



Previously, we noted that a female moose is characterized by a white patch under her vestigial tail. This distinction provides just one of many important tools for identifying an individual. Another is the shape of the bell (or beard) under its chin. A male or female moose may have a sack, a rope, both, or neither. Note the wide variety of rather extreme examples of bells displayed by the moose pictured here. Paying close attention to a sack's size and shape and a rope's length, width, and shape is one of the most important ways to recognize a moose over time. Fortunately, bells tend to keep their basic structure from one year to the next, but some details can change, even over a season: sacks can grow and darken over the summer and shrink and lighten over the winter; and fragile ropes can occasionally disappear, perhaps from injury or frostbite. So it's important to have other tools at hand...

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