

Climate Story
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A Mooseless Minnesota

My Dad is a big hunter. He has loved to hunt as long as he can remember. His love for hunting was instilled in me at young age. I was never patient enough to go along hunting with him. Sitting in a stand waiting for an animal to come for hours on end with out talking was impossible for me. So rather than go along and disturb the animals I would just stay at home: patiently awaiting my dads return from his extravaganzas. While he was out hunting I would go on my own little hunting dates at home. I had some toy deer that I would set up and shoot with Nerf guns pretending I was my Dad. Then upon hearing the garage door groan, and feeling the vibration under my room floor I would race down the door to see what my Dad had got.

He has hunted many animals, as have I now that I am old enough to hunt real live animals. Deer, squirrels, pheasants, grouse, elk, moose, pigeons he's hunted them all. Although my Dad has never shot one I have drawn a special liking to moose over the years. Maybe it's because of the way they were portrayed to as calm and gentle Giants, or because I saw a mounted one hanging on my uncle's wall every time I went there, I'm really not sure. I have always wanted to see a real live moose. Shooting a monster bull moose would be super cool. One with such a huge rack you would be stupid to not mount it and hang it on your wall for everyone to see. But really even just to see one while we are up on our yearly wild blueberry pick on the North Shore would be awesome. After my Dad came back empty handed on his moose hunt I told him, "It's okay Dad you will shoot one next time!" Little did I know there wouldn't be a next time. At the time when he went moose hunting(2006) going moose hunting in Minnesota was limited to once in a lifetime per person and only to residents. It was a one and done thing. When my uncle went in 1987, and shot his moose he has mounted, residents in Minnesota could go once

every 10 years. Now no resident, or non resident for that matter, can hunt moose in the state of Minnesota.

Moose could once be found in 15 counties in Minnesota: abundantly in 9. They were "once a common sight in northern forests," but not anymore. Moose are currently found in 4 counties in the state of Minnesota: abundantly in 2. So now not only can I not hunt moose in Minnesota, but it is highly unlikely that I will even see a moose without leaving the land of 10,000 lakes. Why have the moose left Minnesota? Moose are leaving, but they don't leave to head north. They leave to go wherever dead moose go. To moose heaven maybe? Why are they leaving? Obviously not by choice, but rather as a result of climate change.

Less winter days of up to 30 below are allowing parasites to move further north and allowing a higher number of parasites that always were up north to survive. If winter temperatures are above 23 degrees Moose just won't eat, because there are no place to cool off after looking for their food. Northern Minnesota is seeing the largest herds of deer it has ever seen as a result of climate change. Deer aren't well suited to survive in areas that suffer from extremely cold temperatures and heavy snow fall as the Northern forests used to be. Moose have longer legs and warmer fur allowing them to survive the harsh winters to problem. Deer lack both of those. Another issue that deer present is a brainworm which they often carry. The brainworm is something they can survive, but moose can not. The brainworm causes moose to have a permanent head tilt, as well as walk in circles for extended periods of time. It does so by embedding itself into the brain of the Moose. How horribly sad would that be: to be out in the woods in northeastern Minnesota and you come across a moose that is walking in circles aimlessly and has been for days. It would be horrifying, and all as a result of climate change.

Climate change is the reason. Climate change is the reason why I will never get to go moose hunting in Minnesota. Climate change is the reason why the closest thing to a live moose I will ever see in Minnesota is my uncle's mounted one hanging on his wall. That is IF we don't do something about it. IF we act before it's too late we can do something about this problem. We can save our moose populations and maybe allow them to

return to all 15 counties they once were in. And maybe, just maybe IF we do turn things around I will be able to see a moose in Minnesota in my lifetime.