

Idaho Fish & Game News

October 2013



Volume 25, Number 10

Hunters Can Expect Good Hunting in Idaho This Fall

Hunters can expect better than average big game numbers and hunting conditions across Idaho this year.

Storms in the west central mountains during the summer produced good forage that stayed green, especially under the forest canopy, throughout much of the summer. With a wet fall making for quieter hunting and early fall green-up, expect good hunting conditions with plenty of game in the hills.

With a little planning and scouting, hunters should have an excellent hunting season.

North Idaho: Weather in the Panhandle and Clearwater regions last winter brought below average snow and decent fawn and calf survival. A wet spring produced good forage, but a dry summer may have reduced that forage.

Late summer and early fall rains are greening up the hillsides and helping to distribute game away from water holes. Both regions have areas with good and growing elk and deer numbers – and some areas with lower overall numbers. Even in the areas with lower calf survival, good quality bulls can be found.

The whitetail outlook is good for the fall with little or no disease reported.

Fires burned parts of units 20 and 14 of the Clearwater. But continued rain and warm weather may bring good green-up attracting deer and elk.

Forest grouse appear to be about average based on early season reports. Some multiple clutches of chukar in the Clearwater indicate double nesting a likely result of weather.

Southwestern Idaho: A mild winter in the McCall and Southwest regions produced below average snow. Fawn survival was good over the past two winters, which should result in many young bucks on the hillside this fall.

Likewise, elk survived the winter in good condition. The dry summer and harsh fire season will displace elk and deer during the hunting season. Scouting should take place before hunters set up camp to understand the new conditions.

Wet weather in late summer and early fall and green-up in burned areas may benefit wintering game. Expect good hunting in the northern part of the region.

The Owyhee desert areas were dry this summer and hunters can expect lighter bodied deer and less antler growth. Good fawn survival will result in many two-point deer.



Hunters must stop at check stations even if unsuccessful. *IDFG photo*

Southern and Southeastern Idaho: Two years of better than average fawn survival will bring good hunting this fall in most of the Magic Valley and Southeast regions.

Elk numbers are also expected to be up this year. A hot fire season burned about 300,000 acres in game units 43 and 44.

In northerly parts of the regions, rain provided some greenery during the summer. Managers are making changes in Unit 48-3 to allow better access to unburned areas nearby.

Early season archery hunters report good conditions and lots of elk in the Bear River and Diamond Creek zones. Fall rains may move elk away from water holes and live creeks.

Upland hunters can expect fewer birds this year; a more average year due to the dry weather and poor chick survival.

Upper Snake and Salmon Regions: Fawn survival in the Salmon Region was poorer than average last winter. Drought and fire brought conditions similar to the rest of the state.

Game will redistribute across the landscape, but hunters may find some game disoriented during migration to winter range.

Unlike in the Salmon Region, deer fawns survived well in the Upper Snake. This is the second year of good fawn survival, which should result in a good crop of young bucks. Good reports of elk numbers are coming out of the Upper Snake by early hunters in the Beaverhead, Island Park and Pioneer zones. Folks are seeing and harvesting lots of bulls. Predictions are good for the rest of the season.

Forest grouse hunters are reporting good grouse numbers and broods in the Upper Snake.

Inside this issue

Page 2:

Sources for Information about Hunting in Idaho

Page 3:

Fall Hunting Overlook – What's New in 2013

Elk Hunt Success Rate by Zone - 2012		
Zone	A Tag	B Tag
Panhandle	15.6%	11.5%
Palouse	28.8%	19.8%
Dworshak	20.1%	16.4%
Hells Canyon	Controlled hunts only	
Lolo	13.0%	17.5%
Elk City	16.2%	17.9%
Selway	22.8%	20.3%
Middle Fork	23.3%	20.6%
Salmon	17.6%	25.1%
Weiser River	21.4%	25.1%
McCall	17.2%	12.4%
Lemhi	21.1%	No B tag
Beaverhead	26.3%	No B tag
Brownlee	19.6%	No B tag
Sawtooth	15.1%	19.9%
Pioneer	23.4%	No B tag
Owyhee/ South Hills	5.8%	No B tag
Boise River	11.0%	14.6%
Smoky Mts	19.8%	No B tag
Bennett Hills	34.3%	No B tag
Big Desert	15.4%	No B tag
Island Park	17.3%	No B tag
Palisades	16.9%	25.5%
Tex Creek	14%	22.8%
Bannock	13.6%	No B tag
Bear River	25.0%	21.7%
Diamond Creek	18.6%	No B tag
Teton	7.9%	17.9%
Snake River	19.3%	No B tag

