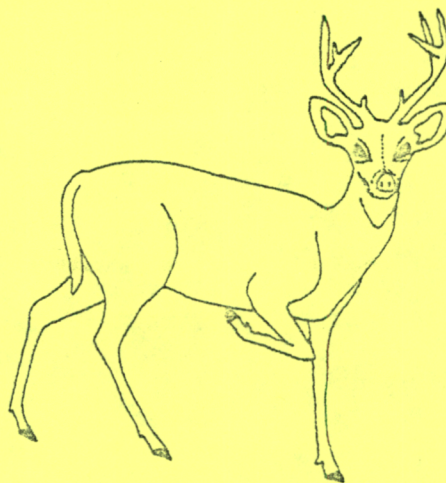


UNGULATES AND THE ISLAND



Of the many body patterns and designs found among mammals, one of the most successful is the large hoofed herbivore. Animals such as antelope, camels, giraffes, bison, tapirs and rhinoceri belong to this group, as do our own domestic cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs. The group is collectively known to biologists as ungulates,

There are no wild ungulates left on Prince Edward Island, and our knowledge of the original large-mammal fauna of the Island is based on antlers that have been found preserved in bogs.



Such finds have indicated that Prince Edward Island was once home to caribou* and moose, but so far, no evidence has been uncovered that white-tailed deer were ever part of our native fauna.

So why did we have caribou and moose but not deer? To answer this question, we must refer to both the geological history of our area, and to the basic ecology of the three species.

Firstly, it must be pointed out that, although caribou, moose and white-tailed deer are all members of the deer family, and that all have large populations in eastern North America, the areas occupied by each species are sorted out according to a well-defined plan. Basically, caribou are creatures of the northern tundra and taiga, moose inhabit the spruce-fir, or boreal, forest, and white-tailed deer are at home in the temperate hardwood forests.

Each animal has a particular set of adaptations which suit it for its environment. The caribou has wide splayed-out hooves, which serve both as snowshoes for travel over the wind-packed northern snow, and as shovels to dig craters in that snow for access to lichens and other forage. To reduce heat loss in severe winter conditions, caribou have dense fur coats of hollow hairs, as well as blunted muzzles and ears (to see what

*Our North American caribou belong to the same species as reindeer, which are found in Lapland and the North Pole.