

# RED DEER

CARD 20



GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
Artiodactyla

FAMILY  
Cervidae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Cervus elaphus*



Beames/Ardea London

**The antlered red deer is an awesome sight. The stag uses his antlers as a weapon when fighting other males for access to females during the mating season each fall.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Height: Males, 4-5 ft.  
Females a little smaller.  
Length: 5-9 ft.  
Weight: 220-265 lb.  
Antlers: 35-39 in. fully grown.



### BREEDING

Sexual maturity: Females, 2-4 years. Males breed at 5-6 years.  
Mating: Early fall.  
Gestation: Average 235 days.  
No. of young: 1 (twins are rare).



### LIFESTYLE

Habit: Sociable; males form separate herds outside of breeding season.  
Diet: Grass, heather, twigs, leaves, and fruits.  
Lifespan: 17-20 years.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are 23 subspecies of deer, of which 6 are endangered.



Range of the red deer.

### DISTRIBUTION

Found in southern Scandinavia, most of western Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor. Introduced into Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand.

### CONSERVATION

Common and increasing. Culling in many places, and protected both as game and as ornamental animals.

## THE RED DEER'S ANTLERS



Antlers begin as knobs covered in soft, thin skin called *velvet*.



Stags older than 2 years grow branching antlers called *prickets*.



New antlers take about 100 days to grow and are shed in April.



The velvet dies in July and the stag will rub it off and eat it.



It takes a few days for the velvet to disappear and for the antlers to become clean. An adult stag can have many branches on his antlers.

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*In summer, the coats of these attractive and impressive animals are a bright, chestnut brown.*

*In the fall, the deer grow waterproof guard hairs, which turn their coats much darker.*

*Wild herds are found in forests and parkland throughout their range.*



#### DID YOU KNOW?

- While most deer eat only the velvet as it falls off their antlers, stags in the Scottish Highlands eat their shedded antlers as well. The soil is so deficient in the minerals that the deer need to grow new sets of antlers that the old antlers serve as a valuable nutritive source.
- Fighting stags sometimes lock their antlers together and cannot separate. When this happens, both will starve.
- A stag with 12 points on his antlers is called a "royal."



G. McCarthy/Bruce Coleman Ltd.

#### BREEDING

The autumn mating season, called the *rut*, is the time when the dominant stags challenge and fight one another for access to the females. Several of the successful stags corner a group of 30-40 females, called *hinds*, and will mate with each sexually mature member as she comes into season.

Younger stags are excluded from breeding by the older, more aggressive males. At the end of the rut, when the stags are exhausted, the younger stags may mate with any of the hinds who are late coming into season.

*Left: Mature stag bellowing a warning to another. If this threat is ignored, the stags will fight (see top picture).*

The stags leave the females when the rut is over, forming bachelor herds for the rest of the year. The larger animals are still dominant, chasing rivals away from the best feeding grounds.

The calves are born after a gestation period of eight and a half months. They are able to stand unsteadily at 20 minutes old, and are able to take milk 10 minutes later.

A calf will stay with its mother until she gives birth again. At this time, she drives it away so that it will not compete with the new calf.

*Right: A calf suckles from its mother. The calf's coat is speckled until after its first molt the following May.*



J. Burton/B. Coleman Ltd.

#### HABITAT

Forests are the red deer's natural habitat. Where the forest has been cleared, the deer move onto open land. Even where forests have been replanted, deer rarely return because the dense regrowth of the conifers makes it difficult for them to feed. Some deer live on open land year-round; other retreat to wooded glens in the worst winter weather.

#### BEHAVIOR

Red deer are primarily grazing animals. They feed on grass by cutting it between their sharp lower incisor teeth and their hard upper gums. They also have strong teeth in their cheeks that enable them to eat twigs in the winter, when grass is scarce.

*Right: The red deer feed on grass in the summer.*



J. Ferrero/Ardea London

#### RED DEER & MAN

Deer hunting is a popular, though controversial, sport. But the number of deer must be controlled each year, to prevent the herds from exhausting their food supply. Hunting, therefore, is seen as a necessary population control.

Some species of deer are bred like cattle, but red deer are not suitable to be raised on ranches because they become dangerous during the rut.



#### NATUREWATCH

Red deer are easiest to spot in summer, in wooded country during the early hours of the morning. Deer watchers must be stealthy because, like most *herbivores* (plant eaters), deer are very wary and alert; they will quickly detect unfamiliar movements, sounds, and scents. Deer are rarely ever spotted on open land.

# KOALA

CARD 21



GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
Marsupialia

FAMILY  
Phascolarctidae

GENUS & SPECIES  
Phascolarctus cinereus



The furry, gray koala lives high in the tops of eucalyptus trees. Now a protected species, it is still threatened by the loss of habitat due to seasonal brush fires.

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Height: 24 in.  
Weight: Males, up to 26 lb.  
Females, 17 lb. Smaller in northern part of range.



### BREEDING

Sexual maturity: Males, 3-4 years.  
Females, 2-3 years.  
Mating: September-January in southern part of range. November-February in northern part.  
Gestation: 35 days.  
No. of young: 1.