Average success in general and controlled hunts
 Deer – 41 percent – 120,868 hunters
 Elk – 22 percent – 74,404 hunters
 Pronghorn – 50 percent – about 3,000 hunters

Idaho Fish and Game News
 Fish and Game Commission:
 Chairman: Bob Barowsky
 Director: Virgil Moore
 Published by Idaho Fish and Game
 600 South Walnut
 P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707
 (208) 334-3746
 E-mail: idfginfo@idfg.idaho.gov
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>
 Volume 25, Number 10

Sources for Information about Hunting in Idaho

For information about big game hunting in Idaho, refer to the seasons and rules books available at license vendors across the state, at Fish and Game offices or the website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/>. Under the “Wildlife” tab click on “wildlife management plans.”

For help with planning a hunt, refer to the “Hunt Planner” - <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/huntPlanner/>.

Hunting license and general season tags are available at license vendors across the state, at Fish and Game offices, online at: <https://id.outdoorcentral.us/>, or by credit card within the United States call 1-800-554-8685, outside the U.S., use the Internet or mail.

Nonresident license applications can be downloaded at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/licenses/>, or ordered along with rule books by phone at: 208-334-3700.

Anyone born after January 1, 1975, must have completed a recognized hunter education course to buy a hunting license.

Order form for maps are in the rule books or <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/?getPage=162>.

U.S.G.S. topographic maps online

<http://www.usgs.gov/pubprod/maps.html> and at outdoor stores.

U.S. Forest Service surface and travel maps are available at offices.

BLM maps are available at offices or online at www.blm.gov/id/st/en.html.

For information about outfitters and guides in Idaho contact Idaho Outfitters and Guides at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/ioglb/>.

Contact Fish and Game:

Idaho Fish and Game, P.O. Box 25, Boise ID 83707 208-334-3700 or <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>.

Tips:

- Get permission to hunt on private land – before the season starts.
- Be wary of predators after killing and while field dressing an animal.
- Dress for the weather. Bring rain gear and wear sturdy, waterproof boots.
- Carry emergency supplies, including a first-aid kit, fire-starting materials, a whistle, a space blanket and a map and compass in case you get lost.
- Bring water and extra food.
- Check on road conditions before heading into the backcountry; effects of this summer’s fires may have closed some roads.



Photo courtesy US Forest Service

The Elk Complex fire in late summer blocked access to hunters in part of Unit 39.



Fall Hunting Season Overlook – What's New In 2013

Deer

- New archery controlled hunt in Unit 45.
- Increase in either-sex controlled hunt tags in Upper Snake Region.
- New October 10 – November 30 controlled buck hunts in units 21, 28, 30, 36A and 36B.

Elk

- Net increase of more than 2,000 controlled hunt tags around the state in response to population increases in some units.
- New cap on sales of Bear River Zone B tags – 20 percent fewer tags will be available this year.
- New general season A-tag muzzleloader hunt in Pioneer Zone units 36A and 50.

Pronghorn

- New youth hunts in units 39 and 54.
- Archery hunt in Hunt Area 68 has been split into two separate hunts.

Mountain Lion

- Longer seasons in the Panhandle Region, opened 16 days earlier on August 30.

Gray Wolf

- Longer hunting seasons in the Panhandle, Middle Fork, Beaverhead and Island Park wolf management zones, and in that portion of Unit 16 north of the Selway River.
- New trapping seasons in parts of units 2, 3, 13, 18 and 22.
- New trapping seasons in the Salmon and Island Park zones – foothold traps only, except snares may be used on private land and in that portion of Unit 28 within designated wilderness.

Moose, Sheep, Goat

The 2013 and 2014 Moose, Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat seasons include some increases and decreases in tag numbers in response to population changes and hunter success rates.

Moose

Declines in moose numbers, particularly in north-central Idaho, resulted in a reduction in tags and closing or combining of some hunt areas. If you do not see your favorite hunt area, look at the Hunt Area Descriptions. Some hunt areas have been combined.



White-fronted geese come in for a landing.

IDFG photo

Bighorn Sheep

Controlled hunt area 27-4 has been split into two separate hunts: two tags in Hunt Area 27-5 and one tag in Hunt Area 36.

Legislation in 2009 designated major portions of all California bighorn sheep hunt areas as wilderness, where access by motorized vehicles is forbidden by law. Wilderness boundaries are clearly marked and will be patrolled. A number of access routes were preserved for hunter access; please check maps and abide by wilderness regulations.

