

Adventure of the Meeses

By Anna Love

There are many different questions and misconceptions that Montanan's get asked, "Yes we have electricity (most of us)," "No, we don't ride our horses to school or work (most of the time)," "Yes, we pronounce "creeks" as "cricks."

One of the biggest misconceptions that Montana's see others embrace is the idea that Montana is some big petting zoo. National Parks such as Glacier and Yellowstone see many instances a year of people getting mauled by animals because they got too close. Personally, I have seen a mother encourage her young child to "get closer to the pretty buffalo" in posing for a picture. One thing that Montanan's understand in order to live here is that you respect your surroundings and the animals that live here. You are their guests! No matter if it's just a day in the woods or the state holiday known as 'opening day of hunting season,' you respect the animals and the area where they live.

Growing up in Western Montana my summers were filled with camping adventures in the Rocky Mountains. Now my father and I don't go camping at your local campground where you camp in a sea of tents and people milling about. The whole point of camping for us is to get away from society and embrace nature and the solitude of the woods. We have our favorite spots that we return to time and time again and often it seems that we are the only ones who camp there. One such location also happens to be a central hub for Deer, Elk, Bear, and Moose alike, and quite often, on our evening drives through the area, we are greeted by the many animals that live there. One such trip that sticks out in my mind is one in which I named the Adventure of the Meeses.

During this particular camping trip we had the privilege of seeing one particular bull moose every night eating little shoots of grass on the side of a creek bed. Those little shoots of grass must have tasted pretty amazing because he was bent down on his belly nibbling them one by one. I named him Bob, he looked like a Bob to me. We saw Bob every night enjoying his evening snack and it became something that we looked forward to on the days to come.

On one of our final nights camping we took our evening drive and talked about if we were going to see Bob and where he would be. As we approached the meadow we slowed the Jeep to a crawl and quietly looked for him. As we rounded a bend there he was, his head, shoulders, and antlers sticking up feet above the long grass in the meadow. Something was different though, Bob had a friend! Standing next to him was Lucy an equally impressive cow moose that was a little wary of our sudden appearance. Bob looked at us then gave a little snort to Lucy as if to say, "Don't worry about them, they are harmless" and Lucy cautiously gave us a nod and continued on in her conversation with Bob. We sat and watched Bob and Lucy as they enjoyed their time together and when they proceeded to leave the meadow and walk into the timberline

we drove on. It's amazing how quickly you can lose site of a creature as huge as a moose when it enters the trees.

Continuing on our drive and looking for other animals, we spotted a few deer here and there throughout the area. As we rounded another curve, off the road and to our left was a small pond; in this pond was another moose! Bruce! Now Bruce was not quite as big as Bob, but still an impressive animal to behold just a few feet from the Jeep, especially when said Jeep has no top or doors. Bruce was sticking his head in the water and pulling up plants to snack on. Not sure what would be delicious as a water logged snack, but hey, to each their own.

After he finished his meal, he looked and gave us the once over and lazily waded through the pond and up into the trees.

Considering ourselves lucky and amazed at being able to see three Moose in one night, we continued on our way stating, "We would drive a little farther and then turn around and head back for camp."

As we continued to drive down the windy road that followed the crick, we turned yet another corner just to be stopped short. In front of us, just off the road was Suzette, a big cow moose, and her two calves Billy and Georgette. Billy and Georgette were having a grand old time splashing about in the crick as their Mama supervised. Now that is 6 moose in one night! That is more than most people see in a summer, or a lifetime! We sure considered ourselves lucky. I snapped this picture just as Suzette, Billy, and Georgette crossed the crick and headed for home.

Dad and I turned around and headed back for camp, thinking it would be a while before we slept. Sitting in a quiet camp, seeing nothing but the light from your fire and thinking of all the moose we had seen. It is amazing how every little sound you hear sounds like a gigantic moose



getting ready to walk through camp. Though I love seeing Bob and all his friends, I would rather see him from the comfort of a moving Jeep not stumping through camp.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if a moose came wandering through your camp? Ask Buckskin Jim, for that is his story.* As for me, I will never forget my Adventure with the Meeses and the memories it created with my Father and I.

* www.buckskinjimmt.com (Stories: "What was that?")