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2021 PAGOSA SPRINGS HUNTING GUIDE

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Why hunt Pagosa Country?

By Dick Ray

I was born and raised (reared) in New Mexico, a grandson of pioneers who came to the territory in a covered wagon.

I grew up hunting in the dry, rocky, cactus-covered mountains of southwest New Mexico where my grandparents had homesteaded.

Then one day over 50 years ago, my wife and I discovered Pagosa Country.

Of course we noticed the scenic grandeur of the San Juan Range, but we also noted that we could ride our horses over most of the terrain and the vegetation that did not include cholla or prickly pear cactus. Every major drainage had a creek, stream or river and most had trout in them. There was a variety of game animals, and plenty of them.

We decided this is better, and proceeded to move from New Mexico to Pagosa Country. But, we weren't truly satisfied with the game situation. The state allowed spike (yearling) bull elk to be harvested and, consequently, there were very few 5x5 bulls or larger taken each fall. All deer and elk licenses were unlimited and public land was crowded.

It seemed that Pagosa Country had been discovered.

All of this prompted some research on my part. This resulted in the purchase of a guide/outfitter territory in British Columbia, Canada, in 1977. We continued to remain Colorado residents, but quit guiding elk hunters in Colorado and focused on private

land in New Mexico and elk, moose, bear, mule deer and white tail deer in Canada. Traveling to Canada each fall took me through Wyoming, Utah, Idaho and Montana, always on the lookout for better hunting grounds. This went on until 1992, when we decided to sell the Canadian venture and refocus on Colorado and northern New Mexico. My son, Mike, and I had been licensed to guide in Utah, Arizona and Wyoming and had decided, "Pagosa is better."

Good judgment had prevailed in Colorado, for all through the 1980s, the state had made a bull elk less than four points illegal to take in most areas. It took a while, but finally, there were some older age class bulls to be found to keep the spike from breeding, allowing the elk herds to begin to regain their sizes. (Without older age bulls to drive the yearling away, he will mate with his mother, sisters and aunt, thus depriving the herd of the genetic diversity required.)

In 1999, encouraged by sportsmen, the Colorado Wildlife Commission totally limited the numbers of deer licenses in the state. Deer numbers have rebounded to some degree, bears are abundant, foxes are common, as are mountain lions and coyotes — all are the result of good habitat.

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A hunter's tale: 'The day I grew up'

By Dick Ray

The southern Rocky Mountains are rich in the natural history of many species of wildlife, as well the history of the people who affected and were effected by that wildlife, be they hunter, trapper, stockman or explorer.

In the mid 1970s, there were only a few outfitters who kept a pack of hounds trained to hunt bear. I did keep hounds, and consequently was called upon from time to time by the Division of Wildlife to pursue a stock-killing bear. One such hunt, in the mid 1970s, caused me to venture high into the mountains above Saguache, Colo., onto the summer range of rancher George Ward.

In order to reach the site of the predation, we had to pack in on horseback to the high country on the north side of Baxter Peak to an elevation of approximately 10,500 feet. I was accompanied by Bert Widhelm, the game warden for that area, a couple of young men who worked for me at that time, and the rancher, Ward.

We got to the campsite late in the evening with just enough time to hobble the horses, tie up and feed the hounds, gather some firewood and make camp. After a supper (not dinner) of biscuits, beans and steak, came the coffee and Ward's stories.

After a while, he asked me, "You are from Pagosa, don't you know Lloyd Anderson?" I replied, "Of course I do; he is the government hunter and trapper, and a fine gentleman he is." I then asked, "How is it that you know Mr. Anderson?"

Said Ward, "I used to work for Lloyd Anderson, and I'll tell you about the day I grew up. It was back just before WWII, and Lloyd and I were packing into the headwaters of the Pine, northeast of Pagosa, to do some predator work around the many herds of sheep, on their summer ranges.

"Ahead of us, going along the same trail that we were on, we spied a pair of bears. We got off our horses and Lloyd peered at them with his field glasses and then spoke out, 'I believe it is a Grizzly!'

"At that, I took my .25-20 from the saddle scabbard and took aim. While Lloyd looked through



Photo courtesy Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Although variable from blond to nearly black, grizzly bear fur is typically brown in color with white tips. A pronounced hump appears on their shoulders; the hump is a good way to distinguish a black bear from a grizzly bear, as black bears do not have this hump. There are no grizzlies remaining in Colorado.

the glasses, I calculated windage and elevation. I squeezed the trigger and the biggest bear dropped. I jumped up and down with excitement as the shot was several hundred yards long. Lloyd didn't say much except, 'Let's go see what you've done.'

"We mounted and rode on to the dead bear, the other one had run off. I asked Lloyd, 'Have you ever seen a shot like that? And with a .25-20!'

"The bear was a beautiful, adult female grizzly. Finally, Lloyd said, 'Now let me tell you what you have really done. You have killed a bear that didn't need killing and with a gun that is no bear gun and that is much more likely to wound than kill, even at close range. Now we are up here to protect domestic

sheep and there has been no report of that bear killing any sheep, so why kill it?'

"Well, as those words sunk in, from a man who I respected so much, well, that is the day I grew up."

Ward went on to speak to us younger men that night about ethics, respect for the animals and self respect.

And so it is with hunting. It is not so much about what you kill as it is about what you learn; about the natural world, the terrain, animal behavior and yourself. I greatly appreciate the time I have been able to spend with men of the quality of Anderson, Ward and all of the others who have passed on their knowledge before they, too, have passed on.

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Hunter safety card required for purchasing hunting license: Local classes offered

By Donald D. Volger

If you were born on or after Jan. 1, 1949, you are required to have a hunter safety card before you can purchase a hunting license.

Those needing a hunter safety card should go directly to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website to find out if classes are posted.

Students should register online prior to the class. To register, go to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website, click on "Learn" then click on "Classes — Traditional" under the Hunter Education heading and follow the instructions. The direct link is <https://register-ed.com/programs/colorado/98-colorado-hunter-education-course>.

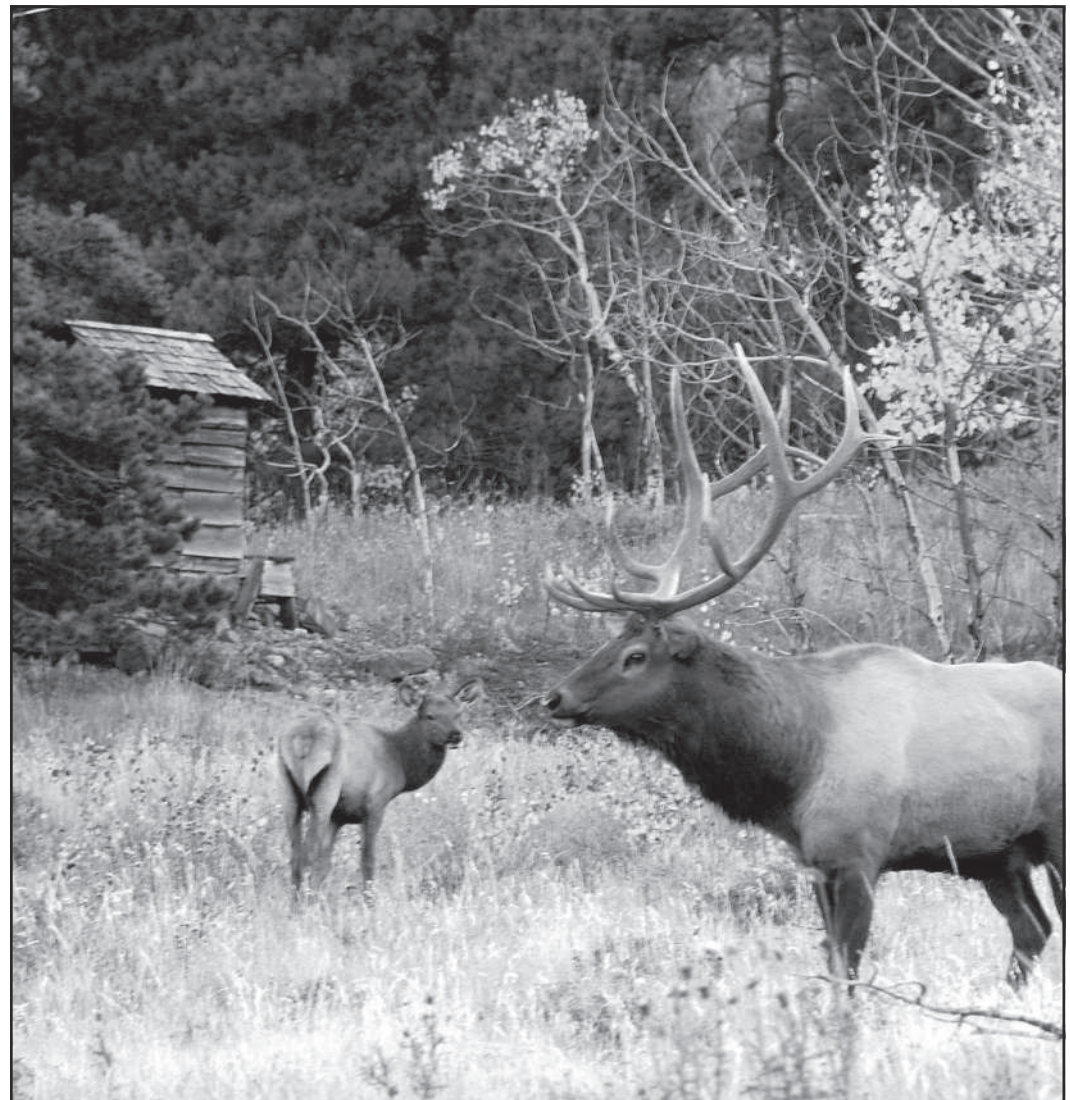
Hunter education classes will be offered two times in Pagosa Springs, Oct. 28 and 29 (before the start of the second rifle season on Oct. 30), with a final class on Nov. 11 and 12 (prior to the start of the third rifle season on Nov. 13).

Sessions will take place 5:30-10 p.m. on Thursday and 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Friday. Students must attend each session.

Classes will be held at the San Juan Ranger Building, 302 San Juan St., in downtown Pagosa Springs.

These courses will be open to anyone wishing to obtain a hunter safety card.

Local hunter safety courses are sponsored by the Pagosa Springs Police Department in conjunction with CPW with support from the local chapter of the Friends of the NRA.



Jennifer Churchill, Colorado Parks and Wildlife



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A Colorado Bear Fight

Adventures in the high country in Pagosa took on a bit different flavor in days gone by. Read about it in "A Colorado Bear Fight," an account written more than a century ago by Will Price.

"In November 1911, the bears were coming down quite low on the Navajo River hills, after acorns, and Weisel's herder said he was afraid to take the goats up Oak Creek because a bear was acting bold and sassy and would not run at his shouts.

"I rode up there one snowy day and sighted three long-haired bears across a narrow valley. They were fat, their legs seemed short, and they were nosing around under the oak brush. It was hard to guess the distance through the falling snow, but I made three shots. Two of the bears started at once up the hill for the heavy spruce timber towards Price Peak; the third following slower as if disliking to go. A hasty examination showed no bloodstains in the snow where they were rooting, or on their trail.

"When I reached the spruce, the down logs were so bad that I tied my horse under a long, drooping limb of a tree, which made good shelter, and then took the trail of the bears afoot.

"When the bears came to a ridge or knoll, they usually would travel along the foot of it for a while, then double back higher up so as to overlook their trail to see if they were being followed. This gave me a chance to gain on them by short cuts across their zigzags, so that when we got through the timber to the foot of the rocks where the bears den up for the winter, their tracks showed fresh in the falling snow. The outer fringe of timber on the steep mountainside had been burned over and a new growth of small fir trees was coming up. Through this new growth of small fir trees, about a hundred yards ahead of me, I could catch a glimpse of the bears as they passed through one open space to another. I took a quick shot at one.

"Soon after I noticed one coming in my direction and held my gun ready to shoot should he appear in an open space, but he avoided them and made

his charge out in the thick undergrowth slightly to the right of where I was facing and was not more than twelve or fourteen feet distant when he came in view, giving me time only to swing my gun around and fire without raising it to my shoulder.

"The shot broke his nose above the two long fangs and went into his throat. He struck me head on, at the waist, and we both slid down hill about twenty feet. When we stopped, I was feet first on my back, dragging my gun by the muzzle in my right hand. He was on top, lying down on me, head at my feet. His first action was to grab one of my feet in his mouth.

"My first thought was to run my gun around and work the lever, but to do that it was necessary to get him off so I could use my left hand. I did my utmost to push him over or around, but he spread out his legs and kept his entire weight on me. After exhausting my strength for nothing, and he was not damaging my feet any, I played 'possum' and laid still, which caused him to stop and sit up and look around. He was sitting on my face and I thought the long hair would smother me, but I managed to turn my head and blow a hole in the snow and breathed easier. After a while, he slowly turned around, shifting his weight to my body, and as soon as he saw my face, he made a quick grab and tried to crush my skull, but his upper teeth would turn back and he could only make scratches. One lower tooth penetrated my nose so that the blood ran down my throat.

"He acted like a dog fighting a cat. He would make a quick grab, then jerk his head back like he was expecting return bites and scratches.

"Of course my playing dead ended when he began biting my face. I had on buck gauntlet gloves, and would grab his nose or jaw with elbows on the ground and hold him back somewhat. His broken bones and teeth made more than fifty scratches on my face and I felt that my face was being eaten away, and when my eyes filled with blood, I thought I was blinded and gave a loud cry, knowing



Michael Seraphin, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

well that there was no one to hear me. The blood in my throat choked me a little, and I gave up all hope. I thought, no one will know where I am. Perhaps a shepherd will find my bones next June. I felt sorry for my mother; how badly she would feel.

