



ROB O'FLANAGAN/Sudbury Star special

Rick Leclaire has been a taxidermist for more than 20 years, but he has never seen an albino moose before. He was asked to mount this rare beast after it was struck by a train near Foleyet.

A white moose?

Taxidermist says it's the real thing

By **ROB O'FLANAGAN**
Star Correspondent

Is it an elaborate hoax or the real thing: A mythical beast akin to the "jackalope" — that bizarre cross between a jack rabbit and antelope usually seen above the pickled eggs and beer mugs in a small town bar?

Taxidermist Rick Leclaire says the head of a white bull moose, currently mounted on his shop wall in Copper Cliff, is (or at least was) a rare and authentic albino. In more than 20 years in the taxidermy business, Leclaire has seen a lot of odd species, but never

one of these.

Leclaire, who recently opened Leclaire's Taxidermy and Art at 17 Serpentine St., says the two-and-a-half to three-year-old bull moose was struck by a train near

STAR SPOTLIGHT

Kukatush Road (about 20 kilometres east of Foleyet), and its mounted head will find a permanent home in the Northern Lights restaurant in Foleyet.

"They tell me what happened was this moose was being chased by wolves, and to get away from them he got up on the railroad tracks," said Leclaire, who argued that because of record snowfalls a greater number of moose have been seeking escape routes on tracks.

"That's when he was hit by the train. Maybe he turned white with fear for sure," he added with a laugh.

Leclaire, who learned the taxidermy trade by correspondence course more than 22 years ago, was able to verify the authenticity of the strange beast. A copy of a Ministry of Natural Resources form authorizing the mounting indicates that the moose is, indeed, an albino. And two snap shots of albinos in the wild, which he laid out on a small table, also proved the existence of the species.

"It's nice to know that this isn't the last one out there," said Leclaire.

"All we did was preserve it.

Otherwise it would have just been left there for the wolves to eat."

Although Leclaire says it is not a pure albino, which has pink eyes and no dark patches in its hide, this is the only white moose he has ever seen.



Track Kill

Train engineer says there's a need to reduce the carnage

As the CNR freight train rolled southward through the Burwash area the engineer and brakemen spotted eight elk on the tracks.

In an attempt to scare these magnificent animals away, the engineer sounded the whistle. By the time the last freight car rolled past the scene the eight animals were dead and Ontario's last surviving herd of wild elk was a little smaller.

This was not an isolated incident. Trains, transport trucks and cars kill moose, deer, and bear all the time. Animals that are exceedingly rare in Ontario, such as elk, woodland caribou and white moose, are also killed every year. Nobody knows the numbers involved, but if the experiences of Bill Cargill are any indication a lot of animals are killed by locomotives.

Cargill is an engineer for the CNR and has been for several years. This past winter he became frustrated with the number of moose killed on railway tracks. It appears that more moose were on the tracks this past winter because of the deep snow in the bush.

While the anti-hunting movement decries the killing of game animals during hunts nobody raises a whisper about animals killed on roads and railways tracks, says Cargill.

And nobody keeps track of the numbers involved. There is no law or regulation requiring people to report "road kills" of any kind, even though that information would be useful in estimating populations, says Mike Hall, a biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

"On one trip I couldn't believe the bloodbath," says Cargill. "I counted 12 dead moose, and those are the ones that I could see. Who



TERRY PENDER/Sudbury Star

Bill Cargill is an engineer who says the wildlife carnage on the tracks this winter was high.

knows how many made it into the bush and died there."

During his 20 years of hauling freight through the remote stretches of bush along the Sudbury-Foley-Horneypayne corridor, Cargill has glimpsed at some of the most rare animals in Ontario, including white moose and woodland caribou.

He has seen three woodland caribou. Each was killed in a collision with a train, he says, and a small herd of white moose was wiped out — one by one — in collisions with locomotives around Foley.

"One engineer I know hit six

moose in one trip," says Cargill. "I took a moose out three trips ago. I ran a bear over only last year. This isn't a rare thing. Every engineer you talk to has run over animals."

