

by Lee Lamb

E I L K  
T A L K

People make all kinds of sounds to communicate. You might holler across the street to get a friend's attention, but whisper to your parents when trailing an elk in the woods. Your little sister laughs when you tickle her, while your baby brother probably cries when he is tired. Elk use different sounds to communicate with each other, too.

## LETTING THEM KNOW WHO'S BOSS

Bull elk bugle during the *rut*—or mating season—to attract cow elk and to let smaller bulls know who's boss. Spikes, the teenage bulls, also bugle, but they have shrill, squeaky voices. Once a bull gathers a *harem*, or group of cows, he works hard to keep it. If a cow strays, the bull chases after her, often grunting to let her know she needs to get back to the harem . . . now!

## SOUND THE ALARM!

When cow elk graze with their heads buried in tall grass, they mew to help keep track of each other. Sometimes scuffles occur over the tastiest food. An elk might grind its teeth and hiss, telling another elk to back off. There is almost always at least one cow on the lookout. When she senses danger, she barks to warn the rest of the herd. All heads come up, ears point forward and everyone is on high alert, ready to run!

## BABY TALK

Elk calves spend their first few weeks hiding from predators in tall grass, under bushes or among rocks. When a calf's mother is ready to move to different feeding grounds, she whines softly to summon her calf out of hiding. Calves are quiet for the most part, but when a calf is scared, it bleats to get mom's attention.

**CAN YOU  
DECODE WHAT  
THIS BULL ELK  
IS SAYING?**