"Presently he ceased operations, and I acted like I was dead. He thought I was done for, so he stood up across me and one of my eyes cleared up so I could see him bleeding from the mouth, and he seemed to be in great pain. Then he started to walk away. When he was about six or eight feet distant, I got to my knees and made a grab for my gun, but he was watching out of the corner of his eye and quickly turned around and made a dive for me. I grabbed him with both hands in the long hair of his jaw and neck, and being on the upper side he could not push me over. He never once tried to stand up or slap me with a paw.

"I noticed that he was growing weaker, and I could hold him away from me, and a thrill of hope passed through me. I said, 'You ____, you have had your chance. Mine will come soon.'

"After trying several times more to push me over, he gave up and started to pull away, but I had my hands full of long hair and could hold him. Then he became very anxious to depart, and when I was sure he would keep going, I released my hold and he walked away, head down, giving me a chance to end the act.

"I pulled my glove from my left hand, which was swelling very fast, coat and shirtsleeves ripped away, and tied it up the best that I could and started for the ranch. I could not find my horse's track, it being covered up by snow.

"When I passed the Kistle ranch, Mrs. Ida Kistle, whom I had known for years, was standing in the doorway. Upon seeing and not recognizing me, she jumped into the house and slammed the door.

"When I reached the Weisel ranch, Mrs. Weisel told her boy, Duane, to call her husband before I washed so he could see me, as he argued once that bears never attacked men."

This story is reprinted from Remembrances, Volume 1 with permission from the San Juan Historical Society.



Keyah Grande Ranch

Protect your hunting privilege

By Donald D. Volger

Thousands of sincere, well-meaning individuals have concluded that killing is wrong. They don't believe man has the right to take life because all life is precious. They are right; life is precious and murder is wrong.

Murder is killing unlawfully with malice aforethought. However, hunting is not murder because malice is not a factor. Hunters, for the most part, harbor a deep respect and appreciation for the game they pursue.

Man is responsible for what happens to the earth. He must accept his role of caretaker and learn to manage the natural resources wisely. Wildlife is one of this planet's most precious resources.

Wise management is based on the principle that healthy animal populations are limited by the amount and quality of the habitat in which they live. If the number grows too large, the habitat is negatively affected and animals eventually die of starvation and disease. Therefore, the number of animals must be limited to avoid overpopulation and habitat destruction. In modern times, hunting has proven to be the most efficient and humane method of population control.

Many species have benefited from the establishment of well-planned management programs. Today, whitetail deer, mule deer, antelope, elk, bear, moose and buffalo populations are on the increase in many portions of our country. Nongame species like the river otter and the peregrine falcon also benefit.

How are these programs funded? By sportsmen's dollars. When hunters and fishermen purchase licenses, their money goes to support management programs. When outdoorsmen buy hunting and fishing equipment, a portion of that money is added. When hunters purchase migratory waterfowl stamps, those expenditures help obtain and improve habitat. Dollars from Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and similar organizations are used for buying and upgrading wildlife habitat.

Who is responsible for the healthy wildlife populations? The sportsman and the dedicated wildlife manager.

The hunter, however, has an image problem. Many hunters are viewed as egotistical, macho slobs who get some kind of perverted pleasure from watching things die — and this is not true. But we, as hunters, are partially to blame for the misconception.

When unethical hunters litter, vandalize property, trespass, improperly display harvested game, violate safety rules and commit game law violations, all sportsmen suffer. Outdoorsmen need to be more considerate toward those who may choose not to hunt. If we want to be viewed as informed, intelligent and caring sportsmen, we have to act like it.

Hunters are evaluated by others. Each individual hunter makes an impact. It will either be a positive one or a negative one. We must work harder at making a positive impression on those who watch. A little common sense and common courtesy couldn't hurt.

If you consider yourself a true sportsman, don't just sit idle. Get involved with organizations that support your views. Pass your knowledge and love of the outdoors along to your children and their friends by including them in some of your activities. Evaluate the reasons you hunt and be able to verbalize them. Purchase hunting licenses and duck stamps even if you can't get into the field.

Don't take hunting for granted. If you do, the next generation of sportsmen may not have the opportunity to decide whether or not they are going to hunt. That decision will have been made for them.



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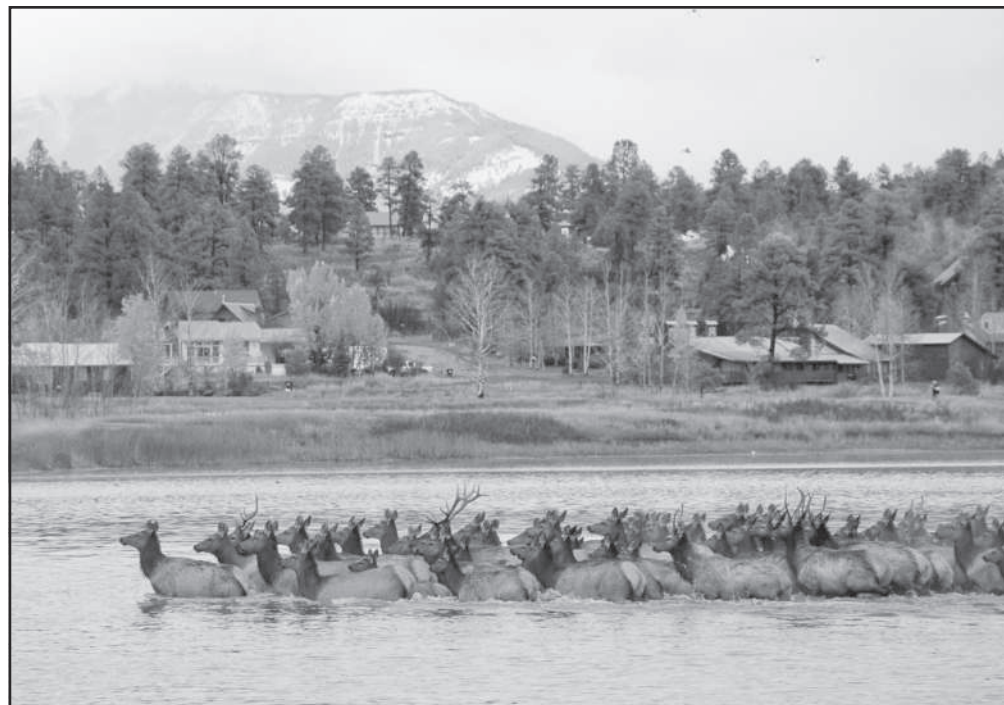
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Michael Pierce Photography

A herd of elk makes its way across Pinon Lake, west of downtown. The elk were reportedly startled by people eager to watch and photograph them, and made their way into the water. Officers of the Division of Wildlife maneuvered the herd using noisemaking rounds — “whistlers” and “screamers” — as well as rubber pellets shot into the water behind the animals. The herd was moved out of the south end of the lake. Traffic on U.S. 160 was blocked by local law enforcement officers and the Colorado State Patrol while the herd crossed the highway into the Alpha subdivision.

Pagosa Country is hunters' headquarters

Pagosa Country is headquarters for many hunters in southwest Colorado. It is ideally located in the midst of some of the best big game hunting in the United States.

Many of the people who live in the area are big game hunters and have, therefore, learned to cater to the needs of hunters. The town and surrounding area can supply all of the amenities needed. There are motels, hotels, lodges, campgrounds, medical facilities (including a hospital), a supermarket, convenience stores and many retail stores.

The inventory of hunting equipment in local stores is extensive. There are hunting and fishing supply stores, hardware stores, clothing stores and automotive service establishments.

Pagosa also has some of the finest restaurants to be found in the region. Hunters, after several days of camp food, will find that any of the area restaurants will provide a welcome diet change. These restaurants make a special effort during hunting season to provide hearty meals.

Stores are well stocked with warm, comfortable outdoor clothing and shoes at reasonable prices. They carry special boots and shoes for hunting and for stormy weather, plus fluorescent orange vests, jackets and hats (required by law).

Hunters often wish to take home a gift or souvenir of their visit to this part of the world. There are numerous stores and shops with every imaginable type of gift.

Along with the merchandise and items for sale, local merchants are a good source of information about the area and will assist hunters whenever possible.

Just how important is wildlife habitat?

By Dick Ray

As biologists, we were taught that the three tenets of sound wildlife management are habitat, habitat and habitat.

As wildlife advocates, we are told that the three most important components of wildlife management are habitat, habitat and habitat.

As historians, we begin to wonder, just how important is habitat? A foolish question in a way, because good habitat is of course vital, but a glance at the recent history of wildlife in western Colorado does provoke the question.

With the settlement of the mountains and valleys of Colorado came the settler's livestock and their livestock's diseases. Disease, coupled with the human population's need for sustenance (game meat) put great demands on Colorado's elk, deer, pronghorn and bighorn sheep.

In 1875, Colorado's Territorial Governor Gilpin is quoted as "We must do something about Colorado's vanishing wildlife." As early as 1861, laws regarding market hunting and fish poaching had been enacted, but with very little enforcement.

With 1876 came statehood and the beginnings of the Colorado Fish and Game Department. In 1885, bighorn sheep hunting was closed and remained closed until 1953. Pronghorn hunting was closed from 1914 through 1945. In southwest Colorado, elk hunting was closed from 1903

through 1937, and deer hunting was closed in 1914 through 1918. In 1903, the first guide and outfitter law was enacted.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, cattle, sheep and other livestock grew to record numbers, heavily grazing many areas. The 1880s through the 1970s saw spectacles like 250,000 lambs being shipped out of the San Juan Basin in southwest Colorado each fall, while the ewes were driven home to winter range. The Craig-Meeker area had some 750,000 sheep on summer range, as another example. The habitat also took heavy hits during the epic droughts of the 1930s and the 1950s.

And yet, the bighorn sheep recovered to huntable numbers during this period. Mule deer became plentiful and even abundant with Colorado harvesting 147,000 in 1963. Elk also increased to the point where 20,858 were taken in the 1969 season. No state had ever produced so much game.

We must ask the question, how could this wildlife recovery occur in the face of such degraded habitats? To find the answer, we must look at the rest of the story.

Every stockman defended his livestock against predators, the same predators that also preyed upon wildlife. In 1934, the U.S. Biological Survey joined with stockmen and the Department of Fish and Game to uniformly pursue predators and in 1934, the Colorado State Legislature placed

bounties on coyotes, mountain lions and bobcats, and the rest is history.

We ask ourselves, isn't the habitat actually "better" now than in those halcyon years of mule deer multitudes? Logging was rampant in the 1960s and 1970s with clear cuts going to timberline in many areas. The largest sawmill in Colorado in 1970 was in Pagosa Springs, and every mountain town had a sawmill (habitat manipulation). Roads have been reseeded and closed, burns have been prescribed, well locations and pipelines have been reseeded, grazing is a fraction of what has been seen and at many elevations, we see an abundance of forbs and grasses under a dead and dying forest canopy. Why, then, are we seeing a decline in many prey species in many areas of Colorado?

Is it really "habitat" alone, or are we missing something? (That something being balance.) Ecosystems become out of balance when predator species and scavenger species dominate the decline of a prey species.

Therefore, it is imperative that wildlife managers engage in ongoing studies and research to better understand current predator/prey relationships and numbers. Population dynamics of all species change over time and must be monitored constantly to achieve responsible wildlife management.

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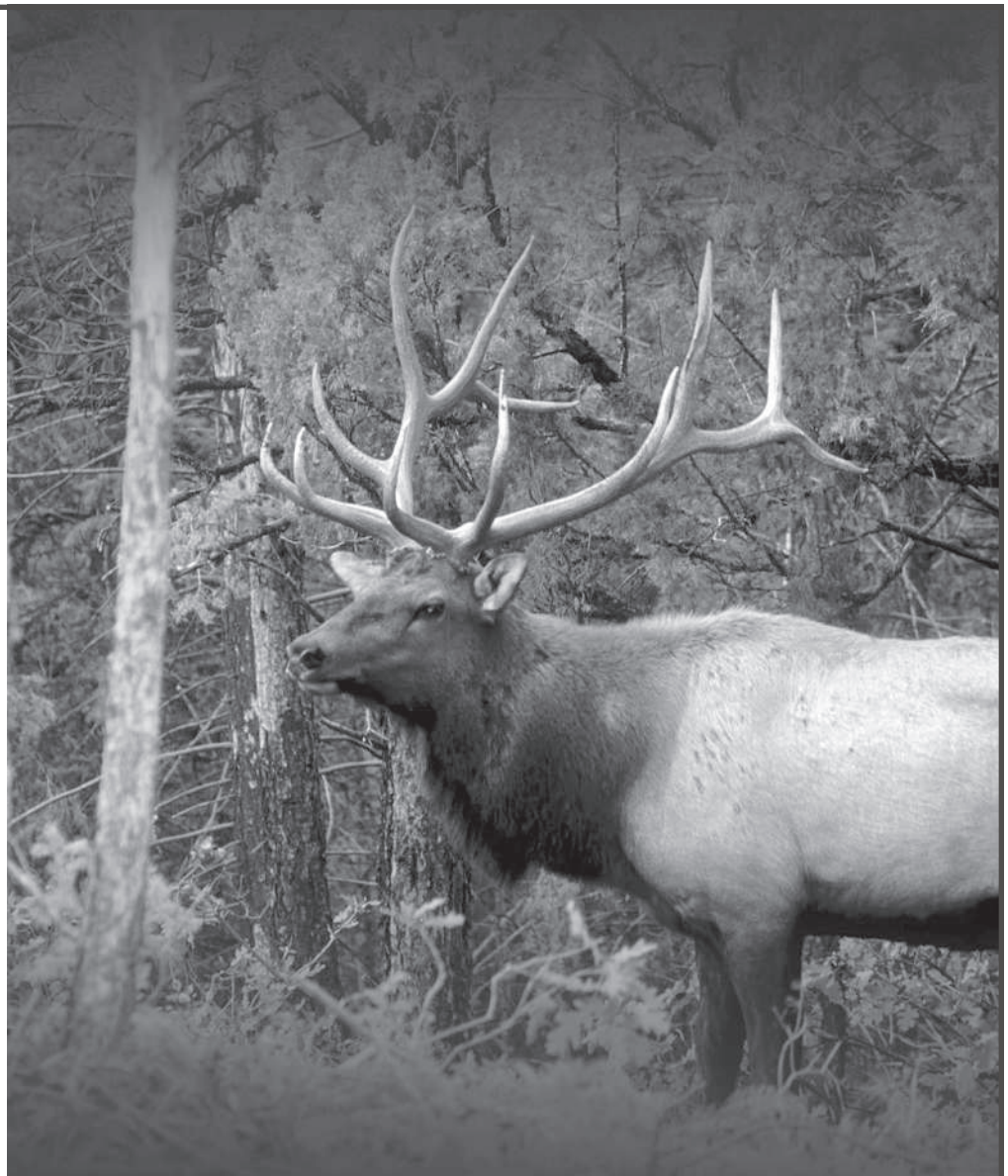
Trophy Bull Elk

