

## Bugler, Flathorns and Wanderhoof

by Thornton W. Burgess

Lightfoot the Deer was the first one on hand the next morning. In fact, he arrived before sun-up and, lying down in a little thicket close at hand, made himself very comfortable to wait for the opening of school. You see, not for anything would he have missed that lesson about his big cousins. There the others found him when they arrived.

“The Deer family,” began Old Mother Nature, “is divided into two branches—the round-horned and the flat-horned. I have told you about the round-horned Deer with the exception of the largest and noblest, Bugler the Elk. He is commonly called Elk, but his right name is Wapiti.

“Bugler is found only in the great mountains of the Far West, but once, before hunters with terrible guns came, Elk were found in nearly all parts of this country excepting the Far South and the Far North—even on the great plains. Now Bugler lives only in the forests of the great mountains.”

“How big is he?” asked Lightfoot.

“So big that beside him you would look very small,” replied Old Mother Nature. “Have you ever seen Farmer Brown's Horse?”

Lightfoot nodded. “Well, Bugler stands as high as that Horse,” replied Old Mother Nature. “He isn't as heavy, for his body is of different shape, not so big around, but at that he weighs three times as much as you do. In summer his coat is a light yellowish-brown, becoming very dark on his neck and underneath. His legs are dark brown. The hair on his neck is long and coarse. His tail is very small, and around it is a large patch so light in color as to be almost whitish. In winter his coat becomes dark gray.

“Bugler's crowning glory are his antlers. They are very large and wide-spreading, sweeping backward and upward, the long prongs, or tines, curving upward from the front instead of from the back, as in the case of Lightfoot's antlers. Above each eye is a long sharp prong. So big are these antlers that Bugler looks almost as if he were carrying a small, bare tree on his head.

“Big as these antlers are, they are grown in a few months for Bugler is like his small cousins in that he loses his antlers at the end of every winter and must grow a new pair. While they are growing, he hides in the wildest places he can find, high up on the mountains. Mrs. Bugler is at that time down in a valley with her baby or babies. Usually she has one, but sometimes twins. She has no antlers.

“In the fall, when his antlers have hardened, Bugler moves down to join his family. The bigger and stronger he is, the bigger his family is, for he has a number of wives and they all live together in a herd or band of which Bugler is lord and master. He is ready and eager to fight for them, and terrible battles take place when another disputes his leadership. At this season he has a habit of stretching his neck out and emitting a far-reaching trumpet-like sound from which he gets the name of Bugler. It is a warning that he is ready to fight.

“When the snows of winter come, many families get together and form great bands. Then they move down from the mountains in search of shelter and food. When a winter is very bad, many starve to death, for man has fenced in and made into farms much of the land where the elk once found ample food for winter.

“But big as is Bugler the Elk, there is a cousin who is bigger, the biggest of all the Deer family. It is

Flathorns the Moose. As you must guess by his name he is a member of the flat-horned branch of the family. His antlers spread widely and are flattened instead of being round. From the edges of the flattened part many sharp points spring out.

“Flathorns, wearing his crown of great spreading antlers, is a noble appearing animal because of his great size, but when his antlers have dropped he is a homely fellow. Mrs. Flathorns, who has no antlers, is very homely. As I have said, Flathorns is the biggest member of the Deer family. He is quite as big as Farmer Brown's Horse and stands much higher at the shoulders. Indeed, his shoulders are so high that he has a decided hump there, for they are well above the line of his back. His neck is very short, large and thick, and his head is not at all like the heads of other members of the Deer family. Instead of the narrow, pointed face of other members of the Deer family, he has a broad, long face, rather more like that of a Horse. Towards the nose it humps up, and the great thick upper lip overhangs the lower one. His nose is very broad, and for his size his eyes are small. His ears are large.

“From his throat hangs a hairy fold of skin called a bell. He has a very short tail, so short that it is hardly noticeable. His legs are very long and rather large. His hoofs are large and rounded, more like those of Bossy the Cow than like those of Lightfoot the Deer. Seen at a little distance in the woods, he looks to be almost black, but really is for the most part dark brown. His legs are gray on the inside.

