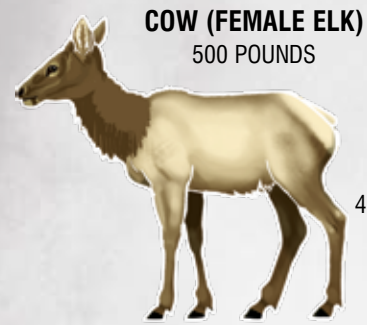


ELK FACTS

Elk or Wapiti ("white rump" in the Shawnee language) - members of the deer family, closely related to moose and white-tailed deer

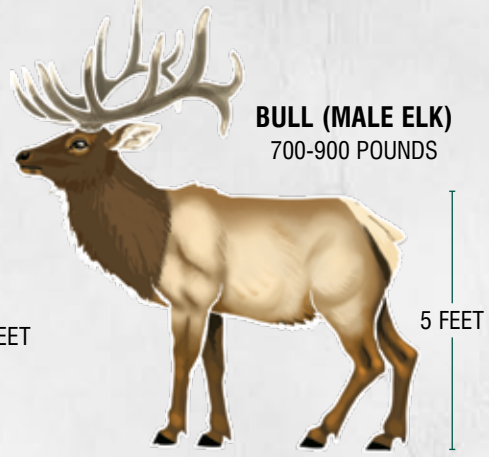
SIZE AND WEIGHT



COW (FEMALE ELK)
500 POUNDS

4.5 FEET

NOSE TO TAIL: 6.5 FEET



BULL (MALE ELK)
700-900 POUNDS

5 FEET

NOSE TO TAIL: 8 FEET



DIET

Herbivores

Eat a variety of shrubs and seedling leaves, woody browse, grasses and forbs

Natural meadows, forest openings and clear-cuts provide good foraging areas for elk



ANTLERS

Only bulls (males) have antlers

Bulls shed and grow a new set of antlers each year

Antlers on a mature bull can weigh up to 40 pounds

COLOR

Summer: Copper Brown

Fall, Winter & Spring: Light Tan

Rump Patch: Light Beige

Legs and neck often darker than body



LIFE CYCLE

Calves are born in late May through early June

Calves are born spotted and scentless as camouflage

Cows remain isolated with their calves for a few weeks and then join a nursery group with other cows and calves

Mature bulls spend the summer in small bachelor groups

The rut (breeding season) begins in September. One bull may mate with several cows and defend them from other bulls. Bulls bugle during the rut to challenge other bulls, maintain their harem and identify their territory.

After the rut large groups of elk may form and remain loosely associated all winter near good feeding grounds.



The mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage.



ELK IN

Wisconsin

In support of this mission, the RMEF is committed to:

- Conserving, restoring and enhancing natural habitats;
- Promoting the sound management of wild, free-ranging elk, which may be hunted or otherwise enjoyed;
- Fostering cooperation among federal, state and private organizations and individuals in wildlife management and habitat conservation; and
- Educating members and the public about habitat conservation, the value of hunting, hunting ethics and wildlife management.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
5705 Grant Creek Road
Missoula, MT 59808
1-800-CALL ELK
www.rmef.org



HUNTING
IS
CONSERVATION



Thanks to the many partner organizations, agencies, volunteers and donors who made the elk reintroduction to Wisconsin possible.

COVER PHOTO: JEFF MORDEN

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HISTORY OF ELK IN WISCONSIN

Elk were once common throughout Wisconsin prior to European settlement, but the last native elk were reportedly killed in 1886 in northwestern Wisconsin. An effort was made to reintroduce elk in 1914. Elk from Yellowstone National Park were released into a Vilas County enclosure and subsequently released into the wild in 1932. Survival was poor due to unregulated hunting and the last four elk were reportedly killed in 1954.

In 1990, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was directed by state legislators to explore the feasibility of restoring elk, caribou and/or moose, all of which were once native in Wisconsin. An assessment of each species suggested that elk would be the most successful.

A lack of local support initially prevented a reintroduction from occurring. But public support grew between 1992-1994. Funding from both state and non-governmental agencies was secured to allow an experimental release in the Clam Lake area of Ashland County.

In 1994, the DNR approved a four-year study under the direction of Dr. Ray Anderson of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. If the experimental study found that the elk were detrimental to the environment or humans, they would be removed and the project would end. Financial support came primarily from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

During the winter of 1994-95, 25 elk were captured from Michigan's lower peninsula. After extensive health testing and a three-month quarantine, the elk were brought to Wisconsin in May. They spent two weeks in an acclimation pen and on May 17, 1995 were released into the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. After an absence of 110 years, wild elk once again roamed the Northwoods of Wisconsin!

CURRENT ELK MANAGEMENT

The Clam Lake elk range consists of approximately 1,620 square miles of mixed conifer, upland hardwoods and cedar swamps. A significant portion lies within the Great Divide Ranger District of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, as well as in the Flambeau River State Forest. The elk range contains several hundred acres of openings maintained specifically for wildlife as well as an abundance of industrial forest lands, where young forests provide a perfect mix of habitat for elk. Federal, state, and county forest, and private lands are mixed throughout the elk range. The long-term population goal for the Clam Lake herd is 1,400 elk.

Elk reintroduction efforts were revived in 2012 when the DNR began working with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to transport up to 150 elk to Wisconsin over a period of up to 5 years. From this effort, a new elk herd was established in 2015 and 2016 with the release of 73 elk into the Black River State Forest of Jackson County, while remaining animals were released in the Flambeau River State Forest to augment the population of the original Clam Lake herd. The long-term population goal for the Black River herd is approximately 400 elk.



PUBLIC VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES

Elk can be seen in many habitats throughout both the Clam Lake and Black River elk ranges. Best viewing times are dawn and dusk. The most popular viewing period is September and October during the mating season, when elk are often feeding in openings. However, keep in mind that elk hunting may occur during this time. If you choose to head into the woods on foot, wear a highly visible outer garment of hunter orange or similar color. Summer observations are possible, but heavy leaf cover makes viewing more difficult.

When searching for elk, use your ears! In the fall, bull elk emit a long, high whistling sound (referred to as a "bugle") that can be heard for miles under good conditions. Bugling can often tip you off on where to start your viewing adventure.

Wildlife openings and viewing areas have been established through a cooperative effort between several partner groups and organizations in both the Clam Lake and Black River elk ranges, and are regularly used by elk. Elk can also sometimes be seen feeding along roadways or private crop fields. While searching for elk, always respect private landowners' rights and privacy.

Do not approach elk too closely. Elk should always be viewed and appreciated from a distance. This will ensure that elk maintain their natural behavior. Remember, elk are wild animals and should be respected.

Before heading out to view elk, we suggest contacting DNR staff or local area businesses for tips on the best places to find them. Your search may take some time. Elk are highly mobile animals, so they could be miles from where they were seen just days before.

CAUTION: While driving in the elk ranges, be alert for logging truck activity and other motorists. Only stop on wide road shoulders and pull completely off the road. Be careful if leaving your vehicle.

ELK VS. DEER

ELK MAY WEIGH UP TO FIVE TIMES MORE THAN DEER



DEER

ELK

3-3½ feet at shoulders	HEIGHT	4-5 feet at shoulders
long tail with a white underside	TAILS	short tail
legs and bodies the same color, white throat patch	COLOR	tan rump patch, black legs, dark brown furry neck
antlers curve forward	ANTLERS	antlers sweep back
less frequently marked	JEWELRY	many elk have been marked with collars and ear tags