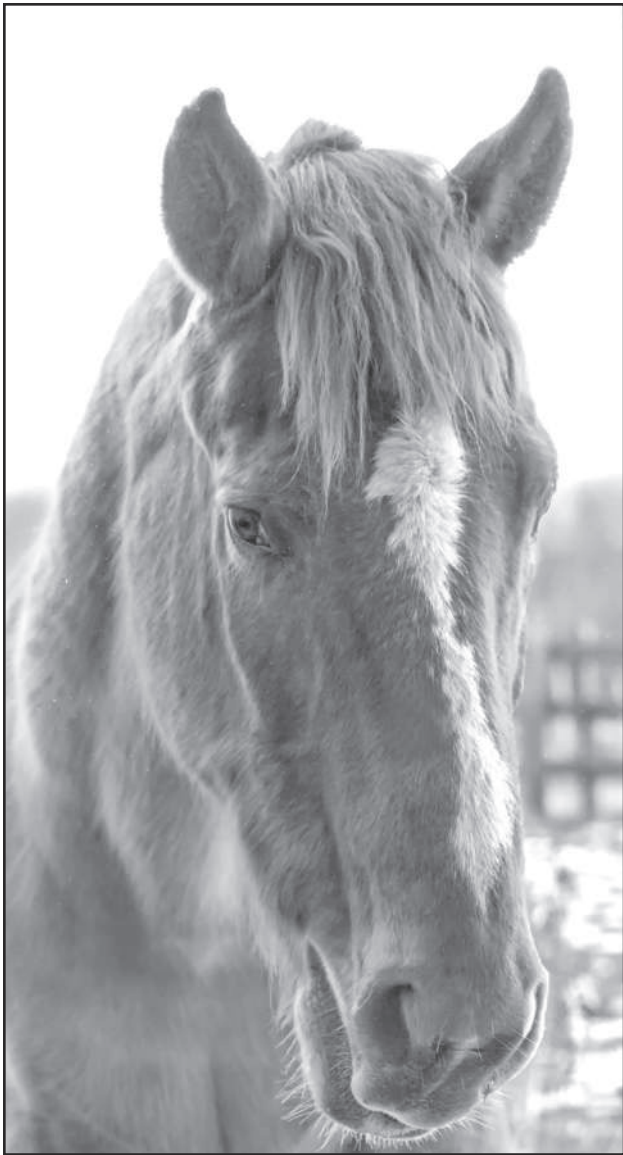
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The horse

By Dick Ray

Autumn brings the sound of the bugling elk to Pagosa country, and it also brings many elk hunters to pursue those elk in the Wilderness areas north, east and south of Pagosa Springs.

This annual endeavor usually involves a horse, at least to pack out a harvested animal. Thus, mankind is provided the need and justification to continue the relationship with the horse.

So, we ponder this relationship that goes back some 5,000 years. How is it that one of the largest animals in the animal kingdom will allow a human to ride upon his back or to use him in other ways? How did this splendid relationship between man and beast develop and continue?

As we look back in history, we realize that the Roman Empire was expanded by the logistical use of the horse. A few centuries later, Attila the Hun built an even more expansive empire and, again, the horse was integral to that success.

Most wilderness elk hunters do not harvest an elk, but most elk hunters are served by the horse to pack in their camp and/or to ride into camp. Consequently, the hunter can reconnect with the historical, traditional, ancestral and beneficial relationship with, The Horse, keeping that knowledge and tradition alive. May man's respect and appreciation for the horse continue to live on.

Tips for hunting mule deer

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Hunting mule deer in Colorado is always challenging. Hunters can improve their success by understanding the habits of these critters.

During the 2020 seasons, for all manners of take, 87,536 hunters harvested 38,899 mule deer for a 44 percent success rate. Colorado is home to about 428,000 deer.

In the mountains and foothills, mule deer don't spend much time in heavy timber. They are primarily browsers and prefer aspen and forest edges where there are plenty of low shrubs, small trees, oak brush and varied vegetation types.

Mule deer are most active at night and can often be found in meadow areas during low-light hours. During the day, they'll bed down in protective cover.

In warm weather, look for deer along ridgelines where wind is consistent and helps to keep them cool.

During the low-light hours of evening and morning, hunt in meadows at the edge of thick cover. If you see where they are feeding during times of low light, it's likely they'll move into nearby timbered areas to rest for part of the day. Deer tend to move during the middle of the day toward the areas

where they feed in the evening.

A slow stalk is recommended. Spend a lot of time scanning slowly with binoculars — a deer can appear at any time.

Pay attention to the wind direction. If the wind is blowing in the direction you are moving, a deer will likely pick up your scent. Deer avoid going to creeks in daylight so there is no advantage to hunting near moving water sources during the day.

One advantage mule deer give to hunters is their curiosity. When mule deer are spooked, they'll often run a short distance then turn to determine if they are being pursued. That may give you one good chance for a shot.

A small amount of snow will get deer moving quickly out of high-altitude areas. Usually by late October, migrating herds will move to winter range areas, even if there is no snow.

Hunters should aim at the vital organ area which presents a small target — about the size of a dinner plate just behind the front quarter. Hunters, no matter how good they are at the range, should never try to make a head shot. Many animals are injured and die slowly because of attempted head shots.

For more information: cpw.state.co.us.

Tips for hunting elk

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

The popular hunting magazines often display colorful photographs of huge bull elk standing in open meadows presenting easy targets. The reality in the mountains of Colorado, however, is far different.

Stalking the wapiti is challenging and most hunters won't get easy shots. You're more likely to find elk on a steep hillside, in a dark ravine, or in thick timber than standing out in the open.

The hunter success rate for all manners of take in Colorado was 18 percent in 2020, and a total of 39,000 elk were harvested. About 213,000 hunters went after elk last season. It's estimated that there are about 293,000 elk in Colorado, the most of any state.

If weather is warm, elk stay spread out over vast areas at high elevations at and above timberline. In those conditions, hunters need to work extra hard. When snow falls, elk will usually start to move, bunch up and look for food sources at lower elevations or on slopes where vegetation is exposed. However, the snowfall must be significant; usually more than a foot of snow must be on the ground to get elk moving.

Hunters must get off their OHVs and hunt slowly and quietly far from any road. Elk are very smart, move quickly at any hint of danger and hide in rugged terrain. Compounding the challenge for hunters is the fact that elk typically gather in groups of 10 or more. If one is spooked, they all move and they can run easily for a mile or more.

Elk are most active during the night and are likely to be

grazing in transition areas — meadows next to heavy timber, where different types of vegetation meet and just above or below ridgelines. Hunters should watch these areas at first light and at dusk.

During the day, hunters need to move into the dark timber — cool north-facing slopes — and not be hesitant to hunt in difficult areas. Hunters should move as quietly as possible for short distances and then scan the woods for 10 minutes or more before moving again. Even in dense forest, it's a good idea to use binoculars so you can discern subtle movement or unusual colors in the trees.

If you find the areas where animals graze at night, it's likely that you'll find them in adjacent areas during the day.

When hunting in areas with roads, move far above or far below the roads to find elk. In areas where two roads are in close proximity, locate the most difficult terrain in between.

Line up your shot carefully because elk are difficult to knock down. The best shots are delivered in the critical area of the lungs and heart just behind and below the front quarters. Never try for a head shot, as this can result in only wounding the animal.

To learn more about hunting elk, check out "Elk Hunting University" on the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website: This program gives extensive information regarding all phases of elk hunting: cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/EHU.aspx.

To learn how to field dress big game and sight-in a rifle, see the videos at: cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/HuntVideos.aspx.

Select a licensed outfitter

Guides and outfitters must be registered, bonded and insured in Colorado. They also need permits to operate on public land and must register with the Office of Outfitter Registration, 1560 Broadway, Suite 1340, Denver, CO 80202,

(303) 894-7778; www.dora.state.co.us/outfitters.

Legal, legitimate outfitters operate around the state and can provide invaluable resources for your hunting trip. Verify an outfitter's registration by contacting

the above office or Colorado Outfitters Association, www.coloradooutfitters.org. For more information regarding hunting and fishing, contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife at (303) 297-1192 or visit the website at <http://cpw.state.co.us>.

Poaching: A constant problem

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Poaching continues to be a major issue in Colorado. Some studies indicate that poachers kill almost as many animals as legitimate hunters do during legal seasons.

If poachers kill even half that number each year, the problem is serious because they are stealing game from licensed hunters, robbing businesses and taxpayers of revenues generated by hunting, and depriving us all of a valuable resource — our wildlife.

Bob Thompson, assistant chief of law enforcement for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, says most poachers are not poor people trying to feed their families. Some kill for the thrill of killing, others for trophies. Some kill for money — trophy heads, antlers and bear gallbladders can be worth thousands of dollars.

Poaching is the illegal taking or possession of any game, fish or non-game wildlife. Hunting out of season or outside of the game management unit for which you have a valid license, hunting at night with a spotlight or taking more animals than the legal limit all constitute poaching. A nonresident who buys a resident license can also be convicted for poaching.

Flock shooting big game is tantamount to poaching since it usually leaves multiple dead and wounded animals.

“Hunters who keep shooting into a herd of animals should realize that not every animal goes down right away when it is hit,” said Thompson. “Not only is it unethical hunting, it leads to a lot of game waste, which in itself is illegal.”

Hunters who witness such violations should report them to wildlife officers, local law enforcement or call Operation Game Thief, a nonprofit organization that pays rewards to people whose tips lead to an arrest being made or a citation being issued to poachers. The number to call is (877) 265-6648, which also is printed on carcass tags. Tips can also be made to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife via email at game.thief@state.co.us.

Rewards are paid for information which leads to an arrest or a citation being issued.

“We depend on concerned citizens to report poaching activity. We need the public’s eyes and ears to help catch poachers,” Thompson said.

For more information, visit cpw.state.co.us.

Advice on taking the shot

By Dick Ray

You have drawn that expensive nonresident license that you have waited so long for. You have bought more gear than you probably need.

You are ready for the hunt — or are you?

When the moment of truth arrives, will you be able to perform efficiently and capably with your weapon?

The most common complaint from outfitters is that their hunter missed or wounded the quarry.

Here are some points to consider:

- The most important thing that the hunter can do prior to the hunt is to become well acquainted and proficient with his weapon, rifle or bow.

- After sighting in, practice under field conditions that you might encounter on the hunt.

- The only weapon commonly used off hand, with success, is the bow.

- Unless very, very close, rifle hunters

should find a tree, rock, log or something stable to lean against or to sight over, or at least sit placing your elbows on your knees in a stable position.

- Prone is a very stable position, but tall grass, deep snow or steep terrain often makes prone impractical.

- Learn your limitations and stick to those limitations.

- If you choose to use shooting sticks, practice with them as well. Practice a rapid sight picture acquisition. When the moment of opportunity presents itself, you don’t want to be fiddling with your sticks.

- Before squeezing the trigger, if sighting through a scope, make sure the horizontal crosshair is horizontal.

- If the rifle is canted, you will shoot high and to the left — if you are right handed, high, and to the right if left handed.

- Rifle or bow: If you can’t make the shot, don’t take the shot!

It is a matter of ethical pride and honor.



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Delicious venison recipes

Venison

Venison is the meat of antlered animals, e.g., deer, moose, elk and caribou. It is of finer texture, much leaner, but more watery than beef.

Liver, heart and kidneys are best if eaten immediately while the rest of the meat is still hanging.

The heart can simply be washed, sliced and fried in butter. Liver and kidneys are improved by cleaning and kneading gently in salt water to remove excess blood. They are excellent if pan-fried in butter.

After the carcass has aged several days at 35-40°F, you can easily cut it yourself with only a sharp knife and remove the meat from the bones. Boneless meat takes less freezer space and cooks more evenly. Trim off bloodshot meat and as much fat as you can. The fat is tallow-like and sticks to the roof of the mouth unless piping hot.

Meat high on the upper hind legs and along the backbone is most tender. Slice one-half- to three-fourth-inch thick for steaks and chops.

To freeze, wrap tightly in heavy freezer paper (-20°F rated), shiny side in, staple or seal with freezer tape and label each cut.

You can grind meat as you need it, using scraps or less tender cuts from the freezer. An ordinary home food grinder will do the job. The trick is to use small pieces of partially frozen meat. To make this lean meat more interesting, grind it with fresh sausage (2-3 parts venison to 1 part sausage) or grind with 1 part beef fat to 6 parts venison.

Venison burgundy

Serves: 6-8

Prep time: 3 1/4 hours

2 T. soy sauce

2 T. flour

2 pounds venison, elk or moose stew meat

4 carrots

2 large onions

1 cup celery, thinly sliced

1 garlic clove, minced

1/4 tsp. pepper

1/4 tsp. marjoram

1/4 tsp. thyme

1 cup burgundy, or any dry red wine

1 cup mushrooms, sliced

Blend soy sauce with flour in a 3-quart baking dish. Cut meat into 1 1/4-inch cubes. Add meat to soy sauce mixture and toss to coat the meat cubes.

