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News Release

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2009 FALL HUNTING EDITION ARTICLES

Here is the fall hunting forecast for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Jackson and Pinedale regions...

Jackson Region

By Tim Fuchs, Jackson Region Wildlife Supervisor

Mountain Goat: This herd is shared between Idaho and Wyoming in the Snake River Range and continues to do well. Both states did a helicopter survey in 2008 and counted a total of 188 mountain goats. Hunter success is typically high with most years being 100 percent. Winter conditions were moderate and little mortality was experienced. Abundant moisture this spring and summer has left the range in excellent condition.

Bighorn Sheep: Hunters hunting in Sheep Hunt area 7 should have a good year. This population has been recovering nicely since the pneumonia outbreak during the winter of 2001-2002. Ram numbers have increased with more animals moving into older age classes. Also, lamb numbers have been on the increase since 2005. Sheep hunting along the Tetons can also be good. However, hunter success in this area has been very low over the past several years due to a couple of factors. First, this population spends its time in extremely rough and remote terrain high in the Teton Range. The second major factor is that much of the herd spends time on both sides of the boundary between the Caribou Targhee National Forest and Grand Teton National Park. Hunters with an area 6 license need to be prepared for extreme conditions and must be in top physical condition.

Moose: Moose hunting in the Jackson Region will continue to be difficult. Herds north and west of Jackson are well below desired population objectives. Distribution is spotty and finding mature bulls will be difficult. Hunting south of Jackson will be a bit more promising with herd numbers stabilizing. Still, hunting will be challenging and will require more time and effort. Moose hunters this year are being asked to submit the heads of the animals they harvest so the Department can take samples in an attempt to determine if parasites and disease are playing a role in the decline of moose in the state.

Bison: Bison numbers continue to be above the Department's population objective. Hunter success for the 2008 season was 95 percent for bulls and 76 percent for cows. A total of 253 bison were harvested last year with 139 being bulls. The Department expects hunter success to remain high this season for bulls as they tend to provide more hunting opportunity by using National Forest lands adjacent to Grand Teton National Park. Hunting for cows can be more problematic since they tend to stay within the park boundaries until weather moves them onto the National Elk Refuge. However, once Bison move onto the refuge, hunting opportunities tend to be very good. As with last year, the 2009 season will run through the first weekend in January. Other changes for the 2009 season will require all participating hunters to report the results of their hunt to the Department whether successful or not. Also for the first time, archery and muzzle loading firearms will be allowed on those areas excluding the National Elk Refuge.

Elk: Elk hunters hunting along the west slope of the Tetons will likely experience difficult hunting conditions. This population is experiencing low densities with very limited distribution. A significant number of elk in the area tend to spend the majority of their time in either Grand Teton or Yellowstone National Parks. If fall weather conditions remain mild, elk tend to stay in the Parks and are not available to hunters. Hunting in the Gros Ventre drainage will also be more difficult this year. In 2008, the season was shortened and a spikes excluded regulation was adopted. This is an effort to recruit more mature bull elk into the population. The shorter season and spikes excluded regulation will be continued this year. People hunting south of Jackson this year will find

elk numbers, and in particular bull numbers, at all time highs. This population is over desired population levels and hunters should have excellent opportunities to harvest an elk. However, hunters need to realize that these elk often occupy steep and difficult terrain and the use of OHV's is limited. Also, it is important to point out that the Jackson and Buffalo Ranger Districts recently adopted their summer travel plan that will change OHV use on national forest lands in the Jackson area for the coming hunting season. Hunters planning on using motorized vehicles are urged to check with the Bridger Teton National Forest and get a copy of their current travel maps. The Grand Teton National Park and National Elk Refuge hunts are difficult to predict. However, with elk numbers strong in the Park, hunters should have excellent opportunities to harvest an elk in either of these hunts.

