A CALL IN the middle of the night was the first clue. In October, I awoke to loud bellowing, like the sound of a forlorn and frustrated cow. It was a cow all right, but not a domestic one—a cow moose.

Next morning, I went into the woods and found cloven-hoofed tracks the size of my hand. I was enthralled by the idea of a moose living nearby.

I wanted to see a moose. I walked in the woods around dawn and dusk, when they’re most active. I often found droppings, like piles of chocolate Easter eggs. As fall turned into winter, I followed tracks on my snowshoes. I kept hoping to find antlers—bull moose lose their antlers after the rut (mating season) every fall.

One afternoon, I was thrilled to find very fresh tracks. I spotted signs of browsing where moose had bitten maple and birch twigs. Some were at eye level, and I was standing on three feet of snow. Suddenly I heard a thunderous, crashing noise ahead. As the sound of breaking branches reverberated in the woods, all that was left was a clump of long brown hair and downy fleece caught on a branch.

This happened during my first winter in New Brunswick after moving here from Nova Scotia.

To get to my new home, I had driven across the Chignecto Isthmus, the flat, narrow strip of land linking New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, skirting the Tantramar Marsh. My journey was easy; people travel safely across the narrow isthmus every day.

The Chignecto Isthmus separates populations facing different challenges. In New Brunswick, moose are healthy and abundant (estimated to be about 29,000). In mainland Nova Scotia, the moose population is endangered (estimated to be as low as 500 adults). Those two populations are of the Americana or Eastern Moose subspecies, while the moose in the Cape Breton Highlands—
Moose in the Atlantic Provinces

It’s a complicated story. Newfoundland and Cape Breton have healthy populations, so does New Brunswick. But there are very few (maybe 500) mainland moose in Nova Scotia, and no moose in PEI.

Moose are not native to Newfoundland, but there are more than 110,000 moose on the island (deliberately reduced from a high of about 150,000 by increasing the number of hunting licenses, due in part to worrisome levels of highway accidents).

They are all descendants of a mere six adult moose that were taken to the island from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. But there are very few (maybe 500) mainland moose in Nova Scotia, and no moose in PEI.

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