Cut carrots into chunks, slice onions and celery, add minced garlic along with the pepper, marjoram, thyme and wine to the meat. Stir gently to mix. Cover tightly and oven simmer at 325 degrees for 2 hours.

Add mushrooms and again stir gently. Cover tightly and bake 1 hour longer or until meat and vegetables are tender. Serve with fluffy hot wild rice, noodles or mashed potatoes.

Pan-frying tender cuts

(Steaks, chops and loin)

Because venison is a watery meat with little fat marbling, the key to cooking juicy, tender steaks and chops is to hold the water in the meat. To do so, cut pieces no thicker than 1/4 inch, fry quickly in a liberal amount of fat and do not crowd in the pan.

1. Heat a heavy frying pan until sizzling hot.

2. Add 2 tablespoons butter.

3. Place meat in the hot pan. Sear on both sides, turning only once.

4. Reduce heat slightly to finish cooking.

Turn if necessary. (If water seeps out of the meat, the fire is too low or pieces are crowded.)

5. Remove to a warmed platter when meat is still pink, just before it seems done. Serve.

For a real hunter's feast, serve with lemon butter or hot Cumberland sauce.

Roasting

(Round, loin)

1. Season with salt and pepper.

2. Place on rack in uncovered pan; cover surface with bacon strips.

3. Do not add water; do not cover.

4. Roast in slow oven (300-325°F), allowing 20-25 minutes per pound.

Moist heat methods

(For less tender cuts)

Substitute venison in most moist heat recipes calling for beef. Use extra fat if necessary.

Stewing

(Shoulder, shank, neck)

1. Cut meat into 1-inch cubes.

2. Season with salt and pepper; sprinkle with flour.

3. Brown in hot fat.

4. Cover with boiling water.

5. Cover kettle tightly and cook very slowly until tender. Do not boil. Add vegetables just long enough before serving time so that they will be tender.

Braising

(Shoulder, neck, breast)

1. Season with salt and pepper; rub with flour.

2. Brown in hot fat.

3. Add small quantity of water (about 1 cup).

4. Cover closely.

5. Cook very slowly until tender. Turn meat occasionally. About 2-3 hours.

Venison soup stock

Put bones left from cutting deer in large kettle. Add water to cover. Simmer 2 hours. Cover and cool overnight in refrigerator to harden fat; then remove all fat. Pick meat from bones and return it to the jellied soup stock. Package for freezer storage. Use as base for noodle or vegetable soup.

Easy campfire venison

Save your best steaks and chops for pan-frying. Anything you don't quite know how to cook will do for the recipe, and it's sure to be tender.

4-6 servings venison, sliced 1/4-inch thick

1 package dry onion soup

Arrange meat in a single layer on heavy aluminum foil. Sprinkle generously with dry onion soup. Seal foil packet tightly. Cook slowly in bed of hot coals or in 325°F oven about 1 hour, or until done. Serve with buttered noodles or mashed potatoes.

Venison sausage

30 pounds venison, cut

20 pounds fat pork, about 50 to 60 percent lean, cut

1 pound salt

3 ounces black pepper

2 ounces sage, optional

Sprinkle seasonings over meat. Grind through coarse chili plate. Re grind through sausage plate. If sausage is to be frozen, season only half the total amount. Wrap sausage in sizes needed for a meal in moisture vapor-proof paper. Thaw and season unseasoned sausage just before using. Unseasoned sausage will keep fresh five to six months, while seasoned sausage will turn flat and rancid after three months.

Venison roast

3- to 4-pound venison roast

1 package onion soup mix

1 clove garlic, slivered, or garlic salt to taste (optional)

1 can cream of celery soup

2 cans water

Season roast to taste with pepper. Sprinkle with onion soup mix and garlic (if desired) over meat. Spread celery soup over roast. Add water. Cover and cook in 250°F oven 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Add more water if necessary. Serves 8-10.

Venison burgers

2 pounds ground venison

1/4 pound ground pork or mild sausage

1 medium onion, chopped

1/4 teaspoon thyme

1/8 teaspoon black pepper

1/4 teaspoon marjoram

2 eggs, beaten

2 tablespoons melted fat

1/4 cup sweet cider

Blend venison, pork and chopped onion together. Add seasonings and beaten egg; blend well. Form into small patties, about 1/4 inch thick. Brown burgers on both sides in fat. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes. Turn burgers. Add cider, cover and simmer 10 minutes more. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

Venison steak marinade

1/4 cup dry red wine

1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

1/8 teaspoon garlic powder

1/3 cup salad oil

3 tablespoons soy sauce

Combine ingredients; pour marinade over deer steaks in glass baking pan. Leave steaks in marinade at room temperature one to three hours, turning them occasionally. Drain steaks, broil to desired doneness over charcoal or under oven broiler, brushing frequently with marinade while broiling. Yield: marinade for 1 pound of venison.

Venison loaf

2 pounds ground venison

2 eggs

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon pepper

3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1 small onion, chopped

1-1/2 cups bread crumbs or oatmeal

Mix all ingredients. Turn into greased loaf pan. Bake in 400°F oven for one hour.

Venison pot roast

Serves: 4-6

Prep Time: 3 hours

2-3 lb. venison rump roast

2 onions, quartered

water

1/3 cup sherry

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 tsp. each dry mustard, marjoram, rosemary, thyme, sweet basil

1 bay leaf

4 potatoes, quartered

4 carrots, sliced lengthwise

flour

salt and pepper

1 lb. mushrooms

2 T. bacon drippings

butter

Trim off all fat. Season 2 T. flour with salt and pepper to taste. Dredge roast in flour. In Dutch oven, brown roast on all sides in hot bacon drippings. Season generously with salt and pepper. Add onions, sherry, garlic, spices, bay leaf and carrots. Add water to cover. Cook at 350 degrees for 2 hours, stirring every 1/4 hour. Add potatoes, cook 1 additional hour or until roast and potatoes are tender. During last 10 minutes of cooking, clean, slice and saute mushrooms in butter. Remove roast and vegetables to warm platter. Remove bay leaf. Pour remaining pot juices into 4-cup bowl. Add enough water to make 3 cups of liquid. Mix 5 T. flour in small jar of water to add to pot liquid. Bring to boil in Dutch oven and cook 3 minutes. Cover sliced roast with mushrooms, serve with gravy and beer bread.

Defining the word 'trophy'

By Dick Ray

Everything I needed to know about trophy hunting I learned in a small town drugstore in 1958.

What is a trophy?

Something taken from an enemy and kept as a memorial of victory, as captured arms; a deer's head, etc. displayed as evidence of hunting prowess; any memento. (Webster's New World Dictionary)

Many years ago as a teenager growing up in Belen, New Mexico, there was a drugstore in town that had a number of mule deer heads mounted and hung on exhibit. As boys, we often visited Buckland's Pharmacy to admire the many deer heads and one moose.

On a certain day in 1958, five of us wandered into the store to gawk while drinking cherry Cokes which we would buy at the soda fountain. As we walked in, Mr. Buckland, the owner who had hunted and taken all of the animals on display, happened to be at the front of the store. One boy, who was much more forward than the rest of us, blurted out, "Mr. Buckland, tell us about that buck," and pointed to the biggest one of all.

Mr. Buckland, who was a very busy man, halted, gave us a long look, and said, "Come on over here and sit down." He was walking toward the soda fountain counter and several of

us exchanged looks embarrassed to have interrupted such a busy man, but hopeful that he might be going to buy us all a cherry Coke. Well, he did not buy us a 35-cent cherry Coke, but all these years later I realized that he gave us something much more valuable on that day long ago.

He began by stating, "Boys, all of these deer — there were 30 or more — represent my life. For years, I have worked here at the store just about every day, all year long. I take a one week vacation with my wife and then I take off a week each November for a deer hunt with my friends." We were all aware that about 12-15 of the town's businessmen took an annual deer hunt in the mountains of Southwest New Mexico.

Mr. Buckland continued, "Starting with the one on the right; that is the buck from our first hunt. I was young then and one of the youngest men on the hunt. Going all of the way around the two walls to the last buck, which was taken last year, I am now one of the oldest men still going on the hunt. Looking at each buck, I can remember and respect how each one lived and how he died. I can remember all of my friends who were along on each hunt and many of them are now dead and gone as well."

Then our impatient buddy blurted out, "But what about the biggest one, Mr. Buckland?" Roy Buckland took a deep breath and said, "Son, I just saw him and killed him the first

morning and it cut my hunt short that year."

Not satisfied, our young colleague then asked, "Mr. Buckland, why did you shoot that little forked horn?"

The now somewhat exasperated pharmacist said slowly, "I was sick that year and probably should not have even gone on the hunt. But I did, and I did eventually kill that buck, after great effort. That small buck means more to me than the big one does."

"Tell us about the moose, Mr. Buckland," we continued, still wanting more. Mr. Buckland replied, "I had been wanting to hunt a moose and had been corresponding with an outfitter in Canada. It was expensive, but late that summer, I received a letter from the outfitter saying that many of his clients had cancelled and that if I would come, I could hunt for half price. That was the first year of the great depression. So boys, I went to Canada and I killed a moose. That's all there is to it. But I do remember that I missed the deer hunt with all of my friends that year because of the moose hunt."

I've often reflected on the stories Mr. Buckland shared with us that day. Some time later, I realized I'd learned from Mr. Buckland that a trophy is any tangible thing that keeps alive, for a lifetime, the memory of an experience, the camaraderie, and the people met along the journey. I still carry this with me nearly 60 years later and I remain grateful for this realization.

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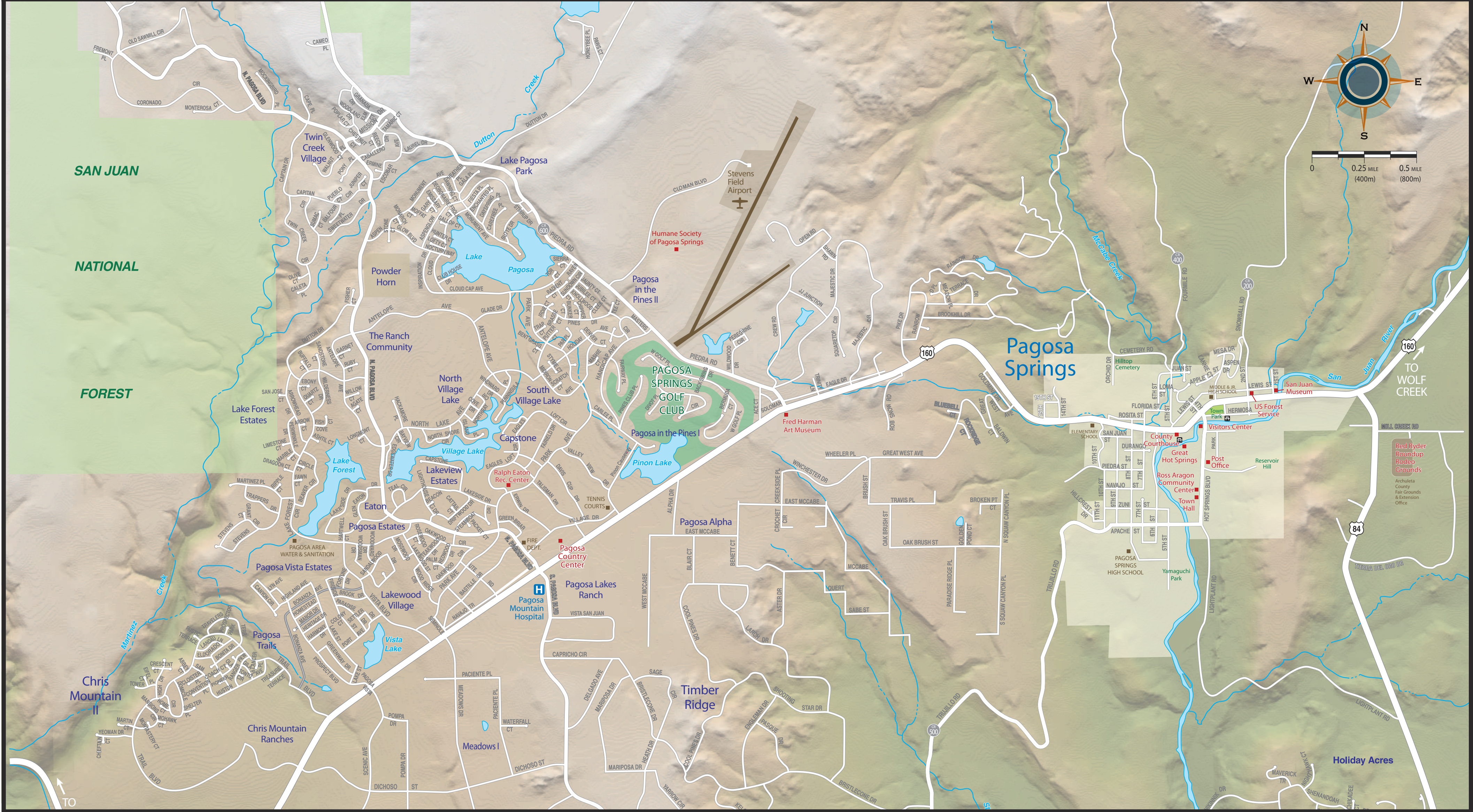
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Pagosa Springs Map



Hunting on the National Forest Pagosa Ranger District

The following are common questions asked by hunters when hunting on National Forest System (NFS) lands managed by the Pagosa Ranger District.

Where may I hunt?

Hunting is permitted on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). State of Colorado hunting regulations must be followed on federal lands.

For a map of National Forest System lands in the Pagosa Springs area, stop by the Pagosa Ranger District office located at 180 Pagosa St.

Pay close attention to land boundaries, especially private and tribal land boundaries. It is your responsibility to know where you are hunting.

Where may I camp?

Camping is permitted in developed campgrounds or outside developed campgrounds in most areas (dispersed camping).

The Cimarrona campground and Palisade Horse campground (located north of Pagosa Springs) will remain open for the hunting seasons, weather permitting. Both campgrounds offer limited amenities, with no trash services or water available. All other USFS campgrounds are closed for the season.