### LIFESTYLE

Habit: Solitary tree-dweller.  
Diet: Eucalyptus leaves.  
Lifespan: More than 10 years in the wild. Up to 20 years in captivity.



### RELATED SPECIES

*Phascolarctus cinereus* has no close relatives in its family.



Range of the koala.

### DISTRIBUTION

Coastal regions of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, which have the largest populations, and parts of south Australia.

### CONSERVATION

Now a protected species. Sanctuaries flourish in Victoria and Queensland. Reintroduced into south Australia, where it had become locally extinct.

## HOW THE KOALA CLIMBS

The koala clasps a tree trunk between its forepaws, and then draws its hind legs up together in a series of small, rapid jumps.



"Thumb" and "forefinger" (above) spread out to give a firm grip.

On the hind feet (left), the toes are also separated, with the "big toe" off to one side.

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While it looks like a small bear, the koala is actually

a marsupial whose hands and feet

are specially adapted for climbing trees.

When it descends to the ground, it shuffles along

awkwardly on its short, stocky legs.

### HABITAT

The koala lives almost exclusively in the top branches of eucalyptus trees. Its strong legs and sharp claws help it to grip the tree trunks.

A nocturnal animal, the koala feeds on the young shoots and leaves on high branches, and spends the day sleeping curled up in the tree.

### KOALAS & MAN

Until the early 1900s, the koala was widespread in Australia. But increased settlement by man brought about a dramatic decline in its population. Much of its natural habitat was

destroyed by fires set to clear the land. Koalas were also widely hunted for their warm, durable fur; more than 2 million skins were exported from Australia in 1924 alone.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The koala never drinks because it gets all of the liquid it needs from eucalyptus leaves. "Koala" is the Aborigine word for "no water."
- The koala is an excellent swimmer, crossing rivers in order to survive heavy flooding.
- Ironically, many koalas are killed in sanctuaries because they are run over by cars belonging to visitors.
- A newborn koala is only the size of a lima bean. Its hind legs are barely formed, but its forelimbs and claws are relatively well developed. It drags itself to the pouch by following a trail of saliva laid down by its mother.

### FOOD & FEEDING

During the course of its evolution, the koala has developed special cheek pouches that store food, and a digestive system to handle a diet consisting entirely of eucalyptus leaves. There are more than 100 species of eucalyptus tree that grow in Australia, but the koala feeds on only 12 of them.

Koalas eat between 1 and 2 pounds of leaves each day, and can easily exhaust their own food supply. Koalas cannot survive without eucalyptus, so the main difficulty in keeping them alive in zoos and sanctuaries is obtaining enough eucalyptus leaves from the right species with which to feed them.

Left: At almost a year old, this koala still clings to its mother's back. She seems happy to oblige, and although her load is no longer light, her specially adapted hands and feet let her climb with ease.

Right: An adult koala eats about 1 to 2 pounds of eucalyptus leaves a day, some of which it crams into its cheek pouches to chew later.



### BREEDING

Koalas mate between December and February, depending on location. A single baby is born after a 35-day gestation period. It is blind, hairless, and only  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long. By instinct, it drags itself into its mother's pouch, which opens to the rear instead of the front as with most other marsupials.

Inside the pouch, the baby koala feeds first on mother's milk, and later on half-digested food that is passed through the mother's rectum.

After six months, the young koala leaves the pouch and clings to its mother's back, remaining with her until the following mating season. It then moves to another tree and lives independently for two to four years until it is sexually mature.



Left: A baby koala spends the first six months of its life in its mother's pouch. Then, for the next two or three months, it clings to its mother's fur during the day, returning to her pouch at night.



Right: Koala mothers and their young enjoy a close relationship. The mother will happily carry her youngster until it is time for it to become independent.

# ORANGUTAN

CARD 22

GROUP 1: MAMMALS



ORDER  
Primates

FAMILY  
Pongidae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Pongo pygmaeus*



**The shy and solitary orangutan is second only to the gorilla in size among the primates. Found solely on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, its population has decreased drastically.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Length: Males, 4 ft. Females, 3 ft.  
Weight: Males, 130-200 lb.  
Females, 90-110 lb.



### BREEDING

Sexual maturity: 8-10 years.  
Mating: Year-round.  
Gestation: 260-270 days.  
Litter size: Single young; twins are rare.



### LIFESTYLE

Call: Squeaks and whines. Adult males make long, bubbling calls and also roar.  
Habit: Diurnal and mainly solitary.  
Diet: Tropical fruits, leaves, shoots, bark, insects, and eggs.  
Lifespan: Average 35 years.



### RELATED SPECIES

There is one species of orangutan, with two subspecies, living in Borneo and Sumatra.



Range of the orangutan.

### DISTRIBUTION

Restricted to the islands of Borneo and Sumatra.

### CONSERVATION

Although the governments of Singapore and Hong Kong have prohibited their import and export, orangutans are seriously endangered. Protection schemes have had some success in returning those bred in captivity to the wild, but they need secure areas within their natural habitat.

## SWINGING THROUGH THE TREES



An orangutan is a heavy-bodied animal. It uses its weight to swing back and forth on the branch it is holding until it comes close enough to reach out and grab a branch of the next tree. The orangutan moves slowly and carefully through the trees, using all four limbs.

