

EXTRA! MOOSE LOOSE ON THE GUNFLINT TRAIL

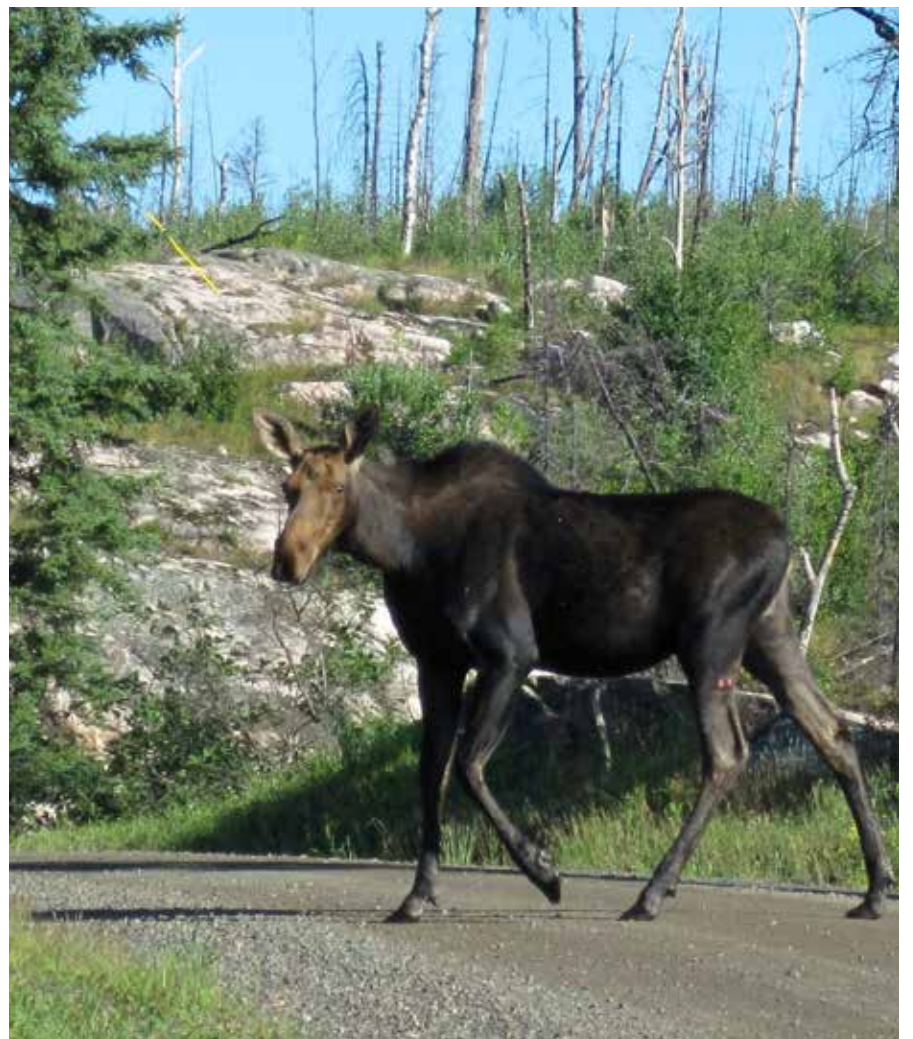
The Elusive Twig Eater

Most people venturing up the Gunflint Trail hope to see a moose. Weighing in at up to 1600 pounds, these huge animals are the largest member of the deer family and the largest and, arguably, most impressive wildlife found in Cook County. Spying a moose, whether it's a bull (adult male), cow (adult female), or calf (young moose), is always a thrill, especially now as moose struggle to thrive in Minnesota and other southerly parts of their traditional range.

The scientific name for moose is *Alces Alces*. However, the name "moose" is believed to come from an Algonquin word meaning "eater of twigs." It's true: as herbivores, moose prefer woody vegetation like twigs, roots, and bark. A healthy moose can run up to 35 miles per hour, which helps them elude predators, like bears and wolves.

For most of the year, bulls and cows have very little interaction, besides occasionally sharing good feeding grounds. Cow moose often give birth to twin calves in the spring. The calves stay with their mother for about a year, until Mom gives birth to the next year's calf.

Only bulls have antlers, however all moose have a little flap of skin under their chin, known as the bell. Scientists are unsure what the function of the bell is, but they've hypothesized that it might somehow help moose keep cool. Since moose prefer temperatures below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, a built-in cooling system would be very handy!



Moose crossing near the Gunflint Trail

Where to Find Moose Along the Gunflint Trail

I spy with my little eye a big bull moose!

There's no secret trick to spying a moose on the Gunflint Trail, other than going out frequently and looking carefully. You're most likely to see a moose when it's eating. Moose favor swampy areas where they can feast on a couple of their favorite foods: water lilies and willow branches. Because they dislike warm temperatures, during the summer moose tend to feed at dawn and dusk. The moose become more active as temperatures cool down again and can be seen at any time of day in the spring, fall, and winter.



If you go up the Gunflint Trail looking for moose, look closely whenever you pass a swampy, low area. With their mottled brown coats, moose can sometimes blend into the background. The **Moose Viewing Area**, located approximately 25 miles up the Gunflint Trail from Grand Marais, offers a ¼ mile hike into a platform overlooking a wooded bog. Even if you don't spy any moose at the moose viewing platform, you'll get a good idea of what sort of habitat moose prefer.

AT HOME ACTIVITY

Make Your Own Moose Call

Looking for moose? Why not call the moose to you? There are several different ways to construct a moose call:

COFFEE CAN MOOSE CALL (*sounds like a moose grunting*)

Supplies:

- Empty metal coffee can
- Hammer
- Nail
- 30-inch cotton bootlace

1. Remove the lid from a large, clean, empty coffee can. Turn the can upside down, and tap a hole into the center of the can bottom, using a nail and hammer.
2. Thread a 30-inch cotton bootlace through the hole, then tie a knot of the end of the bootlace inside the can.
3. Use water to dampen the bootlace at the bottom of the can, then slip the bottom of the can over one hand.
4. With the other hand, hold the end of the bootlace between your thumb and forefinger close to the can. Pull the bootlace taut and move your fingers along it toward the other end, scraping your thumbnail against the bootlace as you go to mimic moose's grunts and groans.

PLASTIC BOTTLE MOOSE CALL (*sounds like scraping antlers*)

Supplies:

- Empty 2-liter plastic bottle
- 18-inch wooden dowel
- Duct tape

1. Take a 2-liter plastic bottle and insert an 18-inch dowel about four inches through the bottle neck, then secure with tape.
2. Have an adult cut off the bottom of the bottle.
3. To use, hold the dowel and gently rake the bottle through brush as you walk in the woods. This mimics the sound of a bull moose scraping its antlers.

Respect wildlife! Always keep a safe, respectful distance between you and wildlife. If you see laid back ears, hair on spine standing up, kicking or stomping, or the moose is walking directly towards you or making threatening sounds, it's time to leave. Remember, you're the moose's house guests, not the other way around.

MOOSE FACTOIDS



Moose need 60 pounds of food a day and will eat up to 130 pounds a day during the autumn.



Moose can swim six miles an hour; much faster than most people can paddle a canoe.



Bull moose drop their antlers each winter and each summer their antlers grow back, sometimes at a rate of 1 inch per day. Antlers of a healthy 10-12 year old moose can weigh up to 60 pounds.



Moose's large hooves act as snowshoes, helping them travel through the winter forest.

In autumn, bull moose become very aggressive during mating season, known as "the rut."

The Gunflint Trail Explorers Program



The Gunflint Trail Explorers program is a Gunflint Trail wide naturalist program based at Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center. This free program is designed for families with elementary school aged children, but is suitable for all individuals curious about the natural and cultural history of the Gunflint Trail. The program features activity bins loaded with themed supplies and an activity guide, adventure booklets, indoor and outdoor games, field guides, and other kid-friendly information all related to the unique nature of northeastern Minnesota.

With Gunflint Trail Explorers program material, families immerse themselves in the great outdoors at their own pace. All activities are self-guided and feature a mix of exploration, science, dress-up and play. Families check out activity materials at the Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center front desk. Everyone participating in an activity receives a handmade journal to record their "findings" and take home.

During the summer months, the U.S. Forest Service and other outdoor educators offer a wide variety of naturalist programs each week at Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center and Gunflint Trail businesses. Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center also hosts journal making workshops throughout the summer.

Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center is located 55 miles up the Gunflint Trail (Cook County Hwy. 12) outside of Grand Marais, at 28 Moose Pond Drive. For more information call 218-388-9915, email info@chikwauk.com, or visit www.chikwauk.com.

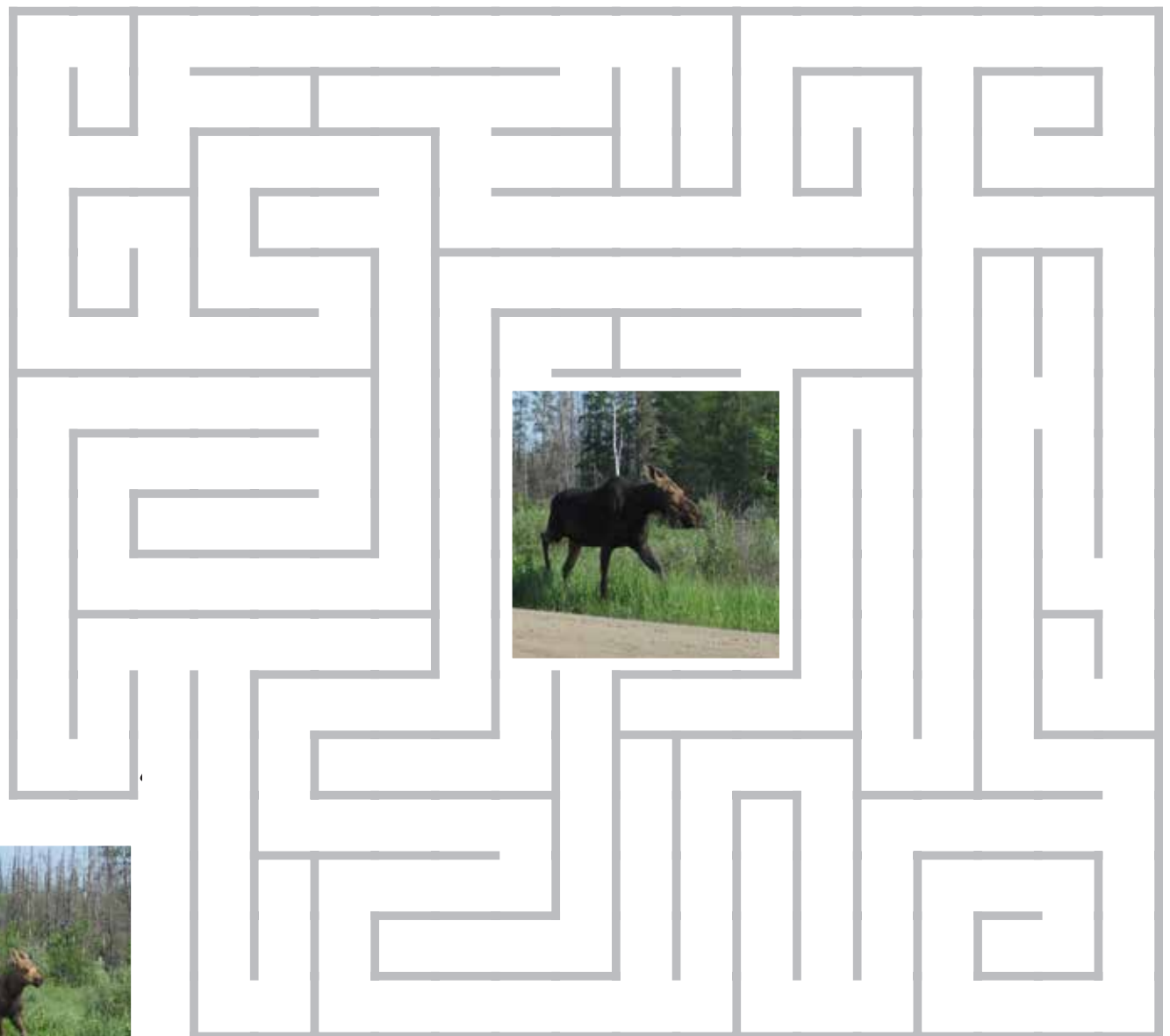
MOOSE COLORING ACTIVITY

Use your crayons or colored pencils to color the moose, and some Gunflint Trail scenery around it.

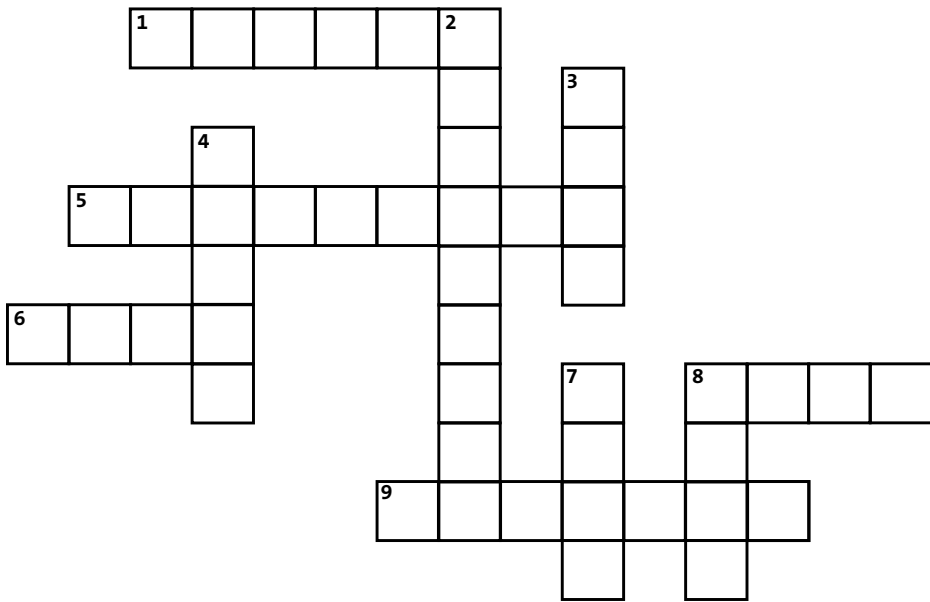


MOOSE MAZE

*Use a pencil to help
the calves (baby moose)
find the cow moose
(their mother).*



MOOSE PUZZLE PAGE



MOOSE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- This 50th U.S. state has the highest moose population
- Because moose only eat plants, they are this type of animal
- In the summer, moose tend to feed at this time in the morning
- This flap hangs from moose's chins
- Bull moose grow a pair of these each year

DOWN

- The word "moose" comes from this language
- A moose is largest member of this animal family
- You might hear a moose make this sort of noise
- A baby moose is called a
- Moose enjoying eating this

K J S D U O P V H D A Q H V X
 F I U H E U W B O G G K U W A
 G X D K B E E A T T W I G S B
 D I W D N N R V T A B F U V B
 W I L D L I F E B E N G Y J U
 F A Y J K A D O C A R B U L L
 T X N F I O Z G M K A L J Y E
 W N G T R O R M M O P I I Y W
 I Y L P L P E R O U T H H L N
 N G H K J E R Y W O A Y C G Y
 S J F Q O D R K X D S R U F R
 D L W M Z L E U P H I E E O L
 V H M S W A M P L D R G S E Q
 M V W D B S N K K H L T Z C L
 N U C A L F V H A B I T A T A

MOOSE WORD SEARCH

Find the following words in the grid of letters to the left. Words can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal, forwards or backwards.

- WILDLIFE
- SWAMP
- MOOSE
- CALF
- BULL
- WATER LILY (no space)
- ANTLER
- DEER
- TWIGS
- HABITAT
- TWINS

MOOSE MATCH Draw a line from each "moosey" word in **green** to its "moosey" definition in **brown**.

WETLANDS
 WOLF
 COW
 ALCES ALCES
 PLANTS
 RUT

FEMALE FOOD MATING SEASON HABITAT SCIENTIFIC NAME PREDATOR

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these unique characteristics of moose's bodies.

VHOOSE _____
 RTNLAE _____
 ZUMLEZ _____

LBLE _____
 IALT _____



KEY TO ANSWERS:
 Crossword Puzzle: DOWN: 1. Algonquin, 3. deer, 4. grunt, 7. calf, 8. bark;
 ACROSS: 2. Alaska, 4. herbivore, 6. dawn, 8. bell, 9. antlers;
 Moose Match: wetlands = habitat; wolf = predator; cow = female;
 alces alces = scientific name; plants = food; rut = mating season
 Word Scramble: hooves, antler, muzzle, bell, tail