Motor vehicle use for the purpose of dispersed camping is allowed up to 300 feet from open, designated roads as long as no damage occurs to the resources (soil and vegetation). Use of existing dispersed sites is highly encouraged.

Camping on the San Juan National Forest is limited to no more than 28 days within any continuous 60-day period. After 14 consecutive days in one location, you must move beyond a 3-mile radius.

Are there other regulations I should know related to camping?

Green trees are not allowed to be cut or damaged. Only standing dead and downed trees may be used as firewood. Firewood must be used in camp and not transported off the National Forest. No standing dead ponderosa pine greater than 15 inches in diameter may be cut.

All campfires must be fully extinguished before leaving camp.

Human waste must be disposed at least 100 feet from water, must be buried in "cat holes" or in group latrines and covered with a minimum 6-8 inches of soil. It is prohibited to leave any waste or refuse in an unsanitary condition. All trash and latrines must be packed out and removed from the National Forest.

Is target shooting allowed on the National Forest?

Target shooting is allowed on the National Forest. Make

sure you have a safe backdrop. You must provide your own targets and remove all debris prior to leaving the site. Do not place targets on or against live or dead trees.

No shooting is allowed within 150 yards of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site or occupied area, across or on a forest development road or a body of water adjacent to, into or within a cave, or in any manner or place whereby a person or property is exposed to injury or damage.

Are there any areas on the Pagosa Ranger District closed to hunting?

There are no areas across the Pagosa Ranger District closed to hunting. There are areas where shooting is not allowed as described above.

Where may I drive my truck or off-highway vehicle (OHV)?

Motorized travel is allowed on National Forest System (NFS) lands, in accordance with travel management regulations identified in the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

The MVUM identifies motorized routes, dates when motorized travel is allowed (pending specific closures due to weather, construction projects, etc.) and mode of travel. The MVUM can be obtained from the Forest Service Office free of charge as well as on the website at www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan under the Maps & Publications link.

All OHVs must have a current Colorado off-highway vehicle registration. Registrations can be obtained through Colorado big game license distribution agents and the Forest Service office.

The use of motorized vehicles is prohibited in the Weminuche Wilderness and South San Juan Wilderness areas, and the Piedra area. Cross-country motorized travel for game retrieval is prohibited across NFS lands on the Pagosa Ranger District.

May I use a game cart to retrieve game?

Game carts are allowed to retrieve game except in the following locations: Weminuche and South San Juan Wilderness areas, and the Piedra area. Within Chimney Rock National Monument, game carts may be used on designated roads; however, cross-country travel with game carts is prohibited.

How do I find an outfitter/guide or someone to pack out my game?

A list of permitted outfitters and guides can be obtained by contacting the Pagosa Ranger District or by visiting www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan.

Only permitted outfitters/guides are allowed to collect money for outfitter/guiding services on the National Forest. Permitted outfitters and guides offer a variety of services such as drop camps, guided hunts, game packing, etc.

I'll be using livestock; what do I need to know?

Hunters must contact a veterinarian to get a certificate of health inspection within 30 days before bringing horses to Colorado. Horses need a Coggins blood test for equine infectious anemia within a year before coming to Colorado.

Hay, straw and bagged horse feeds brought onto the National Forest must be certified as weed free. Feed must be clearly marked as being certified weed free.

Stock must be managed appropriately to prevent damage to trees and natural features including stream banks and meadows. Always confine stock at least 100 feet from water and trails.

Are tree stands allowed?

The use of tree stands is allowed on the Pagosa Ranger District in accordance with the following:

- The owner of the stand must have a valid hunting license for the season used.
- Stands should be identified with the owner's name and phone number.
- Stands may be placed up to three days prior to the start of the hunting season, and removed two days after the hunting season in which they'll be used.
- Transporting of stands to their location must be in accordance with current travel management regulations.
- Stands must not be placed within 150 yards of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site or occupied area.
- Live trees must not be damaged.
- Stands should not be placed in designated wilderness or the Piedra area.

Where can I get more information about the National Forest, and big game hunting in the Pagosa Springs area?

National Forest information can be obtained by contacting the Pagosa Ranger District at (970) 264-2268 or by visiting www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan.

Information on big game hunting can be obtained by contacting the Durango Office of Colorado Parks and Wildlife at (970) 247-0855 or by visiting <http://cpw.state.co.us>.

You can visit the Pagosa Ranger District Office at 180 Pagosa Street, Pagosa Springs, or call (970) 264-2268. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.



Pagosa Ranger District | 970-264-2268
180 Pagosa Street | Pagosa Springs, CO 81147
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00am - 4:30pm

A big lion, like gold, is where you find it

By Dick Ray

He glared at us with golden green eyes that danced with contempt. He had no use for those of us beneath his tree, and we knew it. He was huge by any standard, but I had no need, no wish, no desire to take his life. The day had begun with only the hope to find a lion track that the hounds could trail, and perhaps, catch and release.

The day prior, an outfitter friend, Mark Davies, of Grand Junction, had arrived at our place near Pagosa Springs. Mark had wanted to take a pair of our hounds that might replace a couple of dogs in his pack of lion dogs. Well, a little snow was predicted to fall that night, so my son Mike and I encouraged Mark to stay over and hunt with us the next day. More than half the time, predicted snow fails to materialize, but when we looked out at 4 a.m., sure enough, about one-and-a-half inches had fallen.

It was Feb. 25, and that late in winter, such a small amount of snow usually melts by 9 or 10 a.m. But if you can find a track early, sometimes you can get a lion treed before the track and scent vanishes.

We left with high hopes, invigorated by the cold, crisp, clear morning and knowing that we had as good a chance as anyone to find a lion track that day. We knew that some of the numerous other hunters in the area were sure to be out and about as well. The quota for this area was almost full, with only one lion left to be harvested. With so many hunters out, that would almost surely happen, closing the season by sundown.

Mike and I chose to try Devil Mountain because we had seen sign of a big lion there about 10 days earlier. Mike made his way up a drainage, while I went up another a few miles west. I found the track of a female lion right away and released my three dogs on it. The snow was already melting, for the steep slopes were composed of black shale that held warmth from the day before. The dogs were able to trail up and onto a ridge for nearly a mile before the sun took the track and its scent away from them. They weren't going to make any progress and I didn't, as I climbed up to them. Catching and leashing them, I headed back.

I went to see if I could find Mike, knowing that our trailing conditions and time were passing fast. Mike had come back down his mountain, and we got together. He had a story. He had found a big lion's track up higher, where there was a little more snow. If we hurried, and were lucky, the dogs might still be able to work it.

It took us about an hour to get up to the track. That which had been a big, beautiful fresh track at daylight was now a pathetic half-melted, barely recognizable line threading under old-growth ponderosa pines.

Mark took a long look and said, "It's big, but most hunters would say that it's too melted out to work."

I said, "Mark, we would agree, but let's see what the hounds say."

We released all six dogs, and they took the track onward. And on they went, over a ridge and out of hearing. Now you always hope that a lion has a fresh kill just over the next ridge and that the dogs will tree him not far from the kill. It happens sometimes, but



Photo by Ken Logan, DOW researcher, Courtesy Colorado Parks and Wildlife

A mountain lion, also known as a puma, is treed in western Colorado. Pumas are being trapped, tagged and tracked as part of a long-term research project.

not that day. As we climbed and crested the ridge, we could again hear them in the distance, trailing; then, out of hearing again. A few steep, slick shale slopes more, and then we could hear the dogs bark treed.

As we walked up to the tree, he appeared the same as every lion I had ever seen — splendid, noble, and a word that is over-used but should be reserved for the truly special — awesome. We gazed up at him, and he glared back. Both Mark and Mike urged me to take the lion. I had never killed a lion in Colorado and had never planned to. In 1985, Mike and I treed a lion in New Mexico, which I took with my Bear take-down bow. I had wanted to take that lion. It scored 15-8/16 and was the New Mexico state record for eleven years. I didn't need another lion.

Mike and I have enjoyed our years of work guiding lion hunters. The first Boone and Crockett lion that I ever saw was the one Father Anderson Bakewell, a Catholic priest, took with me in 1978. Mike's first lion was a Boone and Crockett that he took alone in 1982, just out of high school. How could I justify taking another lion of this class?

Suddenly, it became very personal to me. To be sure, the novice may kill without question, having not done it before — he has not experienced the pondering and twinge of remorse that accompanies the still, lifeless form that the act of killing produces. Why we kill is a mystery, outranked only by the mystery of death itself.

Once again, Mike said, "You may as well take him. If the quota doesn't fill today, someone else will kill him

on the next snow. Besides, at your age, this might be the last really huge lion that you ever see."

"True," I thought. "I don't have a gun," I said.

Mike handed me his .44 from his backpack. I questioned my conscience and wondered if it would be enough to immortalize this creature with humble respect and a life-size mount? And then, at the shot, he fell from the tree, dead.

As I looked at his splendid form, I wondered, "What stories could this lion have told?" He was about 7 years old. Being an obligate carnivore, he had to kill to survive, and at a rate of about a deer or an elk a week, he would have made several hundred kills.

We packed out his hide and his meat in our backpacks and led the dogs back across the canyons and down the mountain. As we walked, I remembered Ray Bailey's Boone and Crockett lion taken with us in 1986. It wore a collar that had been placed on it five years earlier west of Grand Junction. We took the lion about 300 miles south of there in northern New Mexico. It made me wonder, who is this lion? Where did he come from? Has anyone ever laid eyes on him before? Does he have a brother out there? And then I thought, a lion is what we would all like to be — a true free spirit. He goes where he wants, kills when he's hungry, and doesn't pay taxes.

My last thought before I came to peace with myself was that I hoped that he had left many sons behind, for all living things will die, and be replaced by their own kind. It is the nature of things.

Moose or elk?

Be sure to know the difference

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Reintroduced to Colorado more than 30 years ago, moose are thriving in many parts of the state. Unfortunately, almost every year, hunters inadvertently shoot moose. During the last few years, more than a dozen moose have been killed during each season by hunters who thought they were shooting elk.

Elk hunters need to be sure to know the difference between these two ungulates. If a hunter without the proper license shoots a moose, the fine can be more than \$1,000 and hunting privileges can be lost.

Moose are the largest members of the deer family and have adapted to a variety of habitats. They favor willows along streams and ponds. But be aware, some moose also inhabit lodgepole pine, oak brush, aspen, spruce, fir and even sagebrush — in other words, the same areas where elk live. Moose can be found in almost any high-country habitat area of Colorado.

There's no excuse for mistaking these animals. They are vastly different in size, color, antler shape and habits. A mature Shiras bull moose weighs 1,200 pounds — about twice as much as the average bull elk. Moose are dark brown and appear almost black. Elk are light brown — a bull elk can be almost golden — with a pale yellow rump.

A moose has a very large, long and bulbous nose and a “bell” of fur under the throat. An elk's snout is much narrower and it has no “bell.” A mature bull moose has broad, flat antlers, unlike the pointed antlers of an elk. But the antlers on some young bull moose have not flattened out yet, so hunters need to look over the entire animal before pulling the trigger.

Moose act very differently than elk when approached by humans. Typically, moose will not flee like elk at the sight of a hunter, which makes them easier to kill. So if it sees you and doesn't run, it's probably a moose.

Despite these readily apparent differences, every hunting season brings a number of illegal moose kills. Circumstances vary from mistaken identity by hunters to blatant poaching. The common denominator in most accidental kills is that the hunter is only using the rifle scope as an optical aid. Always carry binoculars or a spotting scope to help you properly identify the species you are hunting.

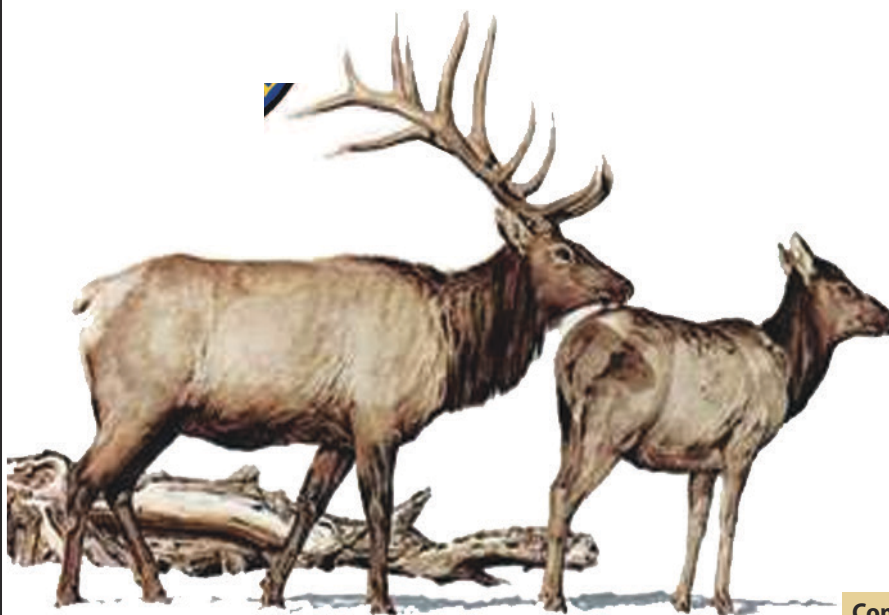
The first moose to reach Colorado — 12 from Utah — were transplanted by wildlife biologists in the North Park region near Walden in 1978. More animals were transplanted over the years and now the population statewide is estimated at about 3,200.

For more information about hunting in Colorado, see cpw.state.co.us.

Elk Hunters: Be Aware of Your Target!

Moose can be found in the same habitat as elk in Colorado. Make sure you know the difference between these two species, so you don't accidentally kill a moose. Use your binoculars, not scopes. Don't just look at the animal's antlers; study the entire head before you shoot.

