

## **Frequently Asked Questions about moose in Minnesota**

### **How long were people able to hunt moose in Minnesota?**

Moose were relatively common in most of the state's northern forests when the state was settled but mature forests could support only a limited number of moose. During the early 1900s, most of the moose range was logged and much of it burned from fires that often started in the leftover slash from logging. The change in habitat – removing the overhead canopy of large trees allowed shorter and smaller shrubs and trees to grow – helped the white-tail deer population to increase dramatically but created poor habitat for moose and their numbers declined.

Although moose were seldom seen in Minnesota after logging and forest fires, the hunting season continued until 1922 when hunters harvested 219 moose. The moose season was suspended in 1923, when the population was estimated at 3,000 animals.

Second-growth forests sprang up as conservation efforts increased, gradually creating better habitat for moose. Aerial census work from 1958 to 1970 showed that Minnesota's combined moose population in the northwest and northeast was fluctuating between 5,000 and 8,000 animals.

After 49 years of no moose hunting, the Legislature authorized a moose season beginning in 1971. The hunt, which occurred every two years, continued in northwestern and northeastern Minnesota every other year until 1989.

In 1991, the northeast season was closed and the bi-annual hunt became a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In 1993, the northeast zone re-opened and moose hunting became an annual season.

The northwest hunt closed in 1997 because of population concerns. The northeast hunt, which was not conducted in 2000 because of budget shortages, became a bulls-only hunt in 2007.

### **When was the moose hunting season?**

The season was conducted during the fall rutting season, which occurs from late September to the middle of October.

### **Why is DNR choosing to not open the moose hunting season?**

A precipitous population decline of 35 percent from 2012 to 2013 and a 52 percent drop since 2010 prompted DNR to not open the 2013 season. DNR's moose management and research plan established biological and management thresholds for closing the season. While those thresholds have not been met, DNR wildlife managers did not anticipate such an alarming decline in the overall moose population when the thresholds were established.

### **Will future moose hunting seasons be offered?**

DNR will not consider opening future seasons unless the moose population recovers. DNR will begin working with other moose experts to develop thresholds that would determine when the hunting season could be reopened. Those thresholds could include minimum population size or trends.

### **Who else hunts moose in the state?**

Under a 1988 agreement with the state of Minnesota, the Bois Forte, Grand Portage and

Fond du Lac Chippewa Indian bands agreed to limit their moose harvest and conduct seasons at the same time as state seasons. The agreement also called for the state to make annual payments to the bands.

Since that time, the Fond du Lac band has dropped out of the agreement and now sets its moose seasons independent of the state and other bands. The remaining Chippewa bands in the moose range also set moose seasons and quotas for band members on reservation lands separate from state regulations.

#### **What is the current Minnesota moose population?**

2,760 within a range of 2,120-3,580.

#### **When was the moose population at its peak?**

Aerial survey figures show that the northeast population peaked in 2006 at an estimated 8,840 moose.

#### **Why is the moose population declining?**

The exact causes of moose mortality are not well understood. Previous research has demonstrated that hunting and predation by wolves are not the primary causes of adult deaths, and multiple signs indicate the causes are likely health- and stress-related factors.

#### **What is DNR doing about the population decline?**

Utilizing the latest technology, DNR wildlife researchers are conducting multiple research projects to learn more about moose mortality. This research will build on work that is ongoing or planned by other agencies and universities. With the number of DNR staff and the collaboration from other entities, including universities and tribal authorities, this represents the largest research project ever undertaken in Minnesota.

Capturing and collaring adult moose is the first phase of a multiple-year project to attempt to determine why moose are dying at unusually high rates in northeastern Minnesota. The DNR is in the process of placing GPS tracking collars on 100 adult moose in the Grand Marais, Ely and Two Harbors areas as part of the most sophisticated moose research project ever conducted. To date, 92 moose have been collared. In addition, additional moose are being collared as part of a University of Minnesota study in Voyageurs National Park and Grand Portage Reservation.

More information is available at [www.mndnr.gov/moose](http://www.mndnr.gov/moose).

#### **How much does a typical moose weigh?**

Minnesota is home to the southernmost populations of Northwestern moose. Shiras moose, the ones found in Wyoming and Montana, are a smaller member of the moose family, with big bulls weighing just less than 1,000 pounds. Alaskan moose are the largest, standing more than 6 feet tall at the shoulder and weighing up to 1,200 pounds. Northwestern moose fall between Alaskan and Shiras moose in size. The smallest moose in North America is the Eastern moose. Its range includes Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and New York.

#### **Why did DNR suspend the northwest moose season in 1997?**

The season was closed after 1996, when the population had declined from a peak point estimate of 4,086 in 1985 down to 1,436 in 1996. This magnitude of decline is very similar to what has occurred in the northeast moose population in just the past seven years.

**How many bull moose have state-licensed hunters harvested during recent hunts in northeastern Minnesota?**

2012	46
2011	53
2010	109

**Did hunting contribute to the moose population decline?**

The bull harvest strategy implemented since 2007 was very conservative and designed to remove about 2 percent of the total moose population annually. Because the hunt focused on a small number of bulls, sufficient bulls remained to breed cows and biologically sustain the population. With the unexpected precipitous population decline documented by this winter's aerial survey, DNR believes it is prudent to control every source of mortality possible.

**What is the success rate of all moose hunters in 2012?**

The success rate of state hunters has, generally speaking, declined steadily from 84 percent in 1993. Hunter success in 2012 was 53 percent, a decrease of 5 percent from 2011.

The success rate for members of the 1854 Treaty Authority was 33 percent, up 7 percent from 2011. The preliminary success rate for the Fond du Lac band hunters was 28 percent, up 2 percent from 2011.

**What other states offer moose hunting?**

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, North Dakota, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington.