

Moose — Tunturpak

MAANI SUN'AMI TUNTURPANEK PIITUKUT. – HERE ON KODIAK WE DON'T HAVE MOOSE.



Photo: Hunter with moose antlers, Dog Salmon River, Alaska Peninsula, ca. 1960. Nekeferof Collection.

Moose (*Alces alces*) are the biggest member of the deer family. These large-bodied, long-legged creatures are known for their droopy nose and dewlap: a flap of hair-covered skin beneath their chins. Only the males have antlers. Moose live in forests across North America, Europe, and Russia. In Alaska they can be found from the southeast Panhandle to the Arctic Slope. Throughout this area, the animals prefer habitats with dense shrubs, including river valleys and recently burned areas.

Moose have been part of the Alaska landscape for thousands of years, but despite their enduring, widespread availability, they are not broadly found in the Alutiiq world. Moose are native to the Kenai Peninsula, but they do not occur in the Kodiak Archipelago and only stray into western parts of Prince William Sound. Similarly, archaeological data indicate that moose were not part of the Alaska Peninsula landscape until the twentieth century. Moose spread into the Alaska Peninsula in the early 1900s, becoming relatively common by the 1930s.

Today, moose are a popular source of food in Alaska Peninsula Alutiiq communities on both the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea coasts. Residents hunt moose from August to April, with peak harvesting in December. Moose are often taken while caribou hunting, and like caribou meat, moose meat is widely shared. Sharing is not only an important social practice, it is a good way to manage the sudden acquisition of a large quantity of meat.