Some years Cargill says he's killed up to 10 moose.

"I know that a lot of animals do get hit but we have no way of getting information," says Hall. "I would certainly like to know what mortality is occurring other than the hunts. We don't get road kill information, but I wish we did."

Cargill wishes that someone would develop a way of scaring animals off the tracks in front of

the locomotives that he drives. Perhaps special whistles that produce a high-pitch frequency could be mounted on the front of the diesels, he says.

There is no indication that the devices work, says Hall, especially when bugs or snow could clog the whistle. When a moose collides with a locomotive, the moose always loses. But drivers of cars and trucks often get hurt when their vehicles hit one of these large animals.

And as a result, a group of doctors in New England has published a report calling on automakers to make cars that better

trauma services at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Centre in New Hampshire, says moose-car collisions are on the increase in North America and autos should be designed to better withstand impact with the heavy, long-limbed animals.

Sutton and his colleagues say in their report that Saab and Volvo have strengthened the design of their cars with moose collisions in mind.

"For urban dwellers, it probably doesn't seem like much of a deal but for us up here in New Hampshire, and I'm sure throughout Canada, this is important," says Sutton.

"As a trauma surgeon, I'm much more likely to see someone hit by a moose than I am a gunshot wound."

The New England doctors looked at the experiences of 23 patients involved in moose-car collisions in their region.

All of the patients had serious injuries, including several who were permanently paralysed.

"What we found is a lot of these patients had a predominance of head and neck injuries because the moose is so large that when a car strikes it, the front-end protection doesn't do much good because it just sweeps the legs out from under the moose and then the moose body falls on the windshield and the roof of the car," Sutton says.

"Seat belts and air bags really don't prevent injury from those types of collisions."

Still, Sutton stressed that the majority of people involved in moose collisions are not seriously hurt.

"Studies in Sweden have shown that out of 72,000 collisions, only one or two per cent were serious or fatal," he says. "North American data suggests the same thing."

FDL man captures 2 rare white moose on film

Concerned about their fate

By Michael Mentzer
Of The Reporter Staff

Jake Schommer went to Canada to shoot a bear. He got two moose instead — rare ones. White ones. Maybe albinos, but he's not sure.

The moose he brought back were captured on video film and several rolls of 35mm. He couldn't be happier.

While he was there as part of a six-member group, he was told that a National Geographic photographer had tried unsuccessfully at one time to photograph the white moose.

"It was a great trip ... just fantastic," said Schommer, a well-known Fond du Lac electrician, amateur photographer and longtime local resident.

Schommer joined Jack Schingen, Scott Snyder and Bob

Gable of Fond du Lac, Bob Snyder of Iowa and Ryan Warren of Madison.

Speaking of the rare white moose, Schommer said, "I could never shoot one of them."

