Governor's Tags—5 to the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming

Phone: (307) 777-4600

Web site: <http://gf.state.wy.us>

WYOMING

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results		
	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Teton	106	32
Sublette	56	16
Carbon	8	8
Sheridan	24	7
Unita	9	7
Park	13	6
Lincoln	37	5
Albany	5	4
Dubois	3	1
Hot Springs	3	1
Fremont	8	0
Jackson Hole	5	0
Pinedale	5	0
Green River	4	0
Jackson	4	0

Preference Point—Each time you apply and are unsuccessful, you receive a preference point. Once you have reached a maximum number of points per a given unit/hunt you will draw.

Bonus Point—Each time you apply and are unsuccessful, you receive a bonus point. Accumulated points do not reach a maximum number for a guaranteed draw. For each point you have accumulated, your name will be in the random computer drawing that many times.

Point Multiplier—Example: if you have two points, your name is in the draw four times; three points

IDAHO

Estimated population: 10,000

Tags offered in the draw: 1,011

- Antlered 814
- Antlerless..... 197
- Bonus or preference point system—No
- Non-residents in the same drawing pool as residents
- Up to 10% of available tags per unit available for non-residents to draw
- 2nd drawing held for any leftover permits
- Raffle Tags "Super Hunts"—2 tags, 1 in Super Hunt, and 1 in Super Hunt Combo (moose, elk, deer, pronghorn)

Phone: (208) 334-3700

Super Hunt Web site: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/superhunt>

Combo Hunt Web site: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt>

Phone: (208) 334-3700

IDAHO

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results		
	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Bonneville	34	10
Idaho	22	10
Caribou	21	7
Boundary	9	7
Shoshone	8	7
Bonner	9	5
Fremont	13	4
Clearwater	7	3
Bear lake	6	2
Teton	5	2
Bingham	4	2
Bannock	3	2
Clark	6	1
Madison	13	0

"DRAW" TERMINOLOGY

Helpful information to begin your journey

nine times, etc. Placing a multiplier on the points more noticeably increases the chances of being selected over someone who is a new applicant or was recently awarded a permit as points are built up. Currently, Washington offers a point multiplier system.

Ghost Hunt or Point-Only—Some states offer a hunt code where you can apply to just receive a preference or bonus point to accumulate points without actually applying for a specific hunt/tag.

Landowner Tag—Classified as Ranching for Wildlife in Colorado. A state program where landowners make

MONTANA

Total estimated population—4,800

Tags offered in the draw—418

- Either sex 220
- Antlered bull..... 112
- Antlerless..... 86
- 10% to non-residents
- 7-year wait to apply again if drawn
- Bonus point system—Yes
- Offer point-only application—No
- Super Tag—1
- Governor's Tag—1

Phone: (406) 444-2525

Web site: <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting>

MONTANA

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results		
	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Beaverhead	26	14
Flathead	29	13
Lincoln	35	9
Missoula	9	6
Madison	12	3
Glacier	3	3
Mineral	5	2
Ravalli	4	2
Lewis & Clark	3	2
Gallatin	13	1
Park	13	1
Sanders	3	1
Granite	4	0

Additional detailed state information on page 50.

their lands available to public hunting in exchange for a specified number of tags they can transfer/sell to others.

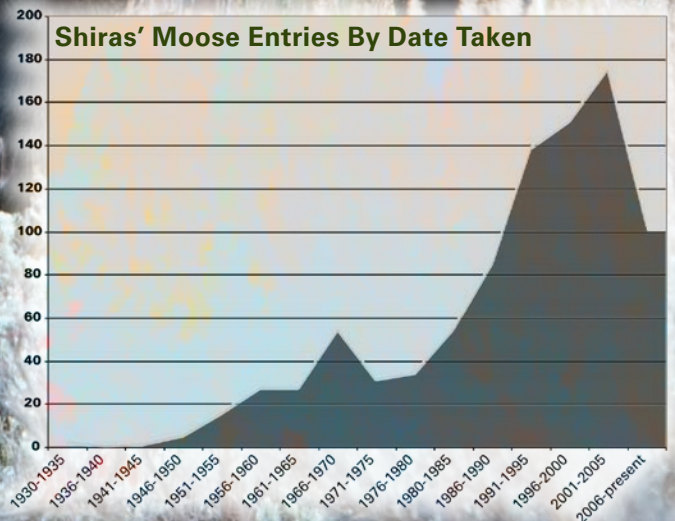
Raffle Tags—Super Tags/Super Hunts—Some states offer moose tags via raffle drawings—purchase as many chances as you wish.