Maps showing wilderness boundaries can be found at the Bruneau, Owyhee and Jarbidge offices of the Bureau of Land Management or at <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en.html>.

Mountain Goat

Hunt Area 51 has been closed because of declining mountain goat numbers.

Waterfowl

This year, the seasons for white-fronted and Canada geese have been separated, allowing a 107-day white-fronted goose season that extends beyond the last Sunday in January.

In Area 3, in the southwest part of the state, seasons for white-fronted geese and

light geese – snow and Ross's geese – will be open at different times for part of the season, with the white-fronted goose season open from November 11 through February 23, and the light goose season from November 26 through March 10.

Hunters are reminded that electronic calls and unplugged shotguns are allowed only for hunting light geese when no other seasons are open.

Elsewhere, the white-fronted goose season will run concurrent with the duck and Canada goose seasons.

The daily bag limit has been increased to six white fronted geese. The daily bag limit for light geese has been increased to 20.

Possession limits for all waterfowl have been increased to three times the daily bag limit.

Waterfowl seasons are based in part on responses to a 2012 survey that showed waterfowl hunters prefer continuous seasons for ducks and Canada geese that start and end later. Rather than seek comments on minor changes annually, Idaho Fish and Game surveyed a random sample of waterfowl hunters to help guide season-setting through 2016.

Several New Fish and Game Rules Affect Hunters This Season

Motorized Hunting Rule

Fish and Game's motorized hunting rules apply to big game animals, including moose, bighorn sheep and mountain goats, in designated units from August 30 through December 31.

Between these dates and in the designated units, specific to all big game hunting, hunters may use motorized vehicles only on established roadways that are open to motorized traffic and capable of being traveled by full-sized automobiles.

Motorized hunting use restrictions apply to units 29, 30, 30A, 32, 32A, 36A, 37, 37A, 45, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 52A, 53, 56, 58, 59, 59A, 66, 66A, 69, 70, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77 and 78.

The rule does not apply to upland game animals or birds in hunts within the designated units. It is unlawful to hunt from or with the aid of any motorized vehicle everywhere in Idaho.

Hunting Passport

A Hunting Passport is a special authorization that allows the person to take wildlife only when they are accompanied by a mentor and participating in the Mentored Hunting Program. They may participate in the program only for one year, and the Hunting Passport expires December 31 of the year it was issued.

A person at least 8 years with a Hunting Passport old may hunt small game and most upland game birds, but a person must be at least 10 to hunt turkey or sandhill crane and at least 12 to hunt big game.

The mentor must be at least 18 and must possess a valid Idaho hunting license, and he or she may mentor no more than two others at a time.

Disabled Hunter Companion

A person may assist a disabled hunter without having a tag or permit. The disabled hunter must have a valid disabled combination license, a disabled archery permit, or a disabled hunt-from-a-motor-vehicle permit and a valid tag. The companion must have a valid hunting license and applicable special weapon permit, but he or she does not need a

tag while helping the disabled hunter dispatch, tag and retrieve game.

The companion and the disabled hunter must be within normal conversation or hearing range without shouting or the aid of electronic devices. But the companion may dispatch, tag and retrieve a downed animal wounded by the disabled hunter.

Animals retrieved by the companion do not count against his or her possession limit. All other applicable rules governing the taking of game animals apply.

The companion must be designated in a statement signed by and include the disabled hunter's name, address, hunting license number, big game tag number and the dates of designation. A proxy statement is required to transport a game animal for a disabled hunter.

Tag Transfer

A person may transfer a controlled hunt tag to their child or grandchild under the age of 18 who is otherwise qualified to participate in the hunt. The child or grandchild may be designated only one controlled hunt tag per species per

calendar year. The transfer must be made before the opening date of the hunt.

License Changes

Resident and nonresident license buyers will be able to buy three-year licenses beginning July 1.

Beginning July 1, Fish and Game will no longer sell youth small game hunting licenses. Youths 10 to 17 may buy the Resident Junior Hunting or Nonresident Junior Mentored Hunting license.

Nonresident Junior Mentored Hunters

The holder of a junior mentored tag must have a junior mentored hunting license and must be accompanied by adult license holder with a tag for same species, but it doesn't have to be for the same area. The junior mentored deer and elk tags are not valid for bear, gray wolf or mountain lion.

Bear Identification

Bear hunters are encouraged to check out our interactive bear identification training program on the Fish and Game website: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/education/bearidentification/>.



Three sisters partake in a hunter education class.

IDFG photo by Mike Demick