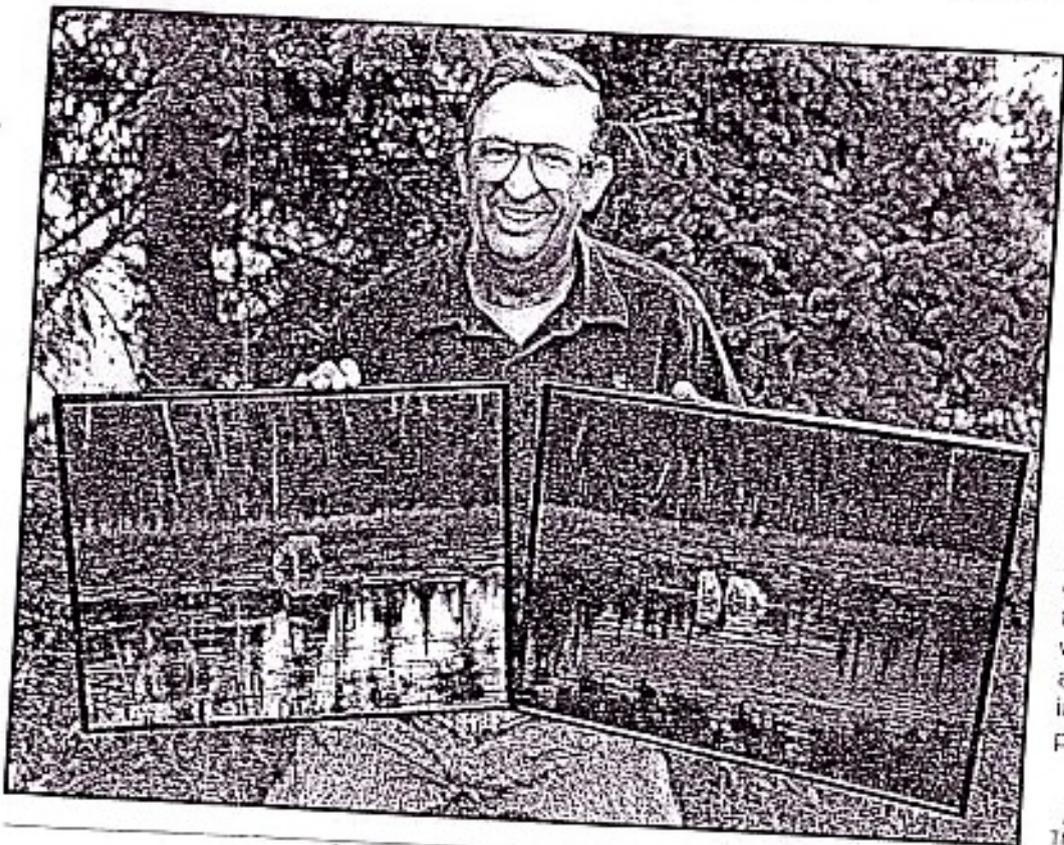
He admits that he's concerned about their fate when moose season opens this fall in Ontario.

"We were told they'll be legal game this fall," Schommer said, even though they are rare. "I'm sure there are people out there who would shoot them if they knew where they were."

That's why Schommer's not saying.

Schommer, who takes his cameras with him wherever he goes, was ready when the unexpected spectacle presented it-

See Moose Page A2



Left, Jake Schommer of Fond du Lac holds two color enlargements of photos he took in June of rare white moose in Ontario. He was in a tree stand on a bear hunting trip when the cow and its yearling bull calf emerged from a thickly wooded area and walked into a beaver pond.

Rick Danz/
The Reporter

Moose/

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self more than 200 yards away.

He was in a tree stand about eight feet above a beaver pond concealed behind a camouflage curtain and wearing camouflage hunting gear when he first noticed one of the moose.

"It looked like a ghost drifting out of the woods," Schommer recalled.

He reached for his video camera and squeezed off 30 minutes of film as the white cow and its white bull calf, probably a year old, moved slowly through the shallows of the beaver pond.

After that, he began shooting frame after frame of 35mm. By the time the moose moved within 25 yards of his tree stand, his film was gone.

"I was shooting off film like crazy," he said with a laugh. "I didn't think I'd get any more chances."