Mule Deer: Although deer population levels are below our population objectives, deer hunters should experience good hunting opportunities in the Jackson region this year. A moderate winter combined with ample precipitation through the spring and summer, have provided excellent forage for deer. Areas that have been historically good for finding mature bucks will again be the focus for hunters this year. These areas include Southern Teton County and Northern Lincoln and Sublette Counties. A word of caution however, the deer season begins in mid September for most of these areas and buck deer tend to be found in upper elevations above tree line. It can take a lot of hard work and patience for hunters to be successful.

Pinedale Region

By Scott Smith, Pinedale Region Wildlife Coordinator

Pronghorn antelope: For the 2009 hunting season in the Pinedale area, permit levels will be similar to 2008. Most seasons will open September 10th and run to the end of October providing ample time for hunters to enjoy the fall season. Hunters enjoy high success rates (average >90%) in this area of the state and have plenty of public land to pursue antelope. Good spring and early summer moisture should promote good horn growth for buck antelope this season.

Mule Deer: The Pinedale area hosts the Sublette, and Wyoming Range herds. These deer herds are two large populations with special management strategies designed to provide high quality hunting opportunities, older age class deer, and high buck : doe ratios (30-45 : 100). Deer hunting in 2009 should be similar to the past several years as the past two winters have not been severe and over-winter survival has been good. In the Upper Green River hunt areas, buck availability should be average to good considering the younger age classes that have survived the past several winters. In the Wyoming Range, fawn production was not as good and hunters may notice a slight decline in the number of yearling bucks they see this fall.

Elk: In Sublette County, liberal seasons have been in place for several years and will remain that way in 2009. Hunting seasons are designed to drive populations down to objective levels, while maintaining at least 20 bulls:100 cows in the post-hunt populations. Warm, dry weather conditions during much of the 2008 season resulted in poor harvest for many of the herds in the Pinedale area. Elk hunters are encouraged to pursue their quarry in the Piney Elk Herd - Hunt Areas 92 and 94. Rifle seasons will open October 1 for general license antlerless elk hunting and extend to November 15 while Type 6 licenses will be valid until November 22 to address an increase in elk numbers along the Piney Front portion of the Wyoming Range.

Moose: The Pinedale area supports the majority of the Sublette Moose Herd Unit and hunting seasons are designed to provide ample recreational opportunities (30 to 40 day seasons) and maintain high bull : cow ratios (60:100 in 2009). The Sublette Herd remains below postseason objectives (-13%) with a population estimate of 4760. The 2009 seasons are similar to the past several years. Quality bull moose are still available even though the population is below desired levels.

Bighorn Sheep: There is one sheep herd (Darby Mountain) plus a portion of the Whiskey Mountain Herd managed by Pinedale area personnel. A regulation change in the issuance of hunting licenses allowed the Darby Mountain (Hunt Area 24) herd to be hunted for the first time since 1997. A ten year old trophy ram was harvested in 2008. Surveys over the last four years have indicated that there are sufficient numbers of rams available to offer one license. That license is valid for any ram from September 1 through October 31. There are no proposed

changes in 2009 for the Whiskey Mountain hunt areas 8/23 and permit levels will remain at 12. Quality rams are present in both sheep herds.

TIPS TO AVOID BEAR CONFLICTS

By Dennie Hammer, Cody Region Information and Education Specialist

CODY – When days begin to shorten and food resources start to decline, bears gorge themselves to gain large amounts of weight—this may result in an increase in grizzly and black bear encounters.

In fall, bears enter a state of hyperphagia, which is an abnormally increased appetite for – and consumption of – food. Hyperphagia is necessary to build enough fat reserves to survive the winter, when a bear will go about five months without eating. Finding an adequate amount of food during this time often leads a hungry bear into conflicts with humans.

According to grizzly bear conflict officer Mark Bruscano, “The habits of black bears and grizzly bears are similar in the fall, but a grizzly bear is usually more aggressive in protecting food sources, defending its cubs and defending its space. If you’re hunting in grizzly bear country, we recommend hunting with a partner and encourage every hunter to carry bear spray,” he said.