Its hands and feet are designed for holding and grasping branches, and its immensely powerful arms enable it to swing and climb in the trees easily.

The big toe on each foot can rotate to touch the ends of the other toes, like the thumbs on our hands. In effect, the orangutan has four "hands"

for climbing trees and gripping branches.

On the ground, the orangutan walks on all four limbs, with the feet bent inward and clenched, and the arms either placed flat or clenched on the ground.

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*Of the three great apes—the orangutan, the chimpanzee, and the gorilla—the orangutan is the only one to live outside Africa. Hidden in the dense, tropical rainforests that are its home, it is also unique among apes for being truly forest-dwelling.*

### HABITS

The orangutan lives a solitary life in the treetops of the rainforest. With the exception of adult males, orangutans rarely descend to the ground. The orangutan is a *diurnal* animal—that is, active during daylight hours. At night, females and youngsters sleep in a nest of branches placed in the fork of a tree. Because males are heavier, they generally prefer to sleep on the ground. All orangutans sleep on their sides with their arms

cushioning their heads. At daybreak, orangutans leave their nests and go searching for food.

Orangutans are far less sociable than other apes, and do not live in large social groups. Adult males are particularly solitary, and stake out areas of forest that they defend as their own territories, fighting other males who intrude, if necessary. Females occasionally group together loosely with their young.



Left: Male orangutans have large cheek pouches.

Right: Fruit makes up half of the orangutan's diet. It follows fruit-eating birds to fresh supplies. It uses its strong jaws and teeth to open hard or spiky skins.



### BREEDING

A dominant male orangutan may have a large breeding territory and mate with several females. Mating occurs year-round and females give birth to a single offspring every three to six years. A baby orangutan grows very slowly. It may become somewhat independent at three years of age, but it will stay with its mother until she gives birth again.

Because female orangutans do not mate again until an offspring is at least 3 years old, they may only succeed in raising two to three young in a lifetime.



Left: A newborn orangutan weighs no more than 5 pounds, but is already well-developed. Totally dependent on its mother for the first 18 months, it suckles from her, travels by clinging to her, and sleeps in her nest at night.

### ORANGUTAN & MAN

The orangutan poses no threat to man, yet man is its only enemy. The orangutan's natural habitat has been destroyed to provide land and timber for an increasing human population.

Female orangutans are

slaughtered so that their babies can be captured for zoos. The babies often die in captivity. Since its breeding rate is relatively slow, its numbers have not recovered and it is a seriously endangered species.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Because the orangutan spends most of its life in trees, its arms are longer and stronger than any other ape's.
- "Orang" and "utan" are the Malay words for "man" and "jungle." The literal meaning

- of the name, therefore, is "man of the jungle."
- Centuries ago, orangutans were much larger than they are today. Fossils show that a species of giant orangutan existed in China 500,000 years ago.