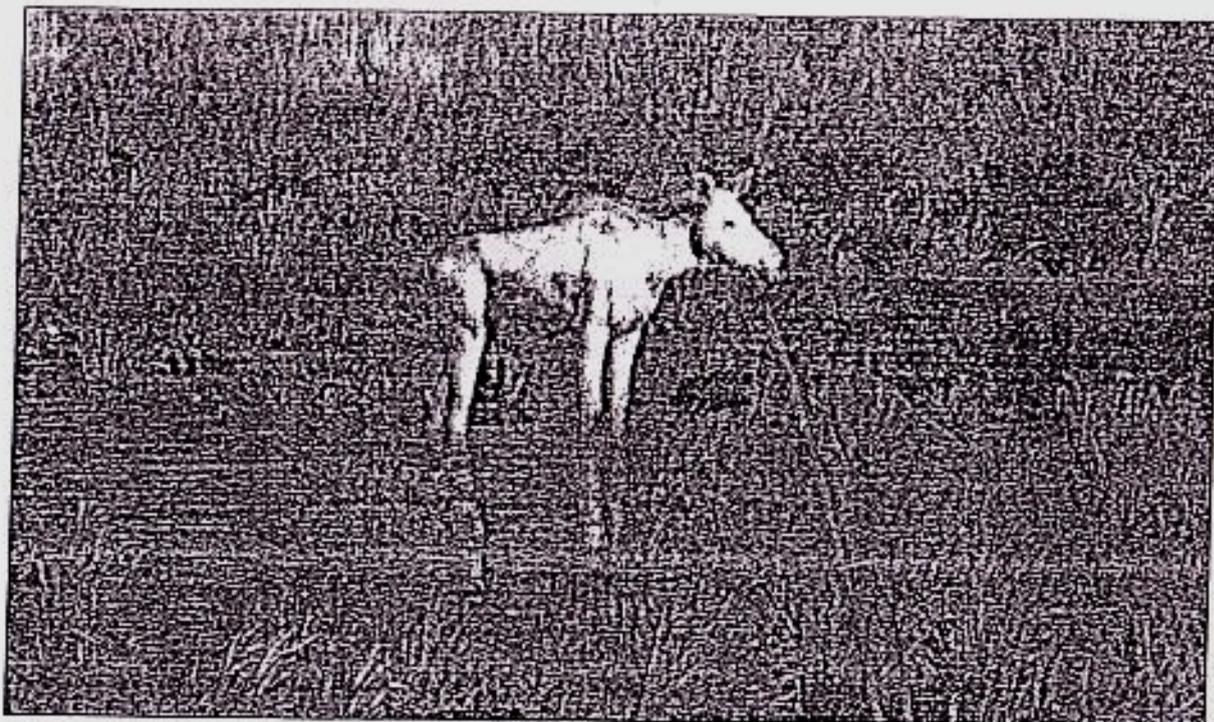
"They looked right at me, but they couldn't see anything out of the ordinary" because of the camouflage, Schommer said. "I knew they could hear the shutter and the sound of the camera when it automatically rewound (the film), but they never spooked."

The sighting occurred on the first late afternoon of the week-long hunting trip in early June. He saw the pair two other times during the week.

At one time he saw them with two brown moose

"I really don't know if they

WERE TRUE ALBINO'S



▲ Jake Schommer of Fond du Lac photographed this rare white moose in Ontario. When fully grown, moose rank among the largest mammals in North America. Bulls sometimes stand 7½ feet at the shoulder and weigh 1,500 to 1,800 pounds. Antlers on a full-grown bull moose spread six feet or more.

their skin was pink and the calf's antlers were just little nubs coming out and they looked pink. I couldn't see their eyes well enough ... but they looked dark."

At one point, Schommer said he chuckled because the legs of the moose reminded him of those of a ballet dancer in white tights.

"You could just barely see the pink color of the skin coming through the white"

Schommer said it was fascinating to watch the moose methodically plunge into the

DEEP WATER HOLES OF THE BEAVER POND

"They knew right where the holes were, and they'd go in so that only their snouts were visible," he said. "It really was something to see."

Schommer had never seen a moose in the wild until the outing in early June.

On the drive to the hunting lodge in Ontario, he saw three along the roadside. In all, he saw about a dozen before the group headed for home.

Schommer also saw lynx for the first time, as well as pine martens, fox, wolves, beavers and a variety of other wildlife

None of us got a bear

mer said. "I got as much satisfaction, if not more, from that trip that any other I've ever done before."

He admits he hasn't given up on the bear hunt though.

"We met a farmer when we were up there, and he wants us to come back," Schommer said. "A big black bear has killed a couple of his cows. We're going to check with him in week or so, and if it's still there, we just might go back."

And if he does, you can bet he'll be hoping the white moose are still safe and sound in their woods near the beaver

White moose disappearing

Foley residents are concerned over the future of a herd of unique white moose which have lived in the area for six years.

The moose are fighting for their survival as three of them have been killed by trains. Residents speculate the animals run to the track to escape wolves.

It is to be hoped a solution can be devised to help save the white moose.

For many people, the moose has become the wilderness symbol for the beauty of the Northern wilderness. It would be a shame to lose such an unusual example of that symbol.