Bruscano added that when field dressing an animal in grizzly country, someone should always be watching for bears. Some outfitters believe that certain bears have associated the report of a gunshot with food. “I have no reason to doubt that this does happen on occasion,” Bruscano said.

“Grizzly bear country is some of the most spectacular country in Wyoming, but hunting there is a challenge,” said Dennie Hammer, long time hunter education instructor and education specialist for the Game and Fish Department.

A real key in avoiding encounters with bears is to constantly be on the lookout for bears and bear sign and getting downed game out as quickly as possible. “Many local hunters and outfitters are using saddle panniers to immediately pack out their game,” Hammer said. “This is a better alternative than leaving the carcass out overnight.”

However, leaving a carcass out overnight is sometimes necessary. When that happens hunters should take the following precautions:

- If possible, hang the carcass at least ten feet off the ground and four feet away from the support structure. . Adult bears standing upright can reach eight or nine feet.
- Put some distance between the carcass and the gut pile and position the carcass so that it can be seen from a distance.
- If hanging is not possible, place branches over the carcass and leave an article of clothing on it as well. The branches and clothing, if disturbed, may indicate a bear's presence.
- When retrieving game, approach the carcass from the upwind direction and observe the surrounding area from a distance with binoculars.
- Make a lot of noise when approaching the carcass and have your bear spray ready.

Bruscino said that if a bear has claimed your carcass, leave the scene and report the incident to the Game and Fish Department. “There really isn’t any reason to risk being injured or killed by attempting to chase a bear off a carcass,” he said.

IS BEAR SPRAY EFFECTIVE?

By Dennie Hammer, Cody Region Information and Education Specialist

CODY – The effectiveness of bear spray as a defense in an aggressive bear encounter has long been questioned by hunters. Many hunters feel much more comfortable knowing that their firearm is a weapon that they know is capable of stopping an aggressive bear—if it is hit in a vital area.

Tom Smith, Bear Researcher, Brigham Young University, has studied human-bear conflicts for seventeen years. He recently reviewed over 300 incidents in Alaska where people carried and used firearms against aggressive bears. An analysis of those incidents showed that 40 percent were injured or killed, including 23 fatalities and 16 severely injured people. Another 48 people suffered lesser injuries.

In an article written by Smith called [Firearms, Bears and Bear Spray](#), Smith states that “In my research, hunters were generally unable to fire a shot before the bear slammed into them. Some hunters couldn’t get the safety off, others short-stroked the bolt and jammed the cartridge, yet others, out of habit, tried to ‘scope’ the bear, losing critical seconds while failing to zero in.”

According to his article, Smith states that “With a can of bear spray on one’s hip or pack strap, it is simply a matter of pointing and shooting. In areas of poor visibility I always have a

can of spray in my hand. It is easily carried over a finger and isn't as clumsy as a firearm is in the field-ready position. All that is required is pointing the nozzle in the general direction and pushing a button. Accuracy is not nearly as critical as it is with a firearm. You can't 'wound' a bear with bear spray. It also eliminates problems with sticking bolt actions, jamming shells, and hard-to-find safety mechanisms."

In another study conducted by bear researchers in Alaska and Canada, 83 bear incidents where bear spray was used were analyzed. Of all persons carrying sprays, 98 percent were uninjured by bears in close range encounters. The results of this peer reviewed research was published in the Journal of Wildlife Management (Journal of Wildlife Management 72(3):640–645; 2008) the article is titled [Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska](#) .

NEW WGFD BEAR MANAGEMENT WEB PAGE GOES LIVE

By Dennie Hammer, Cody Region Information and Education Specialist

CODY – The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has unveiled a new grizzly bear management web page on the department's web site. The new page provides up-to-date information on grizzly bear conflict, research and education efforts, including weekly updates on bear management activities in Wyoming.

To access the page go to the WGFD web site at <http://gf.state.wy.us>. Once there under the "What's New" section, click on "Grizzly Bear Management".