# JAGUAR

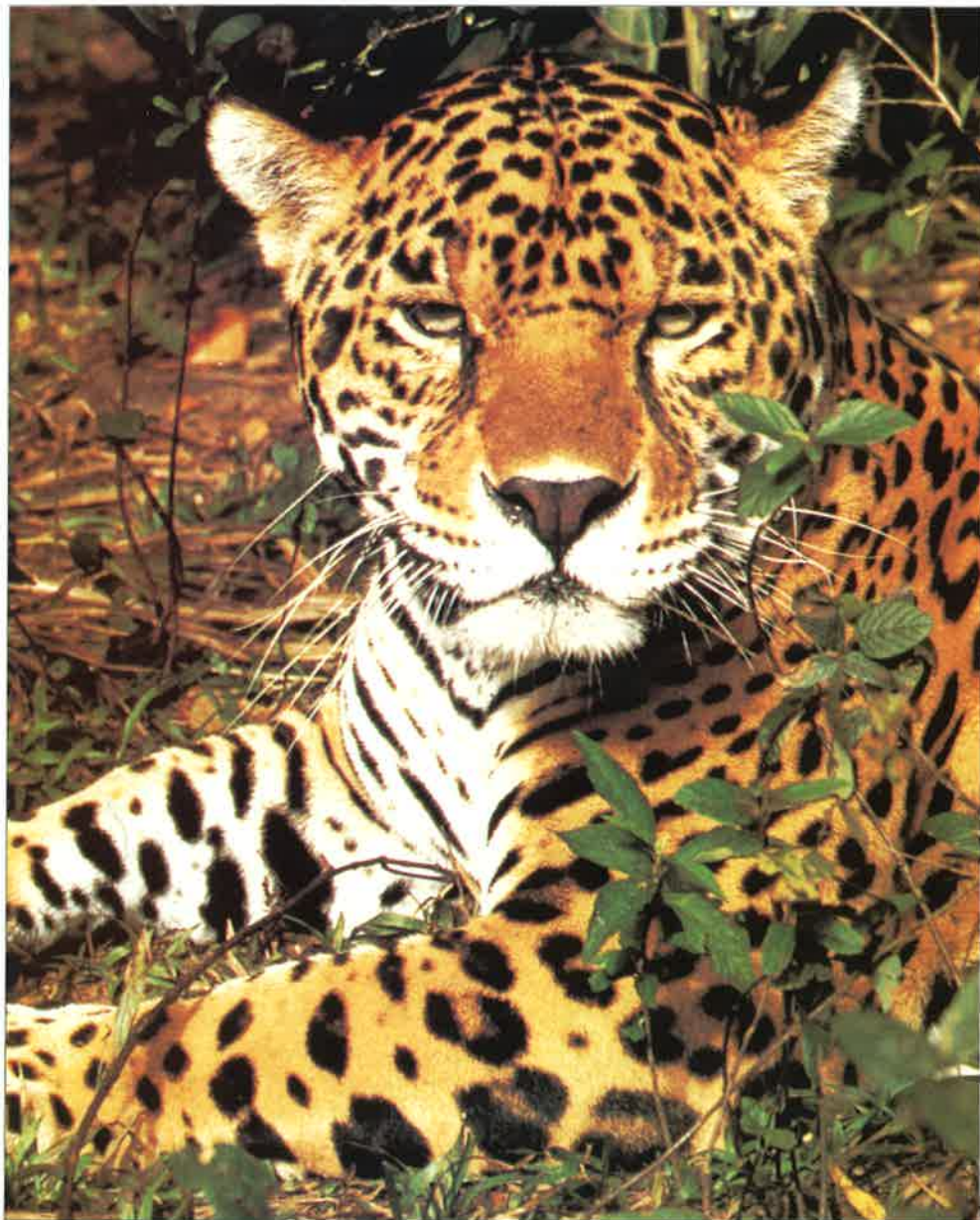
CARD 23

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

CLASS  
Carnivora

ORDER  
Felidae

FAMILY  
*Panthera onca*



**The jaguar is the subject of many myths and hunters' tales. The largest American wildcat, it is now rare in its natural habitat as the result of being hunted for its attractive fur.**

## KEY FACTS



**SIZES**  
Length: 44-73 in. Tail 18-30 in.  
Weight: Males, 125-250 lb.  
Females, 100-200 lb.



**BREEDING**  
Sexual maturity: 3 years.  
Mating: Non-seasonal in tropics; early autumn in extremes of range.  
Gestation: 93-110 days.  
No. of young: 1-4 cubs.



**LIFESTYLE**  
Habit: Solitary, except in breeding season, when they come together to mate.  
Diet: Ground-living mammals, domestic stock, fish, frogs, turtles, and small alligators.  
Lifespan: Up to 22 years.



**RELATED SPECIES**  
Eight subspecies; also *P. tigris*, *P. leo*, *P. pardus*, and *P. uncia*.



Range of the jaguar.

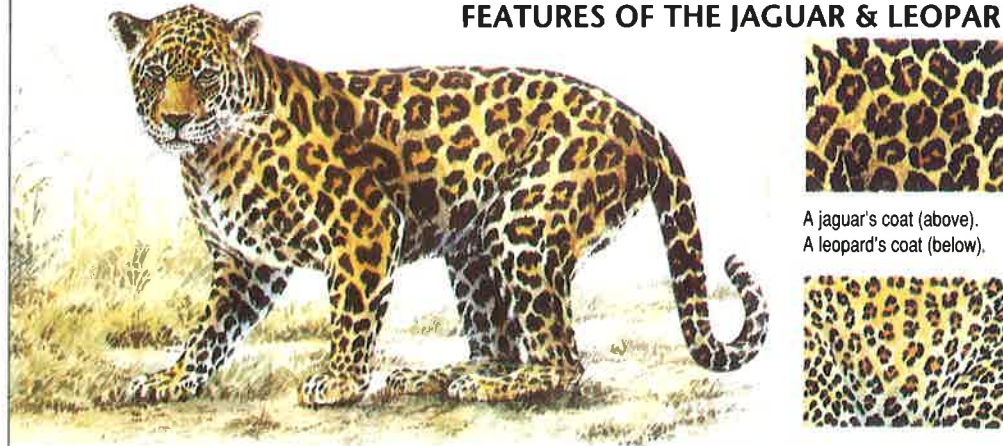
### DISTRIBUTION

Central and South America as far south as Patagonia; the largest jaguars are found in Mato Grosso in Brazil.

### CONSERVATION

All subspecies are endangered. Many are extinct except in zoos, where they breed successfully. At present, the greatest threats to the jaguar are overhunting (mostly for its fur) and the loss of its habitat to farming.

## FEATURES OF THE JAGUAR & LEOPARD



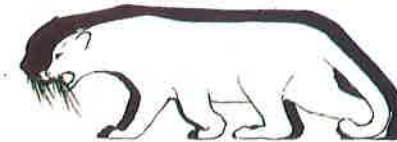
A jaguar's coat (above).  
A leopard's coat (below).



The jaguar's jaw is larger and even more powerful looking than the leopard's jaw.



The leopard's head is smaller and narrower than that of the heavier jaguar.



Although both animals have similar body outlines, the jaguar is more heavily built, with a stocky appearance and sturdy legs.