The Daily Press

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Town fears for future of white moose

BY BRUCE CAMPION-SMITH
STAFF REPORTER

The rare white moose moves like a ghost in the forest just outside of the tiny Northern Ontario town of Foleyet.

The town's residents are worried for the safety of a female, known as a cow, that is thought to be the last white moose remaining in the area.

Four of the animals have been hit and killed by trains, including three this year alone.

"There's one cow that's left that's all white and there's a bull that's half black, half white. Those are the only two left that we know of," said Jane Armstrong, a resident of Foleyet, southwest of Timmins.

Although a rugged bush animal, moose prefer the easygoing walk along the railway tracks to the snow drifts of the forest.

"They go to the track to get out of the deep snow and get away from the wolves who never leave them alone," Armstrong said in a telephone inter-

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Produced calf 1998

Town fears for safety of rare moose

Four have died on railway tracks near Timmins

Continued from A1

view last night.

But that makes them vulnerable to the trains; the most recent deaths came on Nov. 20 when a cow and her newborn calf were struck.

"The only one left is last year's calf," Armstrong said.

The white moose have become a bit of a legend in this small town of 350 people.

The animals are entirely white, sometimes right down to their hooves. They are not albino, however, because they don't have pink eyes.

Tobv Styles of the Metro zoo said the coloring causes the unique

coloring of white lions, white tigers and, in this case, white moose.

"I don't think I've heard of a white moose in recent times," Styles said. "It's not a common thing."

Biologist Rick Ward agreed that it is extremely rare.

"In terms of ratios, I'd be hard-pressed to guess but it would probably be in the order of one in a million," said Ward, who works for the Yukon government.

"That's quite interesting that you would have that large a group. They must be interbreeding to produce the offspring that are also white," Ward said in an interview last night from Whitehorse.

Foley resident Morris Desrochers said it would be a shame if the last one did not

survive the winter.

"It's all we've seen . . . unfortunately," he said. "Some people never get to see one in their entire life."

Desrochers had to kill a white bull in January after its spine was broken by a train. Its head was mounted and now hangs in the town's Northern Lights restaurant.

"It's quite the sight," said OPP Constable Jeff Harmer.

Armstrong has been tracking the moose for years while tending traplines in the woods and at times has gotten as close as nine metres to the big animals.

"As long as you kept your distance from the calf, you could go take her picture. I guess she got so used to everyone photographing her it just didn't bother her," Armstrong said.

Rare white moose fighting for survival

By Jeffrey Ouglar
FOLEYET / The Daily Press

A small herd of white moose is creating a big stir in this tiny community, but locals worry time may be running out for the rare animals.

A herd of at least five white moose had been seen roaming nearby since 1990. But this year, three have been killed by freight trains, including a cow and her calf hit Nov. 20.

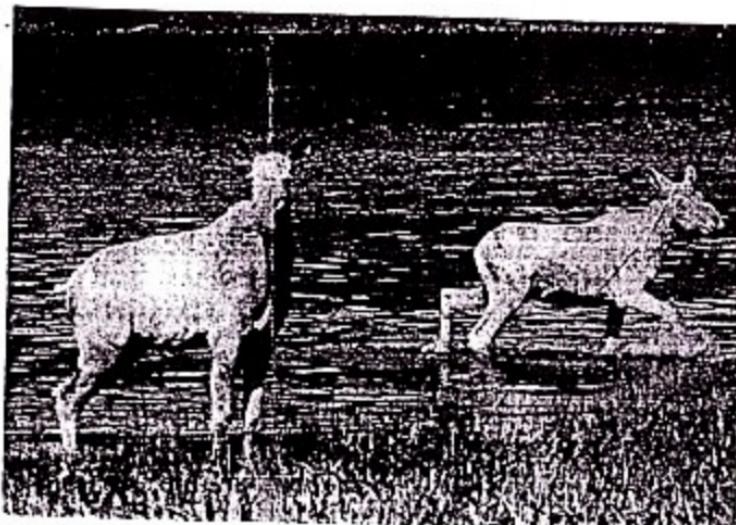
Pat Tresidder said at least 1,000 people have visited him since he brought the dead cow home last week.

