



Moose calves usually stay close to their mothers throughout the first year of their lives, but there have been exceptions. Several times in early 2016 we found Cordie wandering well away from her calf, but she always returned to provide affectionate parenting. Early in the summer of 2018, we often observed SoJo so far apart from her mother Smoothie that we began to wonder if mom had abandoned her. We were relieved when Smoothie finally returned to her and very pleased to see the pair staying close together for the rest of the season. But 2018 was especially sobering for us because it was the first year that we had encountered orphans. Early in the summer, we watched little Annie by herself for about a month as she foraged in the same general area, obviously orphaned at an early age. We also found Quid, Billi's newborn, wandering alone nearby. Sadly, it became clear to us that Billi had died and that Quid was also an orphan. Yet the loss of our favorite cow came with some compensation: Annie and Quid found each other by mid-summer and spent the rest of the season together as inseparable buddies. Note how fit they both appear to be and how distinct Quid is with the white splotch on his back. The conventional wisdom is that healthy orphans in low-predation areas like the Colorado high country have a good chance of survival over the winter, and that's encouraging news for this resourceful pair. But there is more to being buddies than just survival...

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