K. Anstler/Planet Earth Pictures

*Jaguars live in a variety of habitats, from dense jungle and scrubland to reed thickets and shoreline forests. They will even live in open country, provided the grass and rocks offer enough cover for hunting, and a reliable supply of water is available.*

### HABITS

Adult jaguars are solitary, seeking each other out only during breeding season, when male and female stay together for a short time to mate. A young jaguar stays with its mother for a few years before leaving to find hunting territories of its own.

The size of a jaguar's territory depends on food availability. In an area where food is plentiful, such as a forest, a jaguar can survive in a circular area of about three miles in diameter. Where food is scarce, it may need to roam over an area of 200 square miles.

Partridge Productions Ltd./O.S.E.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- One jaguar tagged by a biologist was next seen 500 miles away in a new hunting location.
- The jaguar is the only big

- cat that does not roar.
- Amazonian Indians tell of jaguars emerging from the forest to play with village children.

### BREEDING

Very little is known about the family life of wild jaguars. They have been hunted almost to extinction for their fur. Biologists now find it difficult to study wild jaguars because they have become so rare. Most information comes from studying captive jaguars in zoos, where the animals have been bred successfully.

Males and females meet in the wild only to mate. The male leaves as soon as mating is over, and the female brings up the young on her own. She gives birth to one to four cubs, which are blind at birth

and weigh only 25-32 ounces. The cubs begin exploring the world outside the den at about two weeks, when their eyes have opened. They begin hunting with their mother at the age of six months. They remain with her for the first two years before leaving to find a territory of their own in which to hunt. A jaguar is sexually mature at three years of age.

**Right:** All-black jaguars are not uncommon. These cubs have a spotted father and a black mother.



R. Williams/Bruce Coleman

### FOOD & HUNTING

Jaguars hunt mainly on the ground; however they will climb trees to lie in wait for prey. The jaguar can cover short distances rapidly, but it tires quickly. It hunts mainly at night and often surprises

its unsuspecting prey.

Its food consists mostly of forest animals varying in size from mice to deer. The jaguar is a proficient swimmer and also eats frogs, fish, turtles, and small alligators. It is espe-

cially skilled at catching fish, which it does by flipping the fish out onto the riverbank with its paw. Jaguars will also kill domestic animals, particularly where the forest has been cleared for farmland.



**Left:** Within their range, jaguars may occasionally be found in scrubland, although they usually prefer areas with plenty of fresh water. They are excellent swimmers and can supplement their diet with fish, frogs, turtles, and even small alligators.

### JAGUAR & MAN

Jaguars were once found in an area ranging from Arizona to Argentina, but ruthless hunting has reduced their population. The clearing of forests to build new settlements and pastures for cattle has forced them out of much of their original habitat. Jaguars are thought to be numerous in the upper basin of the Orinoco, in Venezuela, but everywhere else they are in danger of extinction. There are fewer than 200 wild jaguars left in all of Argentina. Soon, the only remaining populations will live in zoos.

Although jaguars have a reputation as man-eaters, there are numerous stories about men being followed for miles through the forest by solitary jaguars. These stories give credence to the theory that the animals prefer to escort men off their territory rather than attack them.



# MOOSE

CARD 24

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
*Artiodactyla*

FAMILY  
*Cervidae*

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Alces alces*



F. Gohier/Ardea London

**The long-legged moose is the largest of all living deer. It feeds by browsing on trees and marshy vegetation and must eat 45 pounds of food a day.**

## KEY FACTS



**SIZES**  
Length: 8-10 ft.  
Height: To shoulder, 5-7 ft.  
Weight: 800-2,000 lb. Size varies according to sex. Female smaller than male.



**BREEDING**  
Sexual maturity: 16-28 months.  
Mating season: September to October.  
Gestation: 240-250 days.  
No. of young: 1 or 2.



**LIFESTYLE**  
Habit: Solitary or in small groups.  
Diet: Leaves, branches and twigs, and water and marsh plants.  
Lifespan: Up to 20 years. Average 10-15 years.



**RELATED SPECIES**  
American moose and Eurasian elk form a single genus and species with no close relatives. Still, there are 40 species of deer (family *Cervidae*) worldwide.



Range of the moose.