"The animal is an incredible sight. Even the tongue and hooves are white."

He said he plans to show the mounted head of the moose at the Canadian Sportsmans Show in Toronto next spring.

Maurice Desrochers, the CN Rail foreman who removed the moose from the tracks, said only a white cow and a spike-horned bull with even more unusual coloring survive from the original herd.

He described the bull as having a white head, "but down the back you could take a measuring tape. One side is white and the



JANE ARMSTRONG of Foleyet snapped this photo earlier this year of two rare white moose in the area. Armstrong is leading a fight to save the white moose from extinction.

other is brown."

Local people suspect the animals run to the tracks to escape wolves.

Jane Armstrong, who traps in the area, has been following the herd for six years.

"I was able to get to within 50 feet of them this spring," Armstrong said. "I guess they got to

know me. Knowing they are dead sort of hurts."

She said she has tried to get the Ontario Natural Resources Ministry to do something to protect the herd.

"But they say they're not albino because their eyes are black. They say it's just a different genetic strain and they're not inter-

ested."

Armstrong is leading a fight to save the white moose from extinction.

Armstrong said one way to quell this problem would be for railway companies to equip their trains with alarm devices that would be effective in scaring the animals out of harm's way.

"If a moose hears a dog bark or a gunshot, they fly," she said. "Maybe something like a firecracker or something that sounds like a gunshot. But the train engineers are equally alarmed by the number of wildlife being destroyed by trains. It is no one's fault; is a natural consequence of the elements."

Of the small herd of white moose that Armstrong discovered in the region in 1990, only one has not fallen victim to passing trains.

"A wildlife naturalist from Michigan came up to film and he could not believe (the wildlife authorities) were doing nothing about them," she said.

Armstrong said hunters mistakenly bear the brunt of the blame for depleting moose populations, when other factors contribute to the decline.

WHITE MOOSE SIGHTINGS

by

Ted Armstrong

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Reports of white moose are occasionally reported from across their range, including Alaska and On-



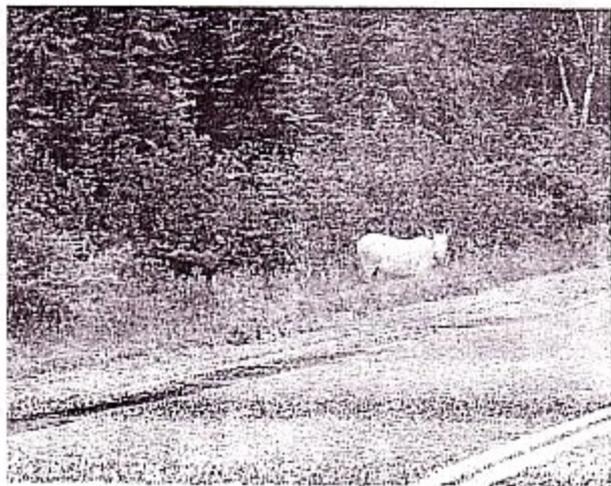
White cow, Foleyet, Ontario — spring 2000. With permission of Mark Clement.

tario (Armstrong & Brown 1986). However, it seems to be rare enough that the condition was not specifically mentioned in a discussion of coat and hair colouration by Bubenik (1997). In Ontario, reports of white or partially white moose have been reported, usually concentrated in several locations including Cochrane and Sioux Lookout. This seems to be the pattern across their range, with a higher incidence of reports of white moose in specific locales.

In the summer of 2000, a park visitor to Algonquin Provincial Park reported that he had observed and photographed a white moose along the highway roadside 20 km west of Foleyet, Ontario, in northeastern Ontario. The photographer, Mark

Clement, was kind enough to e-mail the photograph to park staff. When I corresponded with Mr. Clement, he graciously shared with me all 10 colour photographs which he had taken. The cow moose appears to be completely white, unlike many of the reports of partially white moose that are received. Additionally, there is a very strong indication of pink on many parts of the anatomy, including the ears, lower legs, nose and, apparently, the eyes, strongly suggesting an albino animal.