"The grizzly bear management program in Wyoming can be broken down into three broad categories, which include our efforts to reduce human-bear conflict, to understand grizzly bear population demographics and educate the public," said Dennie Hammer, Cody region information and education specialist. "This new web page is a big step in providing those who follow grizzly bear recovery with timely information on our grizzly bear management program."

Reducing human-bear conflict is a significant challenge for the Game and Fish. "Over the past five years, 443 human-bear conflicts, involving both black and grizzly bears were reported in Park County which averages over 80 conflicts per year," Hammer said. According to Hammer, conflicts include bears obtaining human food rewards, getting into bird feeders, causing property damage and aggressive encounters with people.

The department's trophy game research branch works with black and grizzly bears and mountain lions. The branch collects a great deal of information on the grizzly bear population in Wyoming's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. "Annually, they capture bears and fit them with radio collars. Collared bears provide information on movements, birth rates, cub survival, habitat use, denning periods and vital information used in population estimation," Hammer said.

Information and education outreach has long been a priority with the department. "For nearly 15 years our agency has been promoting coexistence with bears through information and education," Hammer said. "We are making a difference." Hammer organized and coordinated the first "Living in Bear Country" workshop in 1995 and currently leads the "Staying Safe in Bear, Lion and Wolf Country" seminar effort that provides Wyoming communities with information on how to stay safe while hunting and recreating in large predator country.

The web page (<http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/grizzlymanagement/index.asp>) also contains links to Wyoming's bear identification test, Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team reports, Wyoming's Grizzly Bear Management Plan and Occupation Guidelines, Final Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, Center for Wildlife Information and a number of technical documents.

Grizzly bear management authority was turned over to the department when grizzly bears were removed from the Endangered Species List in April 2007.

HUNTER MENTOR PROGRAM A SUCCESS

By Dennie Hammer, Cody Region Information and Education Specialist

CODY – Over 500 mentees, ranging in age from five to 64 took advantage of the Hunter Mentor Program in 2008.

Wyoming's new hunter mentor program allows any person who has not yet received a hunter education certification to apply for special authorization to hunt while being accompanied by a mentor. This allows an individual to experience hunting before committing to the coursework required to complete hunter safety.

Serving as a hunter mentor is a great way to recruit new hunters into the sport. It is also a chance for a seasoned hunter to give something back to the sport. Being a mentor can be a great

experience, but carries with it some responsibilities. Mentors should be prepared to provide a safe and memorable first-time hunting experience by conducting themselves in a safe, legal, ethical and responsible manner at all times, in order to enhance the image of hunters and the sport of hunting. The mentor is responsible for making sure his or her mentee hunter understands all the appropriate hunting regulations, safe hunting practices and ethical considerations during any mentored hunting experience. To participate in the hunter mentor program, a hunter mentor must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age.
2. Possess a valid hunter education card or certificate while in the field with the mentee.
3. Possess a valid Wyoming hunting license while in the field with the mentee.
4. Sign the mentee's special authorization certificate.
5. Document hunting license type/number and hunter safety certification number on the mentee's special authorization certificate.
6. Supervise only one (1) hunter mentee at a time in the field.
7. be in direct supervision (within sight and direct voice contact) of the hunter mentee at all times while in the field.

Anyone who plans to hunt in Wyoming may participate in the hunter mentor program. A mentee can hunt for any species, but must be at least 12 years of age to take big game in Wyoming. A mentee can only apply for one special authorization in his or her lifetime, and that special authorization is valid for one year from the date of issue. A mentee can hunt with multiple mentors during the one-year special authorization. A new copy of the special authorization must be printed out and signed by each mentor. Once the special authorization certificate has expired, the mentee must complete a hunter education class to legally hunt in Wyoming.

If the hunter mentee is under 18 years of age, he or she must obtain parental/guardian permission to apply for the special authorization. The hunter mentee must carry the special authorization certificate at all times while in the field, just like hunters must carry their hunter education cards. The hunter mentee is also responsible for obtaining all necessary licenses, stamps or permits needed for the hunt.