Elk & Moose Comparison



Bull Elk

- Slender snout
- Pale yellow rump
- Chestnut-brown neck
- Reddish, lighter brown body
- Darker legs
- Antlers not palmated
- Obvious brow tines coming off main beam.

Cow Elk

- Slender snout
- Pale yellow rump
- Chestnut-brown neck
- Reddish, lighter brown body
- Darker legs

Confusing Calves

Be very careful you don't mistake a moose calf with an antlerless elk. Young moose have a reddish coat, similar to elk!

Bull Moose

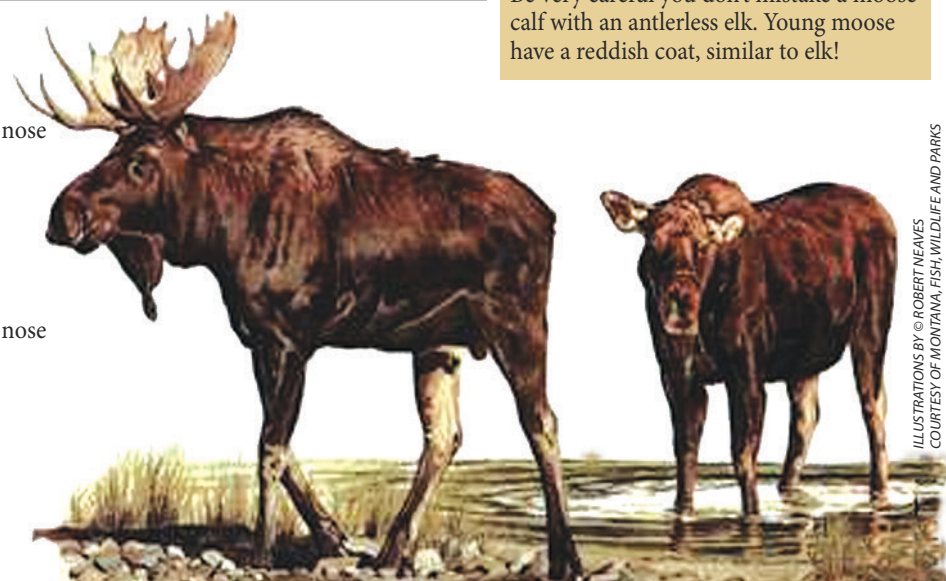
- Dark, black-brown body
- Overhanging snout, bulbous nose
- Larger bell (beard) on throat
- Whitish-gray legs
- Palmated antlers with tines

Cow Moose

- Dark, black-brown body
- Overhanging snout, bulbous nose
- Bell (beard) on throat
- Whitish-gray legs

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COURTESY OF MONTANA, FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

High-altitude survival tips

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Every year more than a few hunters must be rescued from the wilds and high country of Colorado. Hunters get trapped by snowstorms, injured in various types of accidents or simply get lost in the woods.

Hunters must remember that altitude can affect their health and their ability to move easily. And in the Rockies, weather can change quickly with fast-moving storms dumping a couple of feet of snow in just a few hours.

Be prepared for all types of weather — wet, cold, dry and hot. Take appropriate clothing and the right camping gear. If possible, especially for those coming from lower altitudes, spend a few days at higher elevation just before the hunting season to allow your body to acclimate.

Heavy snowfall can occur starting in September. High-country hunters, especially those who backpack into wilderness areas and have to get out on foot, need to watch the weather closely and pick their escape routes before they choose a campsite. Snow can obliterate trails or make them impassable.

Survival experts recommend that you never go into a wilderness area alone. Unavoidable accidents do happen that make self-rescue impossible. Learn how to use a compass, take a map of the area and orient yourself before leaving camp. Explain to your hunting partners where you'll be going and when you plan to return.

Always carry a survival kit and know how to use it. Such a kit should include a knife, waterproof matches, fire starter, compass, reflective survival blanket, high-energy food, water purification tablets, first aid kit, whistle and unbreakable signal mirror.

If you get lost, sit down, regain your composure and think for a few minutes. Many times people who are lost can figure out where they went wrong and make it back to camp. If you truly don't know where you are, stay put.

Survival experts explain that survival is 80 percent attitude, 10 percent equipment and 10 percent skill and knowledge.

If you are caught in a storm or forced to spend the night out, there are three keys to survival: shelter, fire and signal.

If you can't find camp and have to over-night in the wild, your first priority is shelter. Even if you have nothing else going for you — no fire or food — an adequate shelter that is warm and dry will keep you alive until rescuers find you. That means anything from an overhanging rock shelf to a cave, a timber lean-to or snow cave. Always prepare for the worst and build a shelter that will last. Cut boughs from evergreen trees and use them as padding and for covering.

Dress in layers and take extras with you. Put on layers before you become chilled and take off a layer before you become damp with perspiration. Staying warm is a process of staying dry. Do not dress in cotton — it becomes

wet easily and is difficult to dry. Use wool, wool blends or synthetic clothing that wicks moisture away from skin.

Be sure to carry a quality stocking cap that is made of wool or synthetic fleece. You lose up to 45 percent of your heat around your head, neck and shoulders.

Winter headgear should conserve heat, breathe and be water repellent. The old saying, "If your feet are cold put your hat on," is good advice.

Use waterproof footgear, wool or synthetic socks and always remember to carry gloves.

Fire is the second priority if you are forced to stay out overnight. Know how to build a fire even in wet or snowy conditions. That means carrying a lighter, metal matches or wooden matches in waterproof containers and a fire-starter — such as steel wool, cotton or sawdust saturated with paint thinner or alcohol. Camping stores sell a variety of fire starters. Experiment with various materials before going into the field. A fire will warm your body, dry your clothes, cook your food and help you to signal for help.

The third priority is signaling. This can be done by fire — flames at night or smoke from green branches during the day; with a signal mirror in bright sunshine; and with sound — hence the whistle.

You can live up to three or four weeks without food. You will, however, be more efficient and alert, and have more confidence if you

are able to satisfy your hunger. So carry some high-energy food in your survival kit.

Water is more important to survival than food. Your body needs about three quarts of water a day to metabolize its energy reserves and carry away waste. Carry iodine tablets to add to water taken from streams or snowbanks. Avoid drinking ice-cold water, which can cause your body temperature to drop.

Altitude sickness is another danger. Hunters who are fatigued, cold or exhausted are vulnerable. At the very least, altitude sickness can ruin a hunting trip; at the worst, it can be fatal. Hunters who are coming to Colorado from low altitude areas should be especially careful.

Take time to acclimate and do not move quickly above 8,000 feet. Symptoms of altitude sickness include shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, headache and loss of appetite. To avoid altitude sickness, get in shape, limit alcohol consumption, acclimate for a few days before the start of the season and drink lots of water. Staying hydrated is a key factor in reducing your chances of getting altitude sickness.

Hunters with any heart problems should be extra careful in Colorado's high country. If you have a heart condition, you should keep any prescribed medication with you at all times. Inform your hunting partners of your condition.

Finally, be sure to leave accurate information at home about where you're hunting and when you'll return.



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Stop and smell the urine!

And other helpful elk hunting advice

By Bill Haggerty

How do you know you're close to elk when you can't see them and you can't hear them?

"When you smell fresh urine," said the ever-eloquent John Ellenberger. "It's like a slap in the face. You know you're REAL close."

Ellenberger knows that smell.

He's been real close to elk.

Of course, part of his job is to know about elk. All about elk. Even about the smell of elk urine.

For years, Ellenberger was the senior terrestrial biologist for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife's northwest region, based in Grand Junction. Before that, he was the district wildlife manager for the Crested Butte area. He is now retired.

He's hunted all his life. He's trapped and released hundreds of elk throughout his career. He's studied them, read about them, counted them from helicopters and small-engine airplanes.

He's been real close to elk.

But does he harvest one every year he goes hunting?

"No. So what's your point?" he said grinning.

"You can't always get what you want, but if you try some-time, you just might find, you get what you need." A good slap in the face.

Let's face it. Most of us don't harvest an elk each and every year. In fact, the state average is about 24 percent success for hunters — that's all rifle seasons and archery.

Ellenberger said, simply, most hunters rush things.

"Most hunters are in too big a hurry. They cover too much ground. Then, when they do blunder into elk, they bust 'em out before they know the elk are there.

"You can boogie if you're in country where there are no signs of elk," Ellenberger said, "but if you're in good country with good signs, slow down. Try to heighten your senses and be aware of what's going on."

Stop and smell the urine!

But, gee, Mr. Natural, how do I know if I'm in good elk country?

Hopefully, you've done your homework prior to the hunt. Ellenberger stressed that hunters should learn as much as possible about life history, habits, habitat and behavior. What kind of habitat do elk use in August? How about December? Which units have high elk numbers? Which units have a lot of public property with adequate access?

Once you've decided on a hunting unit, get the appropriate maps and head out on a scouting trip. Become familiar with the country. Then, stick to it.

"Don't jump from unit to unit each year," Ellenberger said. "You'll never get to know the area, and you really limit your chances of success."

Next, learn how to use your binoculars or spotting scope. "Glass, glass, glass," the biologist insisted, "especially in the early morning and late afternoon. You'll do a lot better if you sit down and glass. Look for animals bedding down or up feeding somewhere. Once you find them, then you can figure out a plan on how to hunt the animals. But trying to get out early in the morning and run into something without prior knowledge of where the elk are — that's real tough.

"Hunters need to remember that when they're out there

hiking around, the animals have the upper hand," Ellenberger explained.

"They have superior sight, smell and hearing. They do this for a living, 365 days a year. They hold all the cards, so you have to do what you can to turn it in your favor."

For example, he said, "Most guys use the bull call lots more than they should. Maybe that has potential when you're trying to locate other bulls during archery or muzzle loading rifle seasons. But after that, you don't want to sound like the biggest, baddest bull on the mountain. What bull with a harem of cows wants to challenge some bad bull that's going to kick him off his own mountain?"

Instead, Ellenberger suggested cow calls and calf squeals. If you know how to use a cow call or you can squeal like a calf elk, then once you locate a bull, you can try the cow call or the squeal.

"My experience is that when you use it, the bull won't answer, but he's looking. He'll circle and try to get your scent on the wind, so even if he doesn't call back, lots of times elk will move toward you.

Once, Ellenberger recalled, "I had a bull come within eight feet because I paced it off. I had him close enough to see his nostrils flare when he breathed. I could see his eyelashes when he blinked. He kept coming closer and closer and finally winded me before he stepped on me. Then, he ran away about 30 or 40 yards and I called again. He stopped dead in his tracks, turned and stared and stayed another few minutes."

Of course, Ellenberger practices and practices with the calls. And, he's had good opportunities to see how they work.

"I've even had cow elk in an elk trap walk up to me face to face to see what I was after using a call."

He advised hunters not to use a call if they don't know how.

"If you can use one and if the elk don't know you're there and haven't winded you, you can do some incredible things with a cow call," he said. "Even during the rut, the cow call is deadly on the bulls. They'll come closer to you, especially if a bull has a harem. He may not challenge another bull, but he'll sure chase after another cow."

Once you find the animal and you're ready to take your shot, hunters underestimate how strong and how powerful elk are. Even with big guns and magnum loads, Ellenberger said he's seen elk shot through the lungs, "and you can't even tell the elk has been shot."

The biologist tells hunters to be extra careful shooting into a group of running elk.

"You may be taking lethal shots and not know it. All of a sudden, you have three dead elk on the ground. Make sure where you place your shot, then don't take your eyes off the animal you first shot at. If you shoot in a group and animals start milling around, watch closely. Eventually, your animal will go down. But if you keep shooting, you may end up with more than you bargained for."

How about tracking?

"I've thought at times I was fairly good at reading tracks," Ellenberger insisted. "But I've gotten onto tracks that I thought may have been made that morning, only to find out it was probably made a day before. No sense in following that track."

Nonetheless, the biologist said, "If you see elk 300 or 400

yards ahead of you, it's a good idea to get on the track and go slow, but don't move too quick. You don't want to blow them out."

Just finding track, however, and not knowing how long it's been on the ground, is a different story. "The elk may have run into the next county, and it may not be worth it at all to stay on that track. But if you see the animal from a distance and you can find the tracks, sure, go for it."

Even on the snow, in moist conditions, Ellenberger said, "It's a crap shoot. Maybe you can get on those elk, but first, the track is probably older than you think, and, second, even if it shows they're not running, elk still move at a fairly rapid rate and you'll never catch them.

"If you get on a track and you haven't jumped animals within about a half a mile, there's not much chance. Change plans."

If you use binoculars and spot elk, and they're not spooked, "analyze terrain and cover. Plan an appropriate stalk to get close enough to the animal for a good shot," Ellenberger said.

"Again, keep in mind wind conditions at all times."

Another method of elk hunting, if you don't see the animals, is the time-honored method of stand hunting.

"Large herds of elk reside on public land," Ellenberger noted. "Obviously, this is where large numbers of hunters are found."

If you're in one of these areas, Ellenberger suggested locating a spot frequented by elk. Then, find a good place, sit and be patient. Count on other hunters to move animals to you.

A good place may be a saddle on a ridge where elk may pass or a small park at the upper end of a drainage near a saddle.

"Put yourself near any spot that would offer an obvious escape route for elk," the biologist said.

Another proven elk hunting method is "the drive." This involves placing stand hunters at strategic locations, such as dense cover, escape routes or openings that can be crossed by moving elk. When the stand hunters are in place, another group of hunters moves through the cover, pushing elk out of hiding or resting areas.

Of course, there are problems with this method. First, stand hunters must make sure of their line of fire. "Safety is a problem because you don't necessarily see all the other hunters you're working with. Also, there may be other hunters in the area that you are unaware of."

Second, the method may require a larger group of hunters than you normally hunt with. Ellenberger insisted, however, that this method can be successful with one or two stand hunters and one driver hunter.

The third problem is that if you severely spook the elk, "they're long gone and they may not come back to that area for days."

The fourth problem Ellenberger sees with a drive is that the animals are usually running. They have a high adrenaline flow, and you may end up with some tough meat. Worse, the animal may be only wounded and must be tracked for long distances.