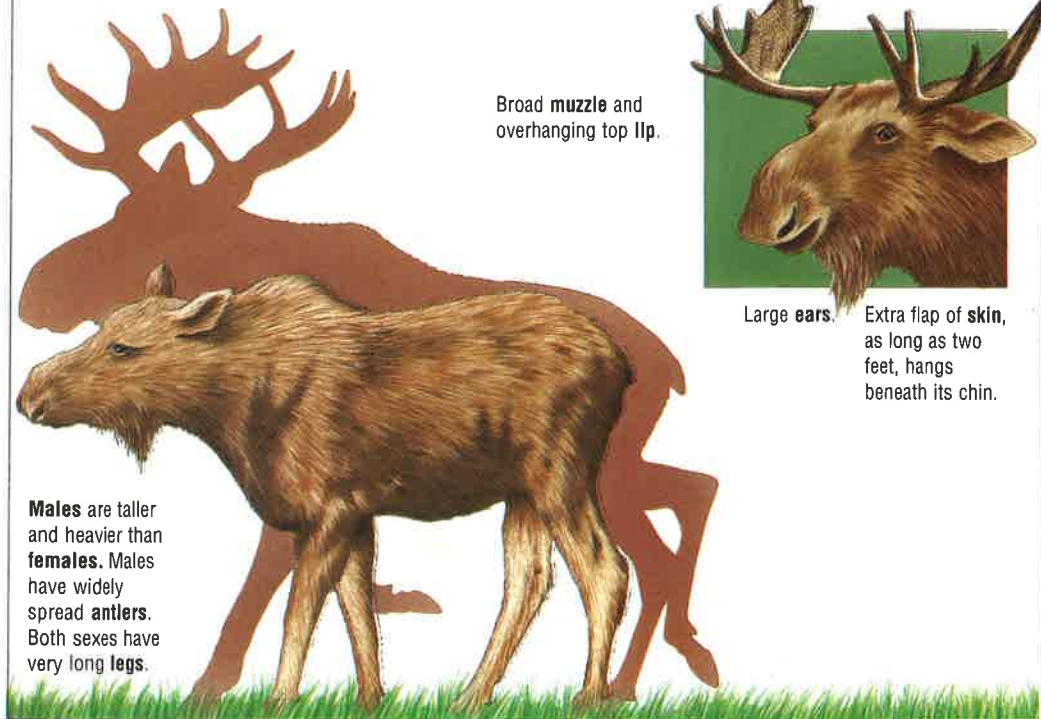
### DISTRIBUTION

Northern North America, including Alaska and Canada. The slightly smaller Eurasian elk is found in Scandinavia, northeastern Europe, and parts of northern Asia.

### CONSERVATION

Extremely abundant in some areas, although populations change depending on severity of winter. Of the 150,000 moose in Alaska, 10,000 are killed annually by hunters.

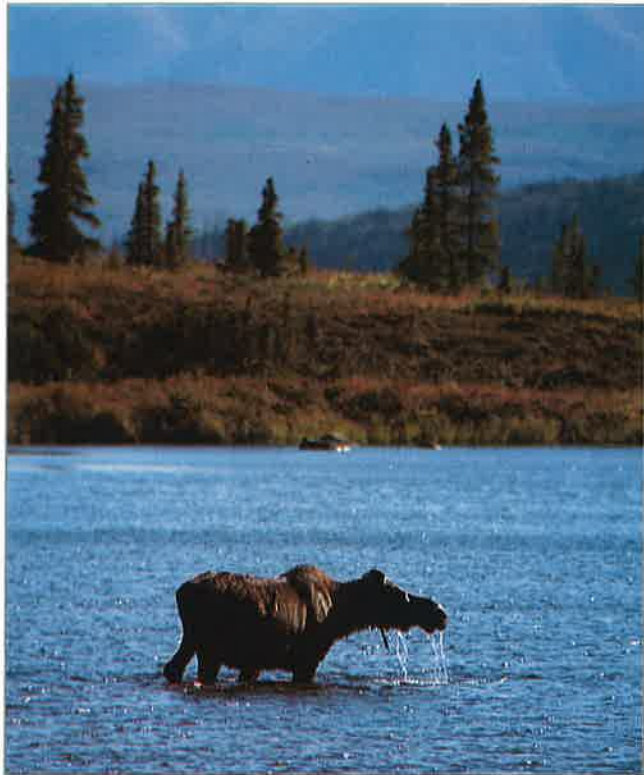
## FEATURES OF THE MOOSE



Broad muzzle and overhanging top lip.

Large ears. Extra flap of skin, as long as two feet, hangs beneath its chin.

Males are taller and heavier than females. Males have widely spread antlers. Both sexes have very long legs.



J.W. Warden/Natural Science Photos

*Moose are widespread throughout Canada and Alaska, where the largest animals, which stand as high as seven to eight feet at the shoulder, are found. Slightly smaller moose are also found in parts of Europe and Asia, where they are known as elk.*

### HABITS

Moose are usually solitary animals. During spring and summer the sexes live apart; calves (young moose) live with their mothers. During the warmer months moose prefer low-lying areas, often near lakes and marshes.

When winter comes the moose move to higher ground, where they seek shelter in forests among birch and pine trees.

Where food is plentiful, moose form small groups that include a bull (male moose), several cows (females), and their calves. They paw at the snow to expose the edible grass and twigs below. Still, harsh winter conditions often prevent moose from finding enough to eat.

Moose that are weak from hunger in winter are sometimes attacked by wolves.

### BREEDING

Rut (mating season) lasts for several weeks in the fall. The bull competes for one female at a time, but he mates with several in turn. Dominant bulls drive younger bulls away and fight among themselves for the females. The bulls that become badly injured while fighting for mates often fall prey to wolves and bears.

The cow gives birth to one or two young in late spring. The calves cannot walk for the first few days, but by two weeks of age they are able to browse for their own food, and they follow their mother as she forages. They are weaned at five months but stay with their mother until she gives birth



M.W. Grosnick/Ardea London

again. The cow sometimes drives the older calves away but allows them to rejoin her when she and her new calves move on.



M.W. Grosnick/Ardea London

Above: Older females often give birth to twins.

Left: Rival males fighting.