Participation in this program is free. To get your special authorization visit a Game and Fish office or the Game and Fish web site at <http://gf.state.wy.us/huntermentor>.

BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTERS REMINDED OF PLUGGING PROCESS

By Dennie Hammer, Cody Region Information and Education Specialist

CODY – Hunters harvesting bighorn sheep in Wyoming are reminded that registration and plugging of any harvested bighorn sheep is required within 15 days following the harvest. The head must be brought into any local Game and Fish office and must be accompanied by the licensed hunter that harvested the sheep.

Any person that picks up any bighorn sheep head or horns is also required to come in to a regional office within 15 days of the pickup for registration, plugging, and interstate game tagging. Individuals that pick up horns may be required to provide Game and Fish officials with substantial proof that horns were legally acquired, possibly including accompanying a Game and Fish official to the location where horns were found.

Bighorn sheep horns may be brought into any local Game and Fish office Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Hunters are advised that the licensed individual that harvested the sheep or the individual that picked up the sheep head or horns must accompany the head to the office.

It is highly recommended that hunters call the regional office before coming in to be sure a qualified person is available to register and plug their sheep. Failing to do so could result in a long wait.

CRANE, GOOSE, DOVE OPENER SEPTEMBER 1

By Lucy Diggins Wold, Green River Region Information and Education Specialist

GREEN RIVER—Limited Quota Sandhill Crane, Mourning Dove and Early Canada Goose Seasons will open September 1 in the Pacific Flyway and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is reminding bird hunters to get ready now.

The sandhill crane hunt is only open to valid limited quota permit holders. Sandhill crane hunt seasons open Tuesday, September 1, and end officially at sunset on September 8. The **season** bag limit is **one** crane.

The Early Canada Goose season in the Pacific Flyway is a general season. The Early Canada Goose Season opens September 1 and ends officially at sunset on September 8. The daily bag limit on any Canada or cackling goose is two and the possession limit is four.

Hunting seasons for mourning doves, rails and snipe opens September 1. The daily bag limit for doves is 15 and 30 in possession.

Hunters are urged to read the *2009 Early Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations* before going hunting.

Goose, dove and crane hunters must have a Wyoming game bird license, conservation stamp, and a federal Harvest Information Program (HIP) stamp. During the early migratory bird season the federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (“Duck Stamp”) is required only if you are 16 years of age or older and plan to hunt geese.

All licensed migratory bird hunters must complete a HIP validation and must obtain a Wyoming HIP validation permit before they can legally hunt migratory game birds in Wyoming. HIP applies to anyone who hunts doves, ducks, geese, mergansers, sandhill cranes, snipe, coots or rails. HIP is a federal program that improves the ability to estimate harvest for management of migratory game species. HIP validation permits are available free of charge when printed from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department web site <http://gf.state.wy.us> However, a charge of \$.50 will be applied if the HIP stamp is obtained from Game and Fish offices or license selling agents.

In order to obtain a HIP validation permit you will be asked to identify the species you hunted the previous year and the approximate number you harvested. Some hunters will be randomly surveyed after the hunting season. Only one HIP permit is needed to hunt all species for the entire migratory game bird season. HIP permits are only valid in the state in which they are issued.

In an effort to protect migratory birds, federal and state law requires that no person shall hunt cranes, ducks, geese, mergansers and or coots with shot shells loaded with shot other than nontoxic shot.

Bird hunters can refer to the *2009 Early Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons* on pages 12-14 for detailed information about shotgun loads, distance estimation and steel shot lethality.

NEW WILDLIFE LAWS KICKING OFF THIS SUMMER

By Al Langston, Cheyenne Information Supervisor

CHEYENNE – Several new laws regarding Wyoming’s wildlife were passed by the 2009 Wyoming Legislature and went into effect this summer. Here’s a synopsis:

Authority to regulate wildlife immuno-contraception— A new law gives the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission the authority to prohibit and regulate the administration of contraceptives to wildlife. Technically, House Bill 0004 says “... any chemical or biological substance or physical procedure to wildlife ... for the purpose of controlling fertility or reproduction.” Using contraceptives for deer control is being promoted in urban areas, mainly in eastern states, and the Bureau of Land Management has a sterilization program for feral horses they manage in Wyoming. Although there are no plans to use contraceptives for deer control in Wyoming at the present time, the commission now has clear authority to regulate how it would be used if proposed in the future.

