

MOOSE TRIPLETS ON ISLE ROYALE

Don Moll and B. Kaye Moll
Department of Biological Sciences
Illinois State University, Normal, 61761

Abstract.-- A sighting of moose triplets on Isle Royale, Michigan is reported.

Triplets in moose (Alces alces) are extremely unusual, therefore our observation of this phenomenon on Isle Royale, Michigan is recorded. On 3 June 1974 we observed a cow moose closely followed by three similar-sized calves swimming in Tobin Harbor between the shore and a small wooded island nearly 50 m distant. Upon reaching the shore the cow and three calves moved into brush and were lost from view.

Triple ovulations or embryos have been confirmed in a very small proportion of moose females (Simkin, 1965; Pavlov and Yazan, 1967; Markgren, 1969), but the authors are aware of only one previous sighting of similar-sized triplets associated with one cow (Hosley and Glaser, 1952). The occurrence of triplets on Isle Royale is particularly unusual since previous investigators (Murie, 1934; Mech, 1966) have found no evidence of triplets, or triple ovulations or embryos, and perhaps due to the less than optimum food supply for the island's moose population, even the number of twinning observations on Isle Royale has declined significantly over the past decade (R. Peterson, per. com.).

The possibility that the triplets seen may be a result of adoption of one or more calves cannot be excluded, although adoption in moose is very infrequent. In the late 1920's Mr. Peter Edisen observed three calves associated with one cow on Isle Royale, however, one calf was significantly larger indicating the likelihood that it had joined a cow with a set of twins (R. Peterson, per. com.). It should be emphasized that the three calves of the present observation were all of a very small similar size indicating recent birth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Rolf O. Peterson for helpful advice and L. F. Brown for criticizing this manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

- HOSLEY, N. W. and F. S. GLASER. 1952. Triplet Alaskan moose calves
J. Mammal. 33(2):247.

- MARKGREN, G. 1969. Reproduction of moose in Sweden. *Viltrevy* 6: 129-299.
- MECH, D. L. 1966. The wolves of Isle Royale. Natl. Park Serv. Publ. Fauna Series 7. 210p.
- MURIE, A. 1934. The moose of Isle Royale. Univ. Michigan Mus. Zool. Misc. Publ. 25:1-44.
- PAVLOV, M. P. and YU. P. YAZAN. 1967. Sluchai mnogoplodiya u losei. in *Biologiya i promysel losya*. Rosel'khozizdat, Moscow. p. 335-336.
- SIMKIN, D. W. 1965. Reproduction and productivity of moose in northwestern Ontario. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 29:740-750.