

# Moose Reintroduction



NOVEMBER 2013

## Moose in Colorado

### Moose Background

Moose, (*Alces alces*), are the largest members of the deer family and are found in the northern regions of North America, Europe and Asia. Moose prefer habitat near lakes, rivers or wetlands, where they feed on young plants including shrubs, aquatic plants, grasses, mosses, willow, and aspen.

In 2013, moose inhabited northern forests in 15 states. Twelve states – including Colorado – offered moose hunting. The moose in Colorado belong to the Shiras subspecies, which are smaller than the subspecies found in Alaska and Canada. Colorado's adult moose can run 35 miles per hour, weigh up to 1,000 pounds and stand six feet tall at the shoulder.

### History of Moose in Colorado

Historical records dating back to the 1850s indicate that moose wandered into northern Colorado from Wyoming, but were transient and never established a stable breeding population. Most of the historic sightings involved hunters seeing and/or harvesting a single bull moose.

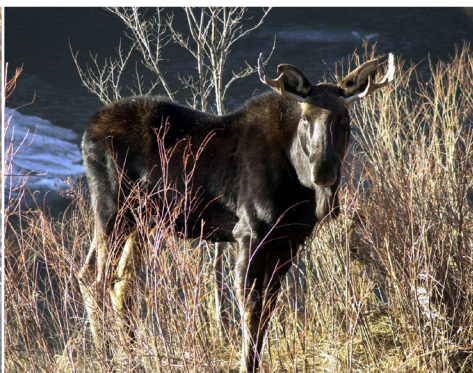
### Moose Reintroduction

In the 1950s, Colorado wildlife officials considered bringing moose to the state. There were concerns, voiced at public meetings on a series of proposals, that moose would compete with cattle and sheep on grazing land, and potentially damage local ecosystems and other wildlife species. State wildlife managers advocated moose reintroduction because of the abundant habitat available and lack of natural predators.

During the 1960s and the early 1970s, the Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife) worked with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the general public and local ranchers on selecting the North Park area in the Routt National Forest near Walden as the site for the first moose reintroduction.

In 1978, state wildlife experts transplanted 24 male and female moose from Wyoming and Utah to create a breeding population in North Park and provide hunting opportunities. Additional moose from Wyoming, Utah and Colorado's own growing population were introduced to other areas of western Colorado over the years. The project succeeded in creating new hunting opportunities and a popular wildlife viewing option. The state legislature, in 1995, declared Walden the "Moose Viewing Capital of Colorado."

By 2012, the reintroduction program had established a breeding population of about 2,300 moose in Colorado. Moose hunting is available in 39 game management units (GMUs). There were 16,500 applicants for 219 moose hunting licenses and 185 moose were harvested in 2012. While the moose population in other states has declined, Colorado's moose population continues to grow.





## Historical Highlights of Moose Reintroduction in Colorado

1978: North Park in Jackson County, near Walden

- 12 moose from Utah and 12 moose from Wyoming
- Dispersal: Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Grand, Larimer, Park, Routt and Summit Counties

1987: Laramie River Valley in northwestern Larimer County, near Glendevey

- 12 moose from Wyoming
- Dispersal: Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin and Park Counties

1991-1993: Upper Rio Grande River Valley in Mineral and Hinsdale Counties, near Creede

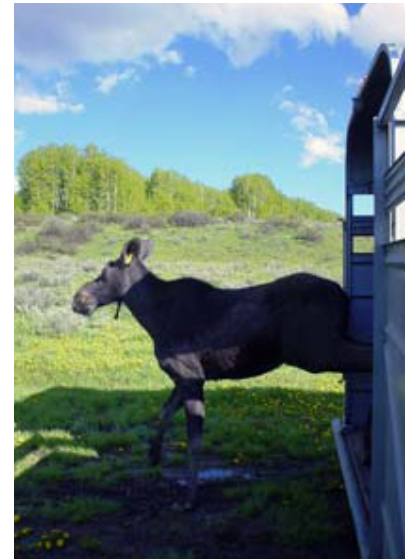
- 93 moose from Wyoming, Utah and North Park, Colorado
- Dispersal: Archuleta, Conejos, Gunnison, La Plata, Rio Grande, Saguache and San Juan Counties

2005-2007: Grand Mesa National Forest in Delta and Mesa Counties near Grand Junction

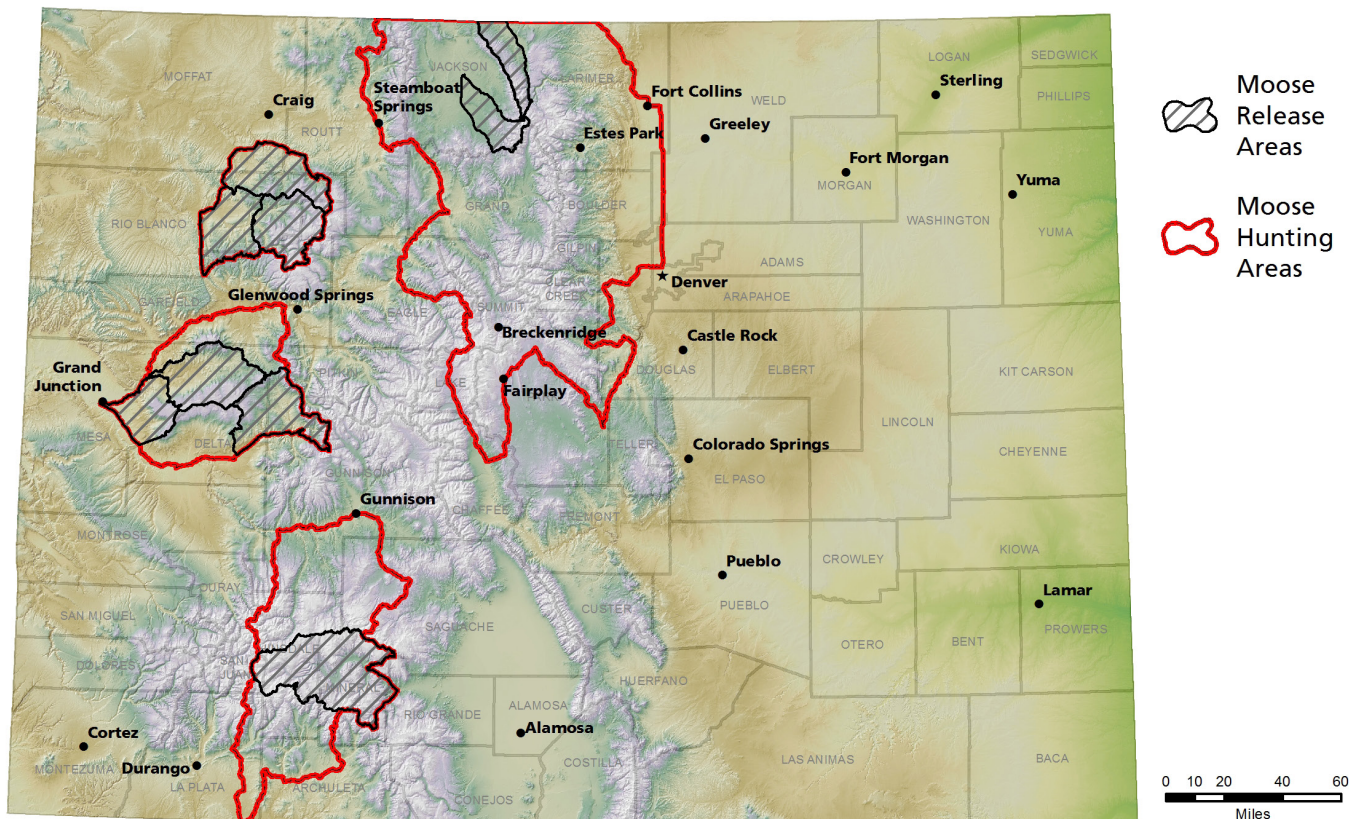
- 91 moose from Utah
- Dispersal: Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, Mesa and Pitkin Counties

2009-2010: White River National Forest in Rio Blanco County near Meeker

- 19 moose from Utah and 20 from North Park
- Dispersal: Garfield, Moffat and Routt Counties



Reintroduction Partners: U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Wyoming Game and Fish, hunter and angler fees, Safari Club International and many other non-profit organizations. Plains Exploration & Production Company, Gunnison Energy Corporation., SG Interests, Ltd. have also contributed.



## Recent Moose Conflicts

In recent years, moose-human conflicts have arisen as moose move into urban areas. Colorado Parks and Wildlife provides these tips for avoiding conflicts:

- Keep a safe distance
- Move slowly
- Keep dogs on leashes
- Back off when moose put ears back, roll their eyes or appear aggressive
- Carry a wildlife pepper spray, UDAP or Counter Attack, to use if a moose becomes aggressive