Finally, whether you're on a drive, a stand or a stalk, be patient. "It always takes longer than you think."

Stop and smell the urine. It may be the slap in the face you need.

It's archery season: Wisdom from a veteran master hunter

By Justin S. Cowan

"Archery season is now?" I frantically question my wife as she wakes me and asks, "Aren't you going hunting this morning?"

"I mean," (regaining my composure) "of course it's archery season. But, you gotta let the elk realize this too, honey. They need a fighting chance." Honey looks at me with that all too familiar "whatever you say" smirk and pushes me out of bed with her cold feet.

This is my start, as opposed to other newbies, to this noble tradition.

These are the folks who have pre-season rituals involving growing a beard, quitting soda and jogging with their tree stand strapped to their back in their suburban neighborhoods working off three pounds before the big hunt. They sleep in their six-man tents in the backyard thinking this will prepare them to sleep in the woods. And this is only the beginning of their madness.

While some hunters feel the need to buy the latest gadgets, wash their camo in Scent Lock, and store their hunting gear in nicely labeled Tupperware boxes, this is entirely the wrong approach to hunting. Sure, it may be efficient; it may even be effective. But there is no joy in this approach. Sighting in a bow before archery season may be the right thing to do, but where's the sense of adventure in knowing you can split expensive carbon arrows at 50 yards?

If you can identify with this, you may be in a category of hunter with too much time, money, and a career that affords these unnecessary expenses. These people are maniacs, zealots of the forest doing all kinds of pre-season rituals otherwise known as extraneous attention-seeking mental illness. They are seen putting the silent stalk on an unsuspecting skunk cabbage or twelve-point sapling just to see how quiet they can move through the woods.

Yep, you may be one. If so, stop reading here. This instructional article will do you no good. However, if you care to learn something from a seasoned veteran of the woodlands, read on.

You've spent \$1,300 on the latest bow ... a bow ... singular ... this thing looks like some futuristic alien weapon in a Bruce Willis movie. For this price, it better come with a lightsaber function and marriage advice. Wiser, more experienced hunters, such as myself, have spent their \$1,300 on a bow, four mismatched arrows, a "remodeled" camper and the vehicle that takes me to my hunting spot. We think in terms of package deals and spread our money — our credit card — out for the best bang for the buck.

But, there is hope for you. That hope comes in the form of something we refer to as "wife." Wife will help you realize the error of your spending habits. Wife will step in soon if you do not take corrective action yourself. She is a wily creature. She knows how much is in the checkbook and you've never seen the check-

book. The family treasure is earmarked for gadgets of her own and other superfluous stuff like groceries and laundry detergent.

Fellas, fellas, fellas, you're going about this all wrong. Let me help you avoid the wrath of Wife, save some money, and save your manhood (if not your dignity).

First of all, preparedness is for the faint of heart. Where's your sense of adventure and spontaneity? Let me set out a better course of action for you:

Step one: roll out of bed at the crack of a couple hours into sunrise. Put on the hunting clothes you stuffed into the corner of your "camper" the year before. The elk urine you squirted on them last year has had a chance to age and is at the peak of its effectiveness. Throw your bow in the truck and hope your arrows are still in the case, too.

Allow yourself time to grab a chimichanga and diet soda at the Circle K before heading out to the woods (after all, you gotta give the "hunters" an opportunity to get the elk moving). This is all the prep work you need, aside from warming the frozen chimi on the dash with the defroster. In your excitement to get out there, you forgot about the convenience store's microwave. You could have had that chimi searing hot, but now you'll have it defrosted on the dash and still frozen at its core. That's OK, you can eat around the frozen part. Who needs processed cheese lava coating their tongue right after scalding it with hot coffee anyway? Now, wipe the coffee you spewed all over your windshield away and get to your spot.

Step two, the hunt: Here is where things get exciting. All you have to do for a successful hunt is walk 100 yards from where you parked the rig and proceed to hang your bow on a tree limb while you use the bathroom (those store-bought chimis hit within minutes). This is when you'll see the big bulls step out into the meadow that you're scoping out. It's a proven strategy, research-based. Drop your pants and they will appear.

While you have literally been caught with your pants down, that is OK. This is what signifies a true hunt. It is at this point, like a hobbled horse making a midnight escape from hunting camp with your pants around your ankles, you move to your bow. You pick out your favorite arrow — the one with the single neon green feather and you knock the arrow. Here is where you realize your release is in your truck hanging on your rearview mirror (because it's cool to have your release with you year-round so everyone can see you're a bowhunter). Now is when you fight every urge to take the shot anyway. Like a pro, and conscientious hunter, you don't try a fingers shot. Instead, you hang your head and go back to the truck to get your release with the knowledge that the one hour you had to hunt this year is quickly coming to an end.

But, you don't give up so easily. The job your boss expects you to be at today can wait.

You press on, release in hand and amble into the woods pants back in position around your waist. If you have enough meat for the year, why do you need a job?

You arrive and get situated in your home-made blind — three sticks and some cattails — on your favorite honey hole: the secret pond. "Secret" meaning only three other buddies have already come and gone harvesting any creature that dared come in on opening morning (rookies who show the distasteful eagerness that us veterans refuse to engage in).

This year you even remembered scentless insect repellent. That squadron of mosquitoes raised in Satan's army that attacked you last year will have to wait for some other sucker. This year, there'll be no maniacal slapping yourself silly as you fight them off and sit "still." Of course, the footage of the battle from the game camera you didn't know was strapped to a tree in front of you is still making its way around social media. Over a million hits. You've gone viral. Congratulations. You've accidentally arrived at the same level of fame only the Kardashians enjoy while other attention-starved saphheads purposefully conduct ridiculous pageantry to collect on their 15 minutes.

No sooner have you sat down when you hear that familiar whistle of a bull elk bugling. It's a ways off, but as you listen, it seems to be getting closer. You've developed an acute sense of hearing over the years; you already know it's a big 6 x 6 that has a slight limp. Your heart begins to race a little faster with each bugle. You breathe deeper and a little faster. The bugling gets louder. The bull should come out of the trees any second now. You knock an arrow, the bugling can't possibly be any louder.

But, there's no bull. It's so loud it should be no more than 10 yards away by now. To listen even better, you hold your breath for a moment.

It's now that you realized the hairs in your nose have managed to align themselves and the snot has hardened in such a way as to make a nose whistle. Oh, well, at least you've already had some action and heard some bugling, even if it was just your own body parts whistling a familiar tune from Ned Nostril and the South Seas Paradise Band.

Day two: You're fired from your job now, so you may as well be hunting. Besides, you don't want to be home when Wife finds out you're no longer the "employed provider" she married. You roll out of your camper sofa/breakfast table/bed and hit the trail.

Patiently you wait at your spot — your spot being the stump you gassed out on and have been sitting at after a grueling quarter mile walk into the woods. You can't go any further anyway because your sock has slipped halfway off your foot and is crowding the toe end of your boots. By boots, I mean those old converse basketball shoes you had in high school when you brought water to your teammates during timeouts.

You don't want to be noisy by fixing the situation, so you decide this spot is where you will become the provider, gain respect, live out your primal instincts, carry on the tradition of early civilization. Taking your hunting boots off after putting them on for the season is a health hazard anyways; and the scent released into the air may spook the big bulls, too. You're fine; it's time to settle in and wait.

Your patience — or nap, as some ill-informed rookies like to call it, pays off. Just as the sun sets, you see your steaks sauntering down the trail in the form of a mentally-challenged righthorn reject that that's having as much luck with the ladies as you did your acne-filled 10th-grade year of high school.

You knock an arrow and realize the new arrow rest you were so excited about last year is sitting on the workbench in your garage. That's OK. Arrow rests are for the unconfident among us. Over the years of making the same mistake, you've become an expert at the impromptu "index finger rest," a tactic us road-worn warriors invented.

Righthorn steps broadside in the trail as he senses the stump he is staring at is different from other stumps he's recently passed. This stump, if it knew English, is muttering the finer parts of the language (with some Spanish thrown in for good measure) under its breath.

This muttering is caused by you as you've drawn your bow full draw on Righthorn. You know you're full draw because your bow has broken over into that 80 percent let-off, not to mention your index finger arrow rest is now dripping blood, the sweet nectar of life, as your broadhead dug into the flesh until it stopped at the bone.

You let go just in time to save your finger — if you quickly render the appropriate first aid — "first" meaning deal with this first before you are found at the end of your own blood trail. Your arrow finds its mark, or a mark. Righthorn whirls and runs straight up the steepest hill available to his escape. You have your work cut out for you.

Finding a job.

Better get to it so you can try again next season.

For all of you that don't understand these time-tested, tried and true tactics of the hunt, take this instructional lesson to heart. I don't know how to order at Starbucks, but I can offer this wisdom. Good luck out there. For now, it's time to head back to your cubicle in Dallas. Load up that Razor, your five four-wheelers, the freezer you strapped to the top of your F-850 Gargantuando, and wear that 800 dollar camo shirt to the office — you won't need it out here. All you need is to open your mind to the learning I've so freely provided in this instructional article. Follow this advice and you'll be out of a job and into the woods in no time at all.

This, after all, is every hunter's dream.

Archery elk hunting: Hunting up close

By Alan Hannasch and Jason Garnett
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

For most of us, hunting is a lifelong pursuit. We have developed (over the years) a routine that begins every year around the first of February and, in one way or another, finds us in the Colorado high country in late August and early September. It seems second nature to expect big game brochures to arrive in the mailbox, an “alarm clock” announcing the new hunting season.

After a few planning sessions with our hunting partners, we decide on hunt units and species. Sometime before the April deadline, we apply for our “tags” and, after a month or so of anxious waiting, we get draw results off the ‘net. We spend the next three months or so scouting our hunting units, usually not as often as we would like. Two or three days before opening weekend, we are off to the woods. For the next four weeks, we are in our element! Sounds great, right? It is.

Not everybody has had enough experience, however, to develop a routine. Whether you are a longtime hunter new to Colorado, an out-of-state guest or a first-time archery hunter, we sincerely hope this article will help you experience the true wonder of early season hunting in the state that hosts one of the largest herds of elk in the world! Archery hunting can be the most exhilarating experience a sportsman or sportswoman can imagine. The absence of city noise, the hubbub of modern life, the relaxed attitude of animals that haven’t been hunted all year and the usually mild weather make for an unforgettable good time.

During the dog days of summer, your pre-hunting activities are kicked into high gear. Final scouting trips should be planned and your maps marked. Target practice is very important at this point, and by now, you should be hitting in groups of 4 inches to a maximum of 6 inches at 30 yards. If you plan on using an elk call, you should be comfortable with it; please don’t practice on elk while sitting in your car at the side of the road — elk learn fast!

Spend some time looking at the Game Management Unit (GMU) interactive maps. The Elk Migration and Travel Corridors map shows you where to focus efforts and mark GPS points.

As the hunt draws near, spend time in the forest (not necessarily where you’ll hunt) and practice making tough uphill and downhill shots (check forest regulations first). It’s also a good time to judge distances before pulling out the range finder to verify your guess.

Go back over your hunt plan.

When it comes time to start packing for a hunt, start a couple weeks early to check gear before it’s packed and loaded into the camper. The camper is used as a base camp (which can easily be substituted with a tent/wall tent). For this article’s “hunt,” we did not take into consideration the use of any off-highway vehicles (OHV) or horses.

Making a list and checking it off is helpful; try making a list of all the gear you take and separate it into two categories — gear for a backpack hunt and gear for a base camp or static hunt from a fixed tent. If you decide to use a base camp, you can then configure your pack with essential gear you need to carry and know what weight you are carrying. Knowing weights of items beforehand comes in handy when planning to carry a backpack! Packaged goods are unwrapped and sealed in plastic

bags that can be reused for hauling trash back out. Conserving weight by carrying items that serve more than one purpose is a good practice; the multi-purpose tool, for example. It has a saw blade that will get you by in the backcountry to cut branches for firewood, elk pelvis and ribs, and a sharp blade that can take care of an elk. Don’t forget to bring extra coolers — a quartered elk will fill two king-sized coolers.

No matter how well you plan, you can count on one thing: The elk have complete disregard of your plan. Be flexible. No secret here — elk are where you find them, sometimes hunting from base camp will keep you in elk range. But you may have to follow the herd. Having a backpack ready to go might be your best option and planning for more than one scenario can increase your odds of success. My preference is packing a mid-sized backpack to carry emergency items, along with sufficient supplies to field dress an elk, and even having a game bag or two will save an extra trip back to camp.

Archery season can bring hot days and cold nights; don’t be surprised by early snow, rain with lightning, sleet — even all of the above in one day. Dress in layers; most days start off frosty-cold in the morning to mid-day sun in the 80s. Especially important: These days, you can carry one of a number of devices that allow you to send messages and/or emergency location signals. The peace of mind is priceless.

Your food supplies are a personal choice, and for day hunts be sure to have nutritional bars and plenty of water. During the archery season, you have more daylight hours, which make for a long day in the field. Getting back to camp and cooking a meal and then cleaning up (being bear aware) is a lot of effort. Simple heat-and-serve meals might be considered.

Now it’s time to head out to your elk camp; always leave a map and specific information about location, arrival and departure times with someone at home. Pre-arranged call times are a good idea if that can be arranged, as well. Before you leave, get a 10-day weather forecast and print it out. Have a list of phone numbers that you can carry in case of emergencies — and don’t forget your hunting license. One last check of the bow and a final practice round before the hunt are in order; by now, your confidence in your shooting needs to be high.

It does not matter where you set up your elk camp — bears will be in the area.

Once in the field, a host of decisions must be made. Should you call to the elk or just move slowly through the woods and hope to intercept them? If you have had time to scout your area extensively, you can try to set up on a wallow, water hole, game trail or elk crossing and wait them out. If your scouting has been limited, spot and stalk may be the ticket. Archery hunters will tell you that all of the tactics listed above work and, more often than not, it is the correct use of all of them that leads to a successful harvest.

