

WILDLIFE PROFILES

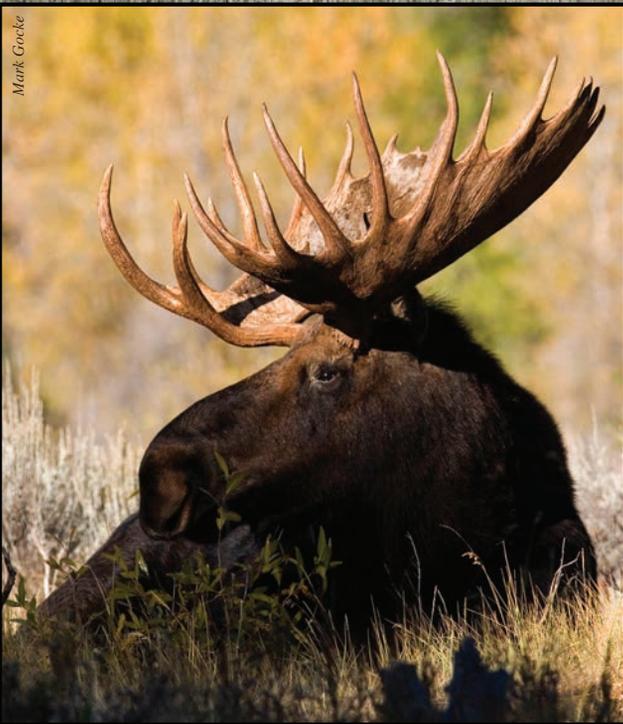
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Bighorn Sheep

- Size:** Bighorn rams can weigh up to 300 pounds, while mature ewes can weigh 200 pounds.
Eats: Lichen, grasses, alpine wildflowers.
Lives: On rugged mountainsides or steep canyons.

Did you know that bighorn sheep can survive the tough Wyoming winters at an elevation of 12,000 feet? Bighorn sheep have crucial migration corridors, or passageways, that they follow down the mountains in the winter in search of food. Some corridors have excess forest growth that blocks these routes, because we prevent wildfires. Bighorn sheep struggle to cross these overgrown corridors. Controlled burns by wildlife managers are critical for bighorn sheep survival. Unlike members of the deer family who have antlers, which are shed each year, bighorns have horns that continue to grow throughout their life. In fact, both sexes of sheep have horns, with the male, or ram, having curled horns that can weigh up to 30 lbs.!

Elk

- Size:** One of the largest mammals in North America. Adult males can weigh up to 1,100 pounds, and females can weigh 650 pounds. Antlers can weigh up to 30 pounds and span 5 feet.
Eats: Grasses and forbs.
Lives: In mountain meadows to sagebrush flats.

Did you know that elk migrate up to 60 miles to their winter ranges? Elk rely on windswept ridges and sagebrush flats for winter range. Many of these lands lie close to private ranches and can create conflicts with livestock. Some elk in north-west Wyoming are also infected with brucellosis, which can be transmitted to cattle. Around 30 percent of the elk that visit feedgrounds may have brucellosis, while around 5 percent that use native winter range show signs of the disease.

Mule Deer

- Size:** Adult bucks can weigh up to 250 pounds, and does can weigh up to 170 pounds.
Eats: Shrubs like sagebrush, bitterbrush, and rabbitbrush.
Lives: Almost everywhere in Wyoming, but numbers are shrinking.

Did you know that mule deer live in virtually every ecosystem in the Rocky Mountain west? The habitat that is most crucial for deer is their winter range. Deer can't handle deep snow like the larger members of the deer family. They rely on what forage is available above the snow, which is almost entirely woody shrubs. However, shrubs can become decadent, meaning they aren't growing new tender and nutritious branches. Overgrazing and fire suppression have harmed many of our winter ranges for mule deer. This, combined with oil and gas development and the building of houses and roads in migration corridors, has led to decreasing mule deer populations across the west.

Moose

- Size:** Moose are the largest members of the deer family. Wyoming is home to the Shiras moose, the smallest of the four North American subspecies, weighing between 600 and 1,400 pounds.
Eats: Woody vegetation, especially willows and aspen.
Lives: In riparian areas and sage meadows.

Did you know that around 60 percent of Wyoming's riparian land, or wetlands, are privately owned? These are the areas where the majority of Wyoming's moose spend the winter. Moose rely almost exclusively on willows to survive the winter. Their stomachs are specially designed to digest the woody material and bark. If you have a chance to examine moose scat, it looks like they have been eating sawdust. Riparian areas aren't only important for moose, they're the home to 94 percent of Wyoming's wildlife, but only 3 percent of the state consists of wetlands. This makes riparian areas one of the most crucial habitats to protect in the state!