

Ken Tustin
Nature Guide, Wildlife Scientist and Ex Helicopter Pilot
Best known as the “Moose Man”



Ken Tustin might be best known as the "Moose Man" for his conviction that moose continue to exist in Fiordland, but he began his working life as a professional hunter, then became a wild animal ecology scientist, specialising in studying Himalayan tahr in the central southern alps.

After a decade in research, he switched jobs to become a helicopter pilot (to the horror of his parents!), in all manner of roles: deer recovery, search & rescue, seismic exploration, heliski, filming, fire control being some of them. The helicopter work included many hard-to-get-at-and-difficult-to-live-in places overseas: five summer seasons in Antarctica (for the Italian Antarctic programme), 18 months in Burma (on seismic work), over two years in Laos (much over the battlefields of Asia), Oman (three months best forgotten).

When medical misadventure halted his aviation career 10 years ago, he revived his life-long interests in moose and tahr - resulting in (so far) three books and a co-produced DVD documentary, among other things...

His passion for Fiordland, it's landscape, history and wildlife has also had him Nature Guiding on Real Journeys "Discovery" cruises each winter. And, of course, delighting to take part, with wife Marg, in the 2011 Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track Celerity Walk!

Excerpt From His Book "A Wild Moose Chase"

"Fiordland in mid-winter. Soaked to the skin despite my parka, I was becoming very cold. Sometimes I wondered what I was doing here.

In the gathering dusk I hunted quietly, pushing gently through dripping pepperwood inside the edge of the swampy clearing.

Then stopped again, alert and watchful. Still no sign of life.

The sky was leaden-a week's rain had stopped only hours before. Dark forested slopes crowding the small valley disappeared into low cloud. It was nearly dark. I shivered involuntarily. time to give up for another day.

A final look around, a shrug to myself. Careless of noise now, I crossed the creek, knee deep and icy, and headed home, following the side of the stream along the clearing's edge to avoid the deep swamp. Some deer had used the same path recently- their tracks were clear in the wet sand. Then I noticed another set of tracks.

Quite different. crisp and clear in the mud. big splayed hoofprints. Large, slotted, dewclaw imprints.

Rain and cold were forgotten! my heart hammered... Moose footprints! Moose!
A New Zealand moose had walked here only a few hours before...