Check snares at least once a week— Prior to July 1 there was no requirement how often snares had to be checked. This law— HB0006— also gives the commission the authority to regulate the size of snares and their breakaway weights. A draft regulation to implement the once-a-week check period and establish snare size and breakaway weights was approved by the seven-member commission at its Aug. 5-6 meeting in Cody.

A stouter penalty for purchasing licenses while under suspension— Anyone who has had his hunting or fishing license privileges suspended as a penalty for a wildlife violation now faces greater consequences if he ignores that part of his sentence and buys a forbidden license anyway. Prior to July 1, the maximum penalty was \$1,000 fine and six months in jail. Now the violator could face a \$10,000 fine and one year in jail.

C-Stamp exemption— Hunters and anglers who hold pioneer licenses have been exempt from conservation stamp requirements for some licenses in the past. New legislation will exempt pioneer license holders from the conservation stamp requirement for all licenses effective Jan. 1, 2010. Same goes for resident military personnel who hold free licenses because they are assigned to a combat zone.

Licenses for youngsters with life-threatening diseases— In past years the law said there could be no more than 10 antelope, deer and turkey, and five elk licenses set aside for hunters 18 or under with life-threatening diseases. The new law removes that cap, gives the commission the

authority to determine the number of licenses to issue and ups the age to 20 and under to qualify. The licenses now will be issued directly to the young hunter and not an organization as was previously done.

Fewer liability concerns for landowners providing recreational parking— This bill broadens provisions of the Recreation Safety Act protecting landowners who allow the use of private land for parking and access related to recreational activities from liability. “This law should encourage more landowners to consider providing access parking and access trails,” said John Emmerich, Game and Fish deputy director.

Internet hunting banned— The 2009 legislature has made it illegal to shoot wildlife by remote control through the Internet. Anyone who violates this law could face up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.

Hunt bighorn ewes and lambs in the future? — That could be possible with the passage of HB0225. The bill allows the commission to issue ewe/lamb licenses to effectively manage bighorn sheep herds, if needed. Applicants would not lose their preference points for bighorn ram licenses if drawn for a ewe/lamb license, nor would there be a five-year waiting period to apply for another ewe/lamb license. There were no ewe/lamb licenses issued for 2009. The commission has yet to set the price for the licenses.

ARCHERS REMEMBER: SPECIAL ARCHERY PERMIT

By Jeff Obrecht, Cheyenne Information Specialist

CHEYENNE – With the majority of pronghorn archery seasons opening Aug. 15, bowhunters are reminded they are required to have an archery permit to hunt in a special archery season.

Archery permits, \$16 for residents and \$30 for nonresidents, are available at license agents and G&F offices.

CONSERVATION STAMP AVAILABLE ONLINE

By Jeff Obrecht, Cheyenne Information Specialist

CHEYENNE – Hunters and anglers can now get their conservation stamp online through the Game and Fish Web site.

“That should be especially convenient for nonresident hunters who arrive in Wyoming late at night when most license agents are closed,” said Jean Cole, License Section manager.

The \$12.50-stamp is required annually for almost all resident and nonresident license holders. Daily license holders are exempt from the requirement. Hunters and anglers who hold pioneer licenses have been exempt from conservation stamp requirements for some licenses in the past. New legislation will exempt pioneer license holders from the conservation stamp requirement for all licenses effective Jan. 1, 2010.

Cole alerts potential Internet c-stamp buyers to load their printer with white paper to perform a test print prior to purchase.

Lifetime conservation stamps are also available from the Game and Fish Cheyenne Office for \$180.50.

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