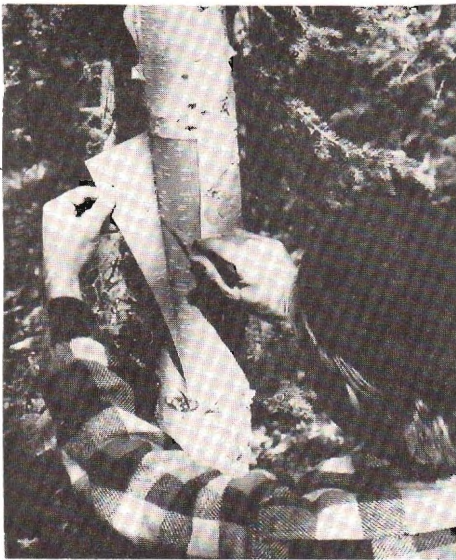


FIRST STEP IN MAKING a birchbark moose call is to select a straight birch tree roughly five to eight inches in diameter. Make two horizontal cuts completely around the tree, one about 18 inches above the other. Connect these two cuts with one vertical cut.

BIRCH BARK

USING A SMALL, thin-bladed knife, peel the thin outer layer of bark from the tree. Removing the bark leaves the tree with a dark band which mars its appearance. Therefore, do your cutting in an area where the cut is not likely to be noticed.



ALTHOUGH MOOSE CALLING is often a preferred technique of Canadian hunters, few Alaskans have discovered its advantages.

In Alaska, moose habitat is generally more mountainous and open than the Canadian taiga, but there are still times and places where calling can be effective. If the country hunted is densely forested, or if the hunter must move into close range, the call can be used to good advantage. Calling also can be used while canoeing or floating a river.

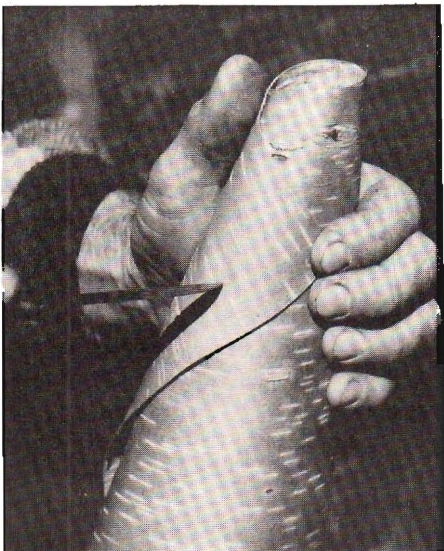
To call a moose, you must be where the moose are at a time when they will respond. In Alaska, moose can be called during the autumn rutting season, which generally runs from the last week of September until the end of October, depending on current weather conditions and the timing of the rut.

There are two types of moose calls; the short, guttural grunt of the bull, and the long drawn-out moaning call of the cow. The best way to learn them is to spend a weekend in late September or October at timberline in prime moose country. Listen carefully and you will likely hear the sounds floating through the autumn air. The calls seem to possess an eerie quality which to me represents the true spirit of the wild.

There are many tricks to calling moose. Bull moose have been known to respond to the sound of sawing wood, but it's usually more difficult than this. A bull which already has several cows may not answer a cow call, but he may go berserk at the sound of another bull.

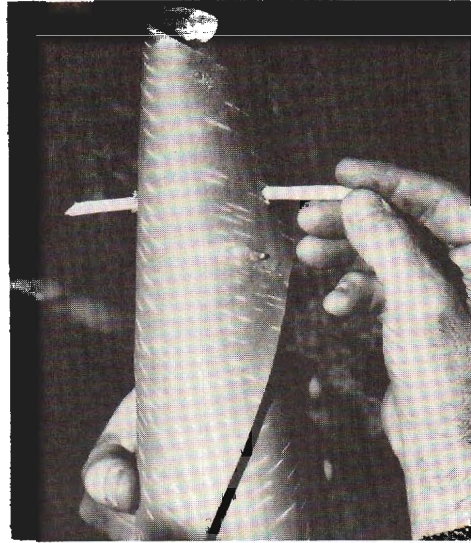
Although the sound of a lovesick cow may produce nothing early in the rut, the hollow grunting of a bull

NEXT, ROLL THE BIRCH bark inside out. Using the knife-point, drill a small hole on either side of the horn, near the place where it will be held.



MOOSE CALL

By Jay Massey
Regional Information Officer
Anchorage



CUT A SMALL BRANCH and pin it completely through the rolled-up bark. A rubber band wrapped around the horn at this point will further secure it, if desired.

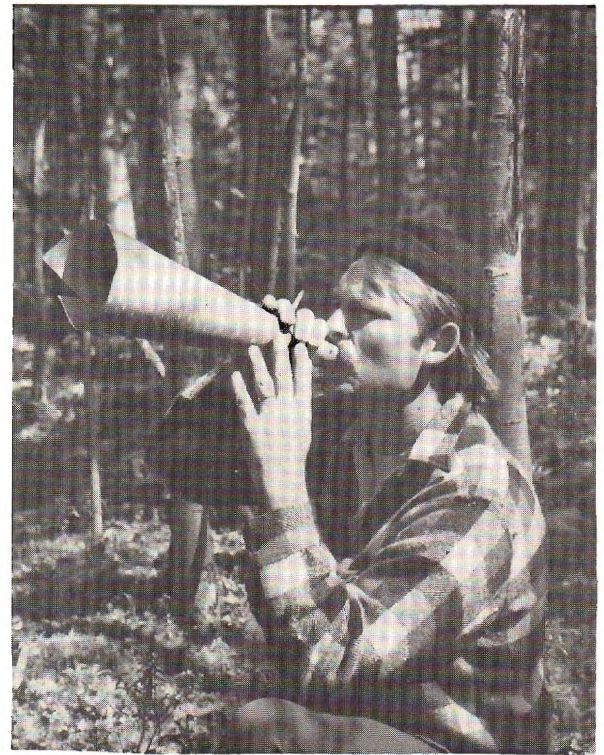
might bring results. Bulls tend to congregate prior to the actual rut, a fact which could have bearing on the type of call the hunter uses. Once, when scraping on an aluminum cooking pan, I inadvertently called in a bull which was still in the velvet. The date was Sept. 6, and apparently this moose was just beginning to feel his oats.

The call of a cow moose is relatively easy to imitate and sounds somewhat like the bawl of a lost Hereford heifer. However, it is deeper, more nasal and more lengthy. It usually begins with one initial "bawl" of about five seconds, then tapers off into shorter consecutive calls. After this series, the caller should wait several minutes before repeating.

A bull answering the cow call usually moves in slowly and deliberately, and calling can be a lengthy affair requiring half an hour to move a bull several hundred yards. Making some noise may bring a quicker response, especially at the height of the rut.

The call of a bull moose is more difficult to imitate. This call doesn't carry as well as that of the cow, and it is lower in volume. It sounds approximately like a low, "Yoork!", combined with a hollow, sucking-in sound. The call is as difficult to duplicate as it is to describe on paper!

Once learned, moose calling is an exciting way of bringing in a moose. It is also a good way to get good close photographs, but unless you have a back-up weapon, don't forget to bring the track shoes! ■



USE THE CALL in moderation, waiting at least several minutes between calls. If there is no response within 20 minutes of the first call, move to a different location several yards away, making some noise in the process. Sometimes, a bull will come in quietly to a call, and the sound of breaking sticks may encourage him to investigate further.

(In the accompanying photos, Jay Massey shows how to make a birchbark moose call.)

The author has called in moose using both types of calls described above. Last September, he used a birch-bark call and a bow and arrow to down a bull moose on the Kenai Peninsula.

Alaska

FISH & GAME

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JULY-AUGUST 1973

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

