

What's in a name: *Cervus canadensis* versus *Cervus elaphus*

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Astute readers of the works in this issue of California Fish and Wildlife will notice use of two binomial scientific names for North American elk (or wapiti): *Cervus canadensis* (Erxleben, 1777) and *Cervus elaphus* (Linnaeus, 1758). The editors of this issue chose to treat these names as synonyms and allow individual authors to retain their choice of each binomial name given the vigorous scientific debate that exists regarding the taxonomy and proper nomenclature of North American elk. While we do not wish to ourselves become involved in the debate, we would like to provide some background and further resources for those who are interested in further reading on the topic.

Further reading:

- Integrated Taxonomic Information System. *Cervus elaphus*. https://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=180695#null
- Integrated Taxonomic Information System. *Cervus canadensis*. https://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=180695#null
- Kuwayama, R., and T. Ozawa. 2000. Phylogenetic relationships among European red deer, wapiti, and sika deer inferred from mitochondrial DNA sequences. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 15: 115-123.
- Polziehn, R. O., and C. Strobeck. 1998. Phylogeny of wapiti, red deer, sika deer, and other North American cervids as determined from mitochondrial DNA. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 10:249-258.
- Use of *Cervus elaphus* versus *Cervus canadensis* in reference to North American elk (wapiti)? https://www.researchgate.net/post/Use_of_Cervus_elaphus_versus_Cervus_canadensis_in_reference_to_North_American_elk_wapiti/1