

a caribou looks like, take a look at a quarter which, contrary to popular belief, does not bear the likeness of a moose).

Since moose also inhabit northern areas, they also need some way of assuring travel in deep snow. But, because of their very large body size, and because they spend most of their winter in sheltered woodlands where the snow does not pack hard, caribou-like snowshoes would be impractical. So, they have evolved stilts. With their amazingly long legs they are able to stride over deep snowbanks with little impediment. Since moose are primarily browsers (i.e. eaters of twigs) they do not need to paw away the snow to get at their food, but they do take advantage of their rangy builds to reach to very high levels for their food, or failing that, to knock whole trees down to obtain the top-most twigs.

The third ungulate, the white-tailed deer, has no winter to contend with at all over much of its range, which is centered in the United States. Those white-tailed deer which do inhabit southern Canada, lacking anatomical adaptations for winter conditions, have developed behaviour patterns which enable at least some of them to survive each winter season. These include the tendency to concentrate in "yards", or traditional areas where there is good shelter and food, and where travel is possible on beaten trails which are maintained throughout the winter.

When European explorers first arrived on Prince Edward Island, they found a landscape dominated by hardwood forests, whose cover was only occasionally broken by bogs, marshes, dunes, and clearings caused by fire or wind. In theory, such a habitat should be the domain of the white-tailed deer, but the reason that white-tails never colonized the Island is simply that they were not around at the right time. During the retreat of the last continental glacier, when enough water was still tied up in the ice to keep Northumberland Strait dry, the Maritime region was covered with first tundra, and then boreal vegetation. At this time both caribou and moose, inhabitants of these regions, seized the opportunity of crossing the land bridge to invade Prince Edward Island, and, although the habitat was not perfectly suited to their normal habits, both species survived up to the coming of the white man.

But by the time the white-tailed deer invaded the Maritime region, the land bridge had been cut off by rising ocean levels, so they never had their chance to test the suitability of our primeval habitat.

At the present time, our second-growth woodlands could probably support a large population of white-tailed deer, but conflicts between deer and farmers would be inevitable. The single attempt at introducing deer to the Island fizzled when most of the immigrants ended up in local stew-pots, and any further introductions would likely come to the same end.

David Cairns



At its March meeting the P. E. I. Natural History Society decided to oppose the proposal by the P. E. I. Wildlife Federation to introduce white-tailed deer to the province for hunting purposes. Reasons cited were potential damage to farm crops, increased danger to the public with increased hunting activity and a lack of habitat where the deer would not be disturbed.