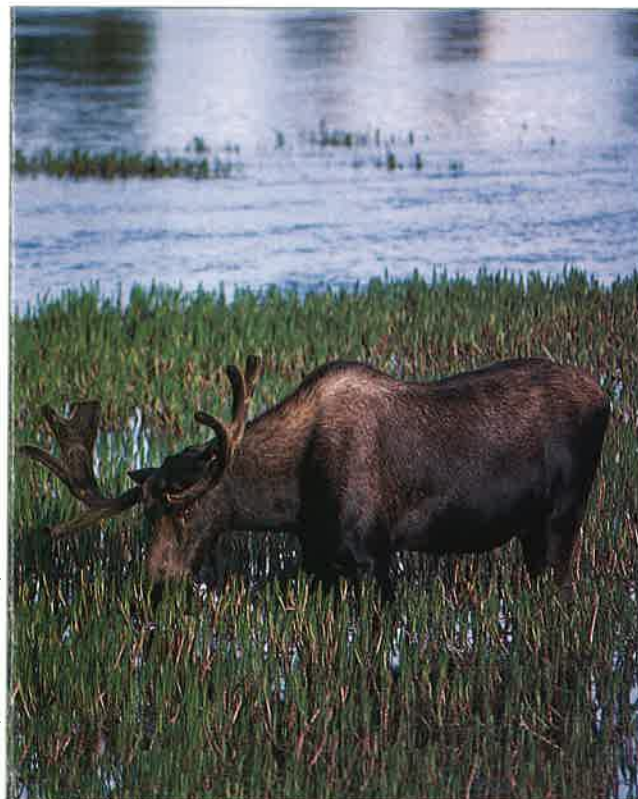
### FOOD & FEEDING

Moose browse for food during both day and night but are most active at dawn and dusk. They feed on the branches and leaves of willow, birch, and aspen trees.

During the summer months moose feed extensively on vegetation that grows in and around lakes and marshes. They wade in water up to their shoulders to feed. They also eat underwater plants by submerging their heads to reach the roots and stems.

When lakes and marshes freeze over in winter, moose feed on berries, twigs, and branches. They also strip bark from trees and paw through snow to reach vegetation.

Right: In summer moose feed on sodium-rich aquatic plants found in lakes and marshes.



R. Coombe/Planet Earth Pictures

### DID YOU KNOW?

- During breeding season hunters often imitate the female moose's call to attract males.
- Bulls have been known to attack trains, possibly mistaking the whistle for the call of a rival bull.
- Moose can trot as fast as 35 miles an hour. They are good swimmers and can remain underwater for up to a minute.
- Moose are bred in the Soviet Union for food and to work on farms.
- A moose becomes helpless in very deep snow (below) and can be overtaken by a hunter on snowshoes.



# BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
Lagomorpha

FAMILY  
Leporidae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Lepus californicus*



M. Austerman/Oxford Scientific Films

**The black-tailed jackrabbit is actually a hare, not a rabbit. It is distinguished by its huge, oversized ears, which allow it to hear the faintest sounds and stay cool during the day.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

**Length:** 24 in., head to tail. Ears, 8 in. long.  
**Weight:** Around 11 lb. Females slightly heavier.



### BREEDING

**Sexual maturity:** 8 months.  
**Breeding season:** January-September. Spring is peak time.  
**Gestation:** 41-47 days.  
**No. of young:** Up to 6. Females may have 3-4 litters a year.



### LIFESTYLE

**Habit:** Nocturnal, solitary except in breeding season.  
**Diet:** Grasses, herbs, succulents, woody twigs, bark.  
**Lifespan:** 1-5 years in the wild.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are 21 species of jackrabbit and hare in the United States. The white-tailed jackrabbit lives in the Northwest.



Range of the black-tailed jackrabbit.

### DISTRIBUTION

Western and central United States, northern Mexico.

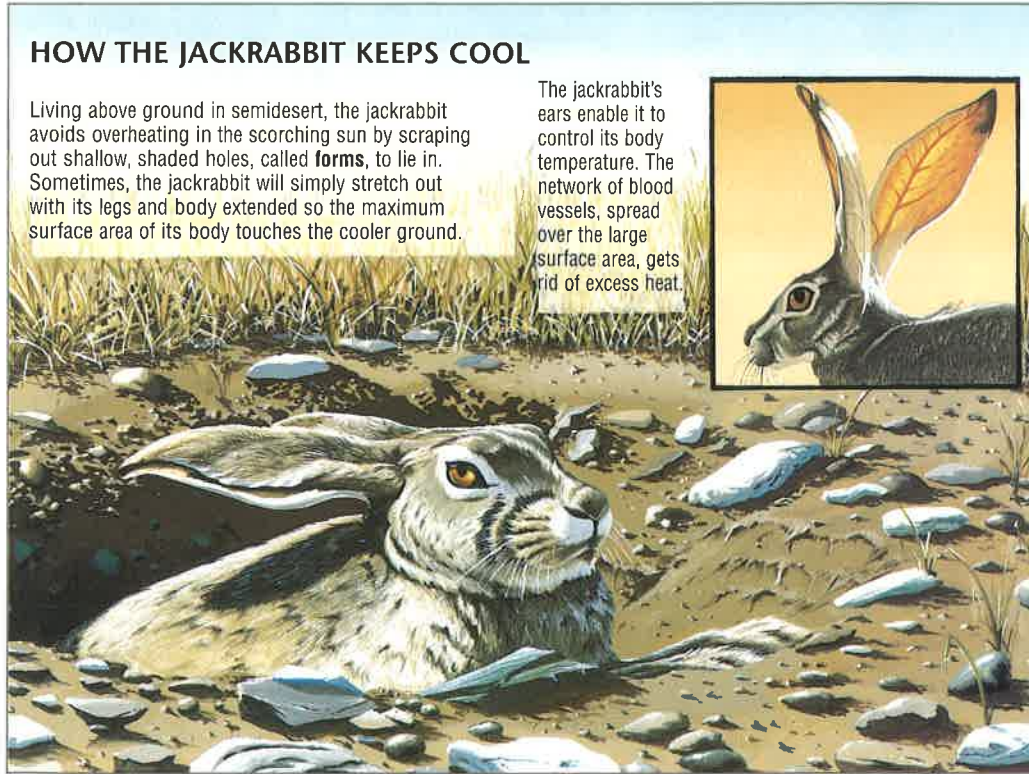
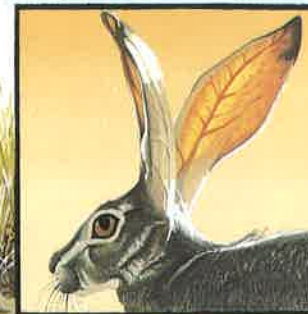
### CONSERVATION

