

Rutting Season in the Rocky Mountain National Park

by Kenita Gibbins

The elk stands tall and weighs up to 1000 pounds, becoming a fascinating species within the deer family.

My two cohorts and I found the antlers particularly interesting when we spied a male elk trying to get the velvet off the rack. We relished seeing a bull close. The tips of the antlers shined in the fading light of the day. The rutting season lasts from early September to mid-October. I believe once the territory becomes his then he can go about attracting the females and get his passion for mating done with the help of urine smells he rolls in.

The females seemly aren't attracted to the males in the least. The scene we watched showed him and us her backside. Her two yearlings poked their heads out of the tall grass. We learned from a viewer that we must not get near the mature female. Mr. Huge Elk rested on the ground, but noticed everything and would/could unquestionably rise to reach us. He thinks we want to steal her. After all, he stole her in the first place.

Lady Elk can get pregnant every year while she is still tending to her baby or babies from the last mating season. Her fertile time lasts only about two days. The males must establish their territory and harem before mating time peaks. The cows once in with other cows can get downright aggressive with the hooves used to battle. We hoped to see male encounters, but the bulls we saw wandered around by their restless selves. Bugling had begun. The message of the grunts, shrieks, and other shrill sounds of communication with the cow elk show the sparring starts.

Rooting for Dragonflies - The Wolves of the Air

After our week in Estes Park with the group, Diane and I had time to go to the Denver Botanic Gardens to continue shooting with our cameras. We headed for the beguiling Monet pond. A volunteer asked me if I enjoyed the water lilies. "Well, yes, but not right now. I'm busy watching the mating games of the dragonflies." She said, "Oh, I didn't know about that!"

Shooting insects proves to be a lot more challenging than filming elk. The species at the pond shows off a sparkly fluorescent blue color. They have big eyes in comparison to the rest of their bodies, stretching to about a skinny 1-1/2 inches long. Their wings hardly show up at all. I read that even though their flying wings are transparent, they give each insect the power to soar. These predatory insects don't stay in place very long. They can eat their weight in mosquitos. So we click our cameras as quickly as possible and then try to find another mating pair. Seeing two dragonflies doing their mating thing fascinated us. He grabs the back of her head, and she curves her body. She can then capture his sperm.

The sperm thrive in the water where new lives of nymphs form and look nothing like the adults. They grow by breaking through their own skin. Each nymph molts about 12 times in one to three years underwater. At the final molting, the nymph crawls out of the water and looks like his parents. He now has eight more weeks of life to repeat the cycle.