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## SHORT COMMUNICATION

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Fiona Schönfeld

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Germany is situated on the western border of the distribution area of moose (*Alces alces*) in Europe. In the past, the number of moose sightings has been very limited and irregular in the state of Bavaria (SE Germany). Nearby populations of moose are located in neighboring countries to the east of Germany, in the Czech Republic, and Poland. A monitoring system for moose was established following a considerable increase in moose observations in Bavaria in 2007. As no reproduction has yet been recorded, moose observation has so far been attributed only to migrating individuals. Cows are more often registered than bulls (27 of 35 observations between 2004 and 2008). The reasons for the increase in migratory activities of moose have not yet been identified.

**Keywords** Wildlife management · Monitoring · Ungulate · Migration · Bavaria

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Eur J Wildl Res  
DOI 10.1007/s10344-009-0272-5

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Received: 9 March 2009 / Revised: 16 April 2009 / Accepted: 27 April 2009  
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**Introduction**

The distribution of moose (*Alces alces* L., Cervidae) is circumpolar (Bauer and Nygren 1999). Moose were among the first large mammals to recolonize central Europe after the end of the last ice age, but due to changes in vegetation,

climate, sea level, fragmentation of their habitat, and hunting, the moose population in Central Europe gradually became extinct by the Middle Ages (Schmölcke and Zachos 2005). After its disappearance in the area of today's Federal Republic of Germany around the time of the 17th century (Joachim 2003), numerous attempts to resettle the largest cervid species have been made. One of the last big projects was carried out during the 1930s and again in 1965 in the moorland "Schorfheide" northeast of Berlin (Bormeister 1997). None of all these trials succeeded. Nowadays, Germany is situated on the western edge of moose distribution in Europe. Currently, there are source populations in neighboring countries in the East due to natural immigration and reintroduction. Moose is occurring in Poland in the area of the Biebrza river valley and Kampinos National Park in the eastern part of the country (Gębczyńska and Raczynski 2002). In the Czech Republic, two small populations exist in Southern Bohemia close to the border of Austria and Germany (Červený et al. 2001).

Moose easily cross large stretches of unfavorable terrain within a very short period of time (Heptner and Nasimowitsch 1967)—they can cover up to 60 km per day. Moose are excellent swimmers and their hoof claws can spread very widely, which enables them to walk across swamps without sinking (Joachim 2003). Thus, there are virtually no natural barriers that can prevent moose migration.

Although moose sightings have been reported in Germany for decades (e.g., Heydenreich 1961; Gömer 2004; Joachim 2004), no precise data is available because moose have never been monitored systematically. In 2007, the number of observations of moose in the state of Bavaria (southeastern Germany) had reached an unprecedented level

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