A large-bodied, completely brown calf accompanied the cow. All possible combinations of cows and calves have previously been reported — a white cow with a brown calf, a brown cow with a white calf, and a white cow with a white calf (Armstrong & Brown 1986). However, based upon the small sample size (5) represented by this sighting and those previously documented by Armstrong & Brown (1986), the majority (3) of cow-calf sightings have been of white cows with



White cow and brown calf, Foleyet, Ontario — spring 2000. With permission of Mark Clement.

brown calves. Nonetheless, a clear photograph of a white cow with a normal coloured calf is still noteworthy.

There have apparently been other anecdotal reports of white moose from this same vicinity. The clarity of the pictures, the obliging nature of the cow moose, and the generosity of the photographer were all extraordinary, resulting in an extremely good look at an all-white cow and her very ordinary looking progeny. Thanks to Mark Clement for his generosity in agreeing to allow publication of these photos, and to Maria deAlmeida for alerting me to the photos.

I would welcome receiving any other reports of white moose that may be out there
(ted.armstrong@mnr.gov.on.ca).

References

- Armstrong, E.R. and G. Brown. 1986. White moose, *Alices alices*, sightings in northern Ontario. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 100: 262-263.
- Bubenik, A.B. 1997. Evolution, taxonomy and morphology. Pages 77-123 IN Ecology and management of the North American moose. A.W. Franzmann and C.C. Schwartz, Editors. Smithsonian Institute Press, Washington & London. 731. 

2002 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide

Regulations apply August 1, 2002 through July 31, 2003,
unless otherwise noted



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Other Hunting Rules

It is illegal to:

- Hunt or pursue wild animals or birds from a car, snowmobile, aircraft, motorboat, PWC, ORV or other motorized vehicle, or by a sailboat.
- Set fires to drive out game.
- Use snares, traps, cages, nets, pitfalls, deadfalls, spears, drugs, poisons, chemicals, smoke, gas, explosives, ferrets, weasels or mechanical devices other than firearms, bows and arrows or slingshots to take wild birds or animals, except as provided by trapping rules or special permit.
- Use a crossbow to take game except under disabled permit (see page 15) or to take deer during the November 15-30 firearm deer season by a properly licensed hunter 14 years of age or older.
- Buy or sell game, except as provided by trapping rules or captive wildlife permit.
- Destroy the identity of game or evidence of the sex of game while in the field or when transported in a motor vehicle.
Exception: See Transportation of Game, page 11, for deer, bear and elk.
- Hunt from a tree, raised platform or scaffold with a firearm.
Exceptions: Firearm bear and deer hunters may use elevated platforms. Also see 2002-2003 Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for waterfowl hunting blind regulations.
- Hunt while under the influence of intoxicating alcohol, exhilarating or stupefying drugs.
- Use cartridges containing tracer or explosive bullets. A silencer or similar apparatus on a firearm is illegal.
- Camp on state land without a permit. Permits are free and are available at any DNR office. They must be posted at your campsite. A fee is charged for camping at designated campsites in state parks and recreation areas and state forest campgrounds.
- Make use of a dog in hunting deer except that a dog may be used to locate a down or mortally wounded deer if the dog is kept on a leash and none of the persons in attendance possess a firearm or bow and arrow. If the tracking is done at night, artificial lights ordinarily carried in the hand may be used. A dog that barks while tracking the deer shall not be used on public lands.
- Harm or harass a deer or bear when it is swimming in a stream, river, pond, lake or other waterbody.
- Kill or wound any game without making a reasonable attempt to retrieve the animal and include it in the daily bag.
- Shoot reptiles and amphibians with a firearm (including spring, air or gas propelled).

Protected Wildlife

Eagles, hawks, owls, swans, spruce grouse, wolves, lynx, moose, cougars, cub bears, and sows accompanied by cubs, and all white or albino deer may not be taken at any time. All nongame birds are protected, except starlings, English sparrows and feral pigeons.