First things first — find elk! All of the map making, planning and practice are of little use if the elk that were in your “secret spot” a month ago are now one drainage away. Hopefully, you are able to set up camp early enough before the season opens that you have time to do some last-minute scouting. Of course, you don’t want to go stomping around the woods that you’re going to be hunting, but you can learn a lot by simply

looking and listening.

“Glassing” your hunting area from a high vantage point can gain you invaluable information about elk movement in your hunting area. Elk tend to move up and down the mountains they inhabit early in the morning and also late in the afternoon or early evening. This habit can make it fairly easy to pinpoint travel routes. These routes or trails can be a great place to ambush elk as they move between feeding and bedding areas.

As you sit looking over your area, listen very carefully; elk are the most vocal members of the deer family and, contrary to popular belief, elk communicate back and forth to each other all the time. Bull elk don’t have to be in the full swing of the rut to bugle, and the chirps, bleats and mews of cow and calf elk can be heard year-round in the Colorado high country. Elk regularly announce their presence, and the hunter who is paying attention can profit from this apparent lack of restraint.

Now that you have current information on movement and location (even if very general), you will want to put together a plan for the morning hunt. Your plan should put you on course to intercept moving elk. Again, elk will move between feeding areas and bedding grounds. Choosing a spot that, from your scouting, shows the most promise of a well-beaten trail, saddle or a wallow would be ideal. Do what it takes to be not only downwind of the elk, but appropriately up or downhill from them, as well. The cool morning air in the valleys and draws of the Colorado mountains tends to move uphill as it warms. As temperatures drop in the afternoon, the cool air that is at the ridge tops begins to move back down the mountains.

Get into position early — the quickly fading darkness of early morning will afford freedom of movement without detection that daylight hours will not. The key is not spooking the elk out of your area before you get a chance to hunt them. Use every trip in and out of the woods before and during your hunt as a scouting trip. Be mindful of elk sign.

A good sign that elk are using an area is “rubbed” trees. Look for smaller aspen trees or pine saplings that bull elk use to rub against to rid their antlers of drying velvet and to otherwise vent their general frustrations. These trees tend to be stripped of bark two to six feet from the ground. A bull with a really bad attitude will wipe the tree clean of all branches and bark. Check rubs for freshness; newly rubbed trees will still have a softness to their bark and will still be oozing sap.

Look for wallows. Elk use wallows for several reasons: cooling themselves down in the hot, early days of fall, to control pesky insects and to spread scent, effectively marking their territory. These small bodies of water can be as large as a backyard pool or as small as a kitchen sink. Evidence of fresh tracks in the mud around a wallow is evidence of recent use. But chocolate milk-colored water and fresh hair prints (made as the elk rolls in the mud) near the edge of the wallow is sure proof that elk are near.

As the morning passes, listen for the telltale sounds of elk movement: a twig breaking, rolling rocks, cow calls or possibly a bugle. Once elk are located, it may be necessary to move to the elk or you can try to call them to you. Try a soft cow call, then, if you get a reply, wait a minute and call again. Be patient. It may take some time for the animals to move to you. If

your call is not answered, try again just a bit louder. You may even want to try a bugle. Remember, start soft then work louder — don’t blow their heads off with your first call!

Calling elk is, for most, a trial and error process; listen to the elk and try to sound like them. Listen for a response. It may take just seconds for a “hot” bull to answer, but it can also take several minutes. A bull that doesn’t feel that the caller is close enough to be threatening may simply ignore calls. If these attempts fail to produce a response, consider the wind direction and start to move slowly on a course that will put you ahead of the elk. At all times, be mindful of animals that may be present but remain quiet.

Few things in life prepare a hunter for his or her first up-close experience with one of nature’s greatest residents. It’s hard to imagine that an animal that can hear a pin drop on a feather pillow, see a gnat blink and smell an unscented candle from across a football field can be successfully hunted. Perhaps that’s why after all the hard work, planning and practice, even the most seasoned hunters often turn to putty when it all comes together. The chest-pounding increase in heart rate and the seemingly instant lack of oxygen that a close encounter causes can make it nearly impossible to hold steady on your quarry. Take a moment to settle yourself. The unbelievable thrill of the moment can quickly sour with an ill-placed shot. Shoot like you have practiced; pick a spot, draw smoothly, anchor, peep, pin, trigger, breathe and squeeze.

After you release your arrow, you will have one of two feelings — a great sense of accomplishment as the arrow hits the target as you have planned, or great concern that you might not have hit the spot. Mark the spot where you stood at the time the arrow was released, where the elk stood and the direction the elk ran. Most of the time, what you do after the shot will improve your odds of retrieving your downed elk.

Take some time to savor the moment. Most likely, the release of your arrow is the culmination of a year’s worth of hard work. Enjoy it! Allow 30 to 45 minutes before beginning your recovery efforts. Generally, big game will travel downhill and rarely in a straight line. Pay attention to every detail and place markers often. If you lose track, circle your last best sign. Tracking after the shot can be the hardest part of your hunt, so be patient and listen — a wounded elk will hold up in the thickest cover you can imagine.

For an archer, every harvest is a trophy and the memory is better shared with a good field photo. Spend a few minutes preparing the animal for the trophy photo; clean up excess blood. If the tongue is hanging out, take pictures from the other side or tuck it in. Look at hunting magazines for good examples of clean trophy photos.

Archery hunting has a relatively low success rate. As with any method of hunting, more times than not you will head back home without an elk. The experience and the fair chase will keep you coming back!

If you do harvest an elk, be aware of the temperature. During the archery season, most daytime highs are well above 60 degrees. You should quarter the elk and pack the meat in coolers for the trip home. You’ve worked hard to get to this point; proper care of your prize is critical.

And ... congratulations!

Hunting violations can be costly

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Every hunting season, officers for Colorado Parks and Wildlife hand out thousands of tickets for violations that cost hunters hundreds of thousands of dollars. While some of those tickets are for flagrant violations of wildlife regulations and hunting laws, many more are for minor violations that could have been avoided.

Hunters are reminded that not only can they be fined for violations, they can also lose their hunting privileges in Colorado and the 45 other states that cooperatively participate in a wildlife compact agreement.

Rick Basagoitia, area wildlife manager for the San Luis Valley, explained that hunters need to set aside some time to review the Colorado Big Game Brochure. The brochure explains many of the common violations and how to avoid them.

"Hunters must know their responsibilities when they get into the field," Basagoitia said. "Wildlife laws are written to protect a valuable resource and for safety."

Following are some of the more common violations that occur every year:

- Not wearing fluorescent orange or pink: You must wear at least 500 inches of daylight fluorescent orange/pink, including a head covering of the same color that can be seen from all directions. Mesh garments are legal but not recommended. Camouflage orange/pink does not qualify.
- Carrying loaded firearms in or on vehicles: Rifles must not have ammunition in the chamber while in or on any motor vehicles. For those riding OHVs, weapons (rifles and bows) must also be in a closed case and fully unloaded (chamber and magazine). Most accidents involving firearms occur in or near vehicles.

- Shooting from a road: Before firing a shot, you must be at least 50 feet off of a designated state or county road, and just off forest service or BLM roads. You also cannot shoot across a road.
 - License not voided: After you kill an animal, you must void the license immediately.
 - Improperly attached carcass tag: The carcass tag must be attached to the animal. The best way is to cut a hole in the hide and attach with a tie. It is OK to wait until you get the animal back to camp or to your vehicle to attach the carcass tag.
 - No evidence of sex: Be sure to leave evidence of sex naturally attached to the carcass. Evidence includes the head, the vulva or the scrotum.
 - Waste of game meat: Big game meat can begin to spoil at 38 degrees. To keep the carcass cool, remove the hide as soon as possible after the kill to allow for air to circulate around the meat. Reduce the mass of the carcass by quartering the meat or boning out the meat. Place the meat in a cooler as soon as possible. Even in cold weather, a carcass should not hang outside for more than 36 hours. Remember: Because game meat contains very little fat, it cannot be aged like beef. The so-called "gamey taste" is caused by spoilage, not because the animal is wild.
 - To learn how to field dress a big game animal, see the video at <http://cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/HuntVideos.aspx>.
 - Shooting a spike-antlered elk: Hunters who hold a cow elk tag sometimes shoot spike bulls. Be sure of your target. If you are shooting at a long distance or in low light conditions, it can be difficult to see spike antlers. If you are not absolutely sure, do not shoot.
 - Illegally tagging an animal: You can only place a tag on an animal that you shot. You cannot trade tags with other license holders, or use tags of other license holders.
- For more information visit cpw.state.co.us.

WELCOME AND GOOD HUNTING

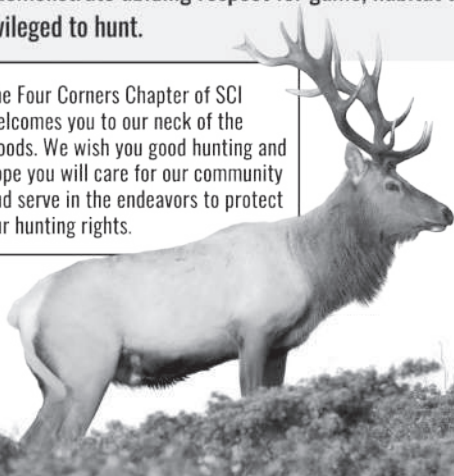
Recognizing my responsibilities to wildlife, habitat and future generations I pledge:

- To conduct myself in the field so as to make a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems.
- To improve my skills as a woodsman and marksman to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife.
- To comply with all game laws, in the spirit of fair chase, and to influence my companions accordingly.
- To accept my responsibility to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.
- To waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of this code of ethics.
- To reflect in words and behavior only credit upon the fraternity of sportsmen, and to demonstrate abiding respect for game, habitat and property where I am privileged to hunt.



The Four Corners Chapter of SCI welcomes you to our neck of the woods. We wish you good hunting and hope you will care for our community and serve in the endeavors to protect our hunting rights.

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Taking care of big game meat

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Ethical hunters not only make a clean kill, they don't waste what they kill. So that means taking care of the meat.

It's against the law to waste game meat. If you harvest an animal, it is your responsibility to remove and care for the meat.

Start preparing before you go into the field. Get in shape and be ready to carry heavy loads over rough terrain. Be sure you know how to field dress an animal. Numerous books and websites are available to provide explanations. If you will be hunting with someone who is inexperienced, teach them the proper techniques.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has produced two videos that explain big game field dressing techniques. See "How to field dress a big game animal" on the website; search for videos.

Another video, "Down to the Bone," explains how to bone out the meat of a big game animal in the field. By boning out the meat, there is much less weight for a hunter to pack out. You can order the video by calling (303) 297-1192; or by going to the "Buy and Apply" section of the CPW website.

Get your gear organized. Assemble all of the equipment you need for cleaning, hauling and caring for your meat. A short list includes: high quality knife, sharpening stone, bone saw, tarp, game bags, frame pack, paper towels, rope and rubber gloves.

Get your freezer ready, too. Be sure you have enough room to store the meat.

Make a clean kill

Shot placement can affect meat quality. Try for a quick kill with a shot that will produce minimal meat damage. The best target: the heart/lungs area just behind the front quarter. A shot to that area will drop an animal quickly. Avoid shooting an animal in the gut or hindquarters. Don't try for head shots.

Also, be aware of where the animal might fall. Don't shoot an animal in an area where you will not be able to retrieve it. Make sure you are capable of retrieving all the meat before it spoils, before it attracts predators and before you become exhausted.

If you can't make a clean shot, don't shoot!

The animal is down; now what?

When you bring down a big game animal with bullet or arrow, you have achieved one immediate goal, but you haven't fulfilled all of your responsibilities as a hunter. You still have to field dress, transport and butcher the meat properly.

Animals must be field dressed immediately. That means removing the guts, heart, lungs, liver, esophagus and other internal organs. If you choose to bone out the meat, you do not need to "gut" the animal.

After removing all the entrails, roll the animal over to drain the body cavity, then use a clean rag to wipe off excess blood, bone chips, dirt, partially digested food particles and other foreign matter.

Only leave the hide on long enough to keep the meat clean while dragging it on the ground or transporting it over dusty roads in the back of an open pickup.

Next, cool the meat as quickly as possible. Skin the animal as soon as you reach camp. Time is critical, even in cool weather. Without air circulating around the carcass, the meat can sour quickly. Bacterial growth begins at any temperature over 38 degrees Fahrenheit. Maggots can hatch within eight hours if the carcass is exposed to flies and other winged insects.

Remove the head, trim as much fat as possible, place the meat in game bags and hang them in the shade. Keep the meat dry. Do not allow meat to hang more than two days in the woods. If the weather is warm, get the carcass into cold storage as soon as possible.

Remember — aging does not improve the flavor or serve to tenderize game meat. Beef can be aged to become more tender and flavorful because the fat on a domestic cow protects the meat from rotting at 38 degrees. Deer and elk are 90-95 percent lean, and the leaner the meat the faster it deteriorates.

When taking the animal home, keep it cold and out of sight. Do not strap an animal to the top of your car.

Game meat can last for several years in a good freezer if it is well-wrapped. The best wrapping is a vacuum seal. If you don't have one, use freezer paper. It's better than plastic in staving off freezer burn.

For more information, see cpw.state.co.us.

How not to get lost in the woods

By Chris Parmeter

District Wildlife Manager, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

In the 1980 classic movie, "The Mountain Men," the character Henry Frapp is questioned by a young greenhorn: "Haven't you ever been lost?" Frapp scratches his whiskers and, after a recollecting pause, replies, "A fearsome confused for a month or two ... but I ain't ever been lost!"

For the fur trappers, wandering through a vast and unexplored country, "lost" would have been something of an oxymoron. Not knowing where you were was a necessary part of the mountain man business. The blank space on the map was as much "home" as it was wilderness, and "lost" was more a state of mind than a physical dilemma.

When the mountain men plunged headlong into the unknown, they knew that, where