“Flathorns lives in the great northern forests clear across the country, and is especially fond of swampy places. He is fond of the water and is a good swimmer. In summer he delights to feed on the pads, stems and roots of water lilies, and his long legs enable him to wade out to get them. For the most part his food consists of leaves and tender twigs of young trees, such as striped maple, aspen, birch, hemlock, alder and willow. His great height enables him to reach the upper branches of young trees. When they are too tall for this, he straddles them and bends or breaks them down to get at the upper branches. His front teeth are big, broad and sharp-edged. With these he strips the bark from the larger branches. He also eats grass and moss. Because of his long legs and short neck he finds it easiest to kneel when feeding on the ground.

“Big as he is, he can steal through thick growth without making a sound. He does not jump like other Deer, but travels at an awkward trot which takes him over the ground very fast. In the winter when snow is deep, the Moose family lives in a yard such as I told you Lightfoot makes. The greatest enemy of Flathorns is the hunter, and from being much hunted Flathorns has learned to make the most of his ears, eyes and nose. He is very smart and not easily surprised. When wounded he will sometimes attack man, and occasionally when not wounded. Then he strikes with his sharp-edged front hoofs, and they are terrible weapons. Altogether he is a wonderful animal, and it is a matter for sorrow that man persists in hunting him merely to get his wonderful head.

“In parts of these same northern forests lives another big member of the Deer family, Wanderhoof the Woodland Caribou. He is bigger than Lightfoot the Deer, but smaller than Bugler the Elk, rather an awkward-looking fellow. His legs are quite long but stout. His neck is rather short, and instead of carrying his head proudly as does Lightfoot, he carries it stretched out before him or hanging low. The hair on the lower part of his neck is long.

“Wanderhoof wears a coat of brown. His neck being much lighter or almost gray. He has an undercoat which is very thick and woolly. In winter his whole coat becomes grayish and his neck white. Above each hoof is a band of white. His tail is very short, and white on the under side. His antlers are wonderful, being very long and both round and flat. That is, parts of them are round and parts flattened. They have more prongs than those of any other Deer.

“His hoofs are very large, deeply slit, and cup-shaped. When he walks they make a snapping or clicking sound. These big feet were given him for a purpose. He is very fond of boggy ground, and because of these big feet and the fact that the hoofs spread when he steps, he can walk safely where others would sink in. This is equally true in snow, when they serve as snowshoes. As a result he is not forced to live in yards as are Lightfoot and Flathorns when the snow is deep, but goes where he pleases. “He is very fond of the water and delights to splash about in it, and is a splendid swimmer. His hair floats him so that when swimming he is higher out of water than any other member of the family. In winter he lives in the thickest parts of the forest among the hemlocks and spruces, and feeds on the mosses and lichens which grow on the trees. In summer he moves to the open, boggy ground around shallow lakes where moss covers the ground, and on this he lives.

“He is a great wanderer, hence his name Wanderhoof. Mrs. Caribou has antlers, wherein she differs from Mrs. Lightfoot, Mrs. Flathorns and Mrs. Bugler. Wanderhoof is fond of company and usually is found with many companions of his own kind. When they are moving from their summer home to their winter home, or back again, they often travel in very large bands.

“In the Far North beyond the great forests Wanderhoof has a cousin who looks very much like him, called the Barren Ground Caribou. The name comes from the fact that way up there little excepting moss grows, and on this the Caribou lives. In summer this Caribou is found almost up to the Arctic Ocean, moving southward in great herds as the cold weather approaches. No other animals of to-day get together in such great numbers. In the extreme North is another Caribou, called Peary's Caribou, whose coat is wholly white. The Caribou are close cousins of the Reindeer and look much like them. “All male members of the smaller Deer are called bucks, the female members are called does, and the young are called fawns. All male members of the big Deer, such as Bugler the Elk, Flathorns the Moose and Wanderhoof the Caribou, are called bulls. The females are called cows and the young are called calves. All members of the Deer family, with the exception of the Barren Ground Caribou, are forest-loving animals and are seldom seen far from the sheltering woods.

“This, I think, will do for the Deer family. To-morrow I shall tell you about Thunderfoot the Bison, Fleetfoot the Antelope, and Longcoat the Musk Ox.”

Source:

Burgess, Thornton. “Bugler, Flathorns, and Wanderhoof.” *The Burgess Animal Book for Children*. Electronic.