

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Biological Survey

DIVISION OF INFORMATION

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1940.

PHOTOS available from Biological Survey.

Doomed to Death by Locked Horns,
Moose Sawed Free by Wildlife Agent

When two bull moose battling in the snow-clad wilds of Alaska face death because they have locked horns and cannot separate, even a veteran outdoors man like Wildlife Agent Jack Benson, of the Alaska Game Commission, will act surprised. That's what happened recently when the law-enforcement agent was flying in a plane over Farwell Lake in Rainy Pass while returning to headquarters from a routine air patrol of his district.

The details of the incident were reported in the Commission's last quarterly report to the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of the Interior. When Benson sighted the two bulls fighting desperately on the frozen waters of the lake, the ship was headed groundward to give the agent a better view of the struggle. Closer inspection revealed that the moose had locked horns. Both animals were doomed to death.

Unlike deer, fighting bull moose rarely lock horns, according to Biological Survey experts, because the antlers are palmated.

Benson headed for McGrath, 130 miles away, where he obtained ropes and saws. Three workers accompanied the agent on his return trip. The animals were still locked together.

Risking the danger of being gored by the maddened bulls, the rescuers approached the animals and lassoed them. While two men held the ropes taut, Benson and an aide sawed off part of the antlers.

As soon as the horns were cut through, the men jumped clear of the animals to avoid attack. Nevertheless, the larger bull rushed his benefactors. They needed no invitation to scamper to safety.

While the larger bull strode away into the forest, the smaller one remained on the ground and soon died from a deep neck wound inflicted by his antagonist.

The bull moose of Alaska, known to scientists as Alces gigas, which means giant moose, is the largest of the deer tribe in the world. Sometimes these bulls weigh more than 1,400 pounds. Huge and grotesquely formed, the moose has a large head, oddly formed nose, short body, and long legs.

Probably the one body feature that attracts popular attention to the moose is the "bell" hanging from its neck.

Moose have enormous antlers that sometimes spread as much as 6 feet from tip to tip. Of the three largest moose trophies taken by nonresident hunters in Alaska during the fiscal year 1939, one had a spread of 6 feet 5 inches; the second, 6 feet 4-1/2 inches; and the third, 6 feet 2-1/2 inches. All these moose were taken on the Kenai Peninsula.

Though apparently clumsy, these half-ton big-game animals can stalk through the thickest forest with surprising agility and quietness for such huge animals. In summer they prefer low-lying, swampy forests.

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