As the most common of North American hare species, the black-tailed jackrabbit breeds quickly and successfully. It is considered a pest because of the damage it does to crops, and it is a popular target for game hunters as well.

## HOW THE JACKRABBIT KEEPS COOL

Living above ground in semidesert, the jackrabbit avoids overheating in the scorching sun by scraping out shallow, shaded holes, called **forms**, to lie in. Sometimes, the jackrabbit will simply stretch out with its legs and body extended so the maximum surface area of its body touches the cooler ground.

The jackrabbit's ears enable it to control its body temperature. The network of blood vessels, spread over the large surface area, gets rid of excess heat.



*The jackrabbit lives in semidesert and prairie regions.*

*Its brown fur gives it effective camouflage against the sparse, dry vegetation. If it is spotted by predators,*

*however, it can run faster than a racehorse*

*and will leap over rocks and bushes in an*

*attempt to evade capture.*

### HABITS

The nocturnal jackrabbit is well adapted to life in the hot desert and prairie regions of North America. It lives in open spaces among the thin desert ground cover of plants, such as sagebrush and cactus. Most of the time, the jackrabbit is solitary. Like all hare species, it lives above the ground.

During the cool of the evening, the jackrabbit emerges from its resting place to feed under cover of dark-

ness. Its large ears funnel sound and enable it to hear danger signs. Good hearing is essential to the survival of the jackrabbit, which is prey to wolves, coyotes, and pumas.

In addition to its excellent hearing, the jackrabbit also has sharp eyesight. Like other hares, it will sit upright on its haunches so that it can better view its surroundings.

**Below:** For most of the year, jackrabbits are solitary.



Lanceau/Nature

### BREEDING

Jackrabbits normally breed nine months out of the year. At the beginning of the breeding season, males box each other with their forefeet and chase the females, often kicking and biting them.

Young jackrabbits are born six weeks after mating in a concealed site above ground. The young have furry coats and their eyes are open. Soon, the mother separates them into individual hiding places.

The young remain in their hiding places until their mother comes to suckle them.

Eventually, they begin eating small amounts of vegetation in addition.

The young are weaned after three weeks; the female mates again and produces another litter. The young are sexually mature within a year.



K.W. Fink/Ardea London



C. Palmer/Oxford Scientific Films

**Above:** In early spring, jackrabbits come together to breed. Males fight each other for access to females.

**Left:** The female places her young in separate hiding places to prevent a predator from taking them all.



### SPECIAL ADAPTATIONS

The jackrabbit's eyes are situated on the sides of its head, giving it all-around vision that enables it to spot danger coming from any direction.

Its fur is brown with black tips, which provides effective

camouflage against the brush. When asleep during the day, the jackrabbit blends into the desert scenery unnoticed.

The jackrabbit's long back legs allow it to run at high speeds to escape danger.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Jackrabbits in the desert rarely drink water. They obtain all the moisture they need from water-retaining plants, such as cactus.
- Jackrabbits can reach a speed of 50 miles per hour and can leap as high as 5 feet.
- The undersides of a jackrab-

bit's feet are covered with long, brush-like hairs, which provide both a grip and a soft cushion on hard surfaces.

- A female jackrabbit will usually suckle her young once a day, and spends no more than five to 10 minutes with them.

### FOOD & FEEDING

Jackrabbits leave their resting places at dusk in order to feed. Occasionally, they raid crops and cause extensive damage. When food is scarce, jackrabbits will survive by gnawing the bark of trees.

Jackrabbits feed for short

periods, stopping in between to rest. Their long, chisel-like incisor teeth bite the stems of grasses and herbs, which are then chewed and shredded by the flattened molars.

**Below:** Jackrabbits include twigs and woody shrubs in their diet.