Auction, Commissioner's, Governors' Tags—These are special tags (statewide or unit-specific) that are offered by states to conservation organizations to auction off to the highest bidders with typically 90 percent of proceeds going back to the state to help fund its conservation or management programs.

Destination: Shiras' Moose



The oldest Shiras' moose on record was taken in 1930 by John "Jack" Williams in Gallatin County, Montana. The trophy was entered in 1973 by Powderhorn Sportsman Supply in Bozeman, Montana. The Shiras' moose was willed to them by the Williams family.



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Additional State-by-State Breakout of Where the Shiras' Moose Opportunities Lie

UTAH

Total estimated population: 4,000

Tags offered in the draw: 171

Resident antlered 128

Non-resident antlered.... 13

Antlerless total..... 30

- Cooperative Wildlife Management Units CWMU permits—52 available to resident only
- Participating landowners will have tags they can sell/transfer to resident or non-residents
- Once-in-a-lifetime permit
- Bonus Point System—Yes
- Offer point-only application—Yes
- 50% of available points per unit are set aside for those with the most points
- 50% in drawing for those with less than max points
- Max points vary by unit
- Conservation Permits (auction tags)—1 statewide, 6 unit-specific

Phone: (801) 538-4700

Web site: <http://wildlife.utah.gov/hunting>

CWMU Web site: <http://www.cwm.utahwildlife.org>

UTAH

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results

	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Weber	37	16
Summit	22	12
Cache	27	7
Morgan	18	7
Utah	5	2
Salt Lake	3	2
Wasatch	3	2

WASHINGTON

Total estimated population: n/a

Tags offered in the draw: 128

Either sex 88

Antlerless..... 40

- Once-in-a-lifetime permit—waved for Raffle Tickets
- Raffle Tickets—2 tags either sex
- Bonus Point system with point multiplier—Yes
- Offer point-only application—Yes
- 1 Statewide auction tag

Phone: (360) 902-2464

Web site: <http://wdfw.wa.gov>

Raffle Web site: http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/special-permits_raffles.html

WASHINGTON

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results

	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Pend Oreille	27	21
Stevens	10	10
Spokane	6	3

COLORADO

Total estimated population: unavailable

Total permits: 185

Resident 168

Non-resident 17

- Ranching for Wildlife—Yes
- Preference Point System—Yes
- Must build three preference points before you are in the drawing to accumulate bonus points—awarded each year you are unsuccessful
- Offer point-only application—Yes
- Governor's Tags – 2 raffle tags, state-wide open units

Phone: (303) 297-1192

Web site: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting>

Raffle web site: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/BigGame/RaffleAuction.htm>

COLORADO

Top Counties Sorted by 10-year Results

	ALL-TIME	LAST 10 YEARS
Jackson	29	14
Larimer	11	10
Grand	7	4

HIRE A COORDINATOR

If you're like me and you don't have the time to learn every twist and turn for every state, and application deadlines seem to slip by every year, you may want to consider taking advantage of one of the many licensing services available. They know this business inside and out and keep up with the changes. And, if you have your sights set on a "hot tag" for more than one species across the West, it's a great way to go. There will be a fee, but it's worth it.

Carter's Hunting Services
<http://www.huntinfool.com>
 (435) 865-1020

Western Hunter Services
Chris Denham
Chris@westernhunter.info
 (480) 219-1503

Cabela's T.A.G.S.
<http://www.cabelas.com>
 (800) 755-TAGS

All moose are members of the deer family, but even prior to western settlement Shiras' moose never occurred in the numbers we commonly associate with other deer species like mule deer, elk, and white-tail. For Shiras' moose, depletion in their numbers came swiftly during the 1800s. Moose have relatively low reproductive rates and are highly susceptible to predators—two and four-legged. When you throw in unregulated over-harvesting on top, it is easy to see how we almost lost this species forever. Fortunately, sportsmen stepped in on behalf of this deer and did what they do best.

By accepting moose conservation and management efforts and sitting out years of closed seasons, sportsmen helped populations rebound, which began to pay dividends in the 1960s and 70s. Still today, rebounding aside, one moose per square mile is not uncommon, and hunting them is a tightly controlled affair. Regardless, he is out there, roaming the low country willow-lined bottoms, sage-covered slopes, and alpine spruce thickets. He is managed by six western states as a big-game species and therefore the opportunity to hunt him does exist. A conservation success? You bet.

The Shiras' moose is named after congressman, innovative wildlife photographer and professional member of the Boone and Crockett Club George Shiras 3rd, who first introduced this subspecies to science in the early 1900s through his Yellowstone Park expeditions. The Shiras' moose is also known in some circles as the Wyoming moose due to its abundance within the Cowboy state. Their population distribution today shows Shiras' moose occurring in the states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. Some would argue that populations of moose found in the extreme southern portions of British Columbia and Alberta are in fact Shiras' moose, but for records-keeping purposes, the Boone and Crockett Club recognized Shiras' from the aforementioned states. In recent times, according to Idaho big-game specialist Dale Towell, some moose have wandered across the border into eastern Oregon, but are not recognized as a huntable population.

Shiras' moose is often the overlooked undercard in a big-game lineup that features over-the-counter chances to hunt the West's big three—elk, mule deer and pronghorn. This may be good news if you're vying for a chance to hunt moose, but remember, the title of this article is still "One Tough Tag."

If you've been thinking of adding a Shiras' moose hunt to your planning calendar, you will need to prepare yourself for a few realities. For one, there are no over-the-counter tags available in any state. To sign your name to the "golden ticket," you either must apply for and draw a tag, or circumvent the draw-process by participating in state-held raffles, bid on auction tags, or purchase a landowner tag where available. In most cases the odds of drawing a moose tag today are longer than that of pulling a sheep tag, but there is hope. Over 2,500 lucky hunters will be going moose hunting this year. The key to punching that golden ticket is to apply and "build points." Your persistence and patience will be rewarded.

Know this

As you can see by reviewing the state data on pages 48 and 50, each state is different in how it administers moose hunting opportunities. Not all bonus and preference points systems are the same. Use this information only as a guide. Check the regulations yourself, because they do change and can be complicated. Fortunately, each state has a web site, and depending on the state, you can view everything from draw odds to past-hunter success per unit. You can check

your accumulated points, see how many points it has taken to draw a specific unit, and the list goes on. Also, call if you have questions. Each state has a special license department that can answer questions and walk you through either the paper or online application process.

Trophy Search

From a "trophy" perspective, the Boone and Crockett Club's database reveals 911 entries all-time for Shiras' moose. The first entry on record scored 179-7/8 B&C and was taken by John Williams in Gallatin County, Montana, in 1930. There were only 12 entries from 1930 until the 1950s. They spiked in 1965, took a small dip in the late 70s, and took off beginning in 1985. It doesn't take a Ph.D. to draw a few conclusions here. Modern conservation and game management—including predator control—played a vital role in both the recovery of decimated populations to the point of allowing regulated hunting, and the fact that these populations matured enough to offer real trophy opportunities.

Deciding where to hunt, whether you're trophy-minded or just looking for a freezer full of arguably the best wild venison available, is relatively easy. As

mentioned above, there are only six states with huntable populations and structured seasons for Shiras' moose. If you look at the data, the state of Wyoming has clearly produced the most B&C entries, nearly double that of the next-closest state, Idaho. From a pure opportunity standpoint, Idaho holds the highest population and offers the most permits annually.

The tables on pages 48 and 50 rank the top records-book producing counties for all-time and over just the past ten years. Typically we look at just the top five counties, but with Shiras' moose, you'll want to look at all counties when trying to compare hunt units and hunt codes with specific areas/counties.

The bottom line—Shiras' moose offers a wonderful Western big game hunting experience to those diligent enough to begin their hunt in the draw. Season dates more often than not coincide with fall breeding seasons, which bring calling into play. To get there, start banking points today, buy a few raffle chances, or scout out a landowner tag. Trophy or not, just being able to pursue this great deer offers a special connection to sportsmen-led conservation efforts that we can all be proud of—not to mention, the meat is bar none! ■

Destination: Shiras' Moose



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