Outdoor Recreation is Outdoor Education

Grade level:

Pre-K to 4th

Objective:

Learn about elk in New Mexico by coloring the following illustration while reading about them. The elk is New Mexico's largest big game animal and lives in all suitable habitats. Yet by the early 20th century elk had vanished from the state completely, following their disappearance from the plains states to the east. Elk were first protected by closing the summer to hunting starting in 1880. As late as 1875, groups of 2,000 elk were seen in the state. Elk were declared game and thus protected by law in 1903, but this could not save the species from extirpation in New Mexico.



The elk is a large member of the deer family that can weigh up to 800 pounds! They live in high forest or semi-open woodlands in the summer and then migrate to lower elevations in the winter. Elk feed mostly on grass but also eat shrubs and plants. Male elk (bulls) have antlers which are made of bone and sometimes grow to five feet in length. Antlers can weigh as much as 40 pounds and in early spring they snap off and surprise the bull! Antlers grow back quickly, up to an inch a day! In the fall in the high country, you may hear the loud, whisting 'bugle' of the elk during courtship. Elk are one of the most important *big game* species in New Mexico.





earning by Coloring

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish www.wildlife.state.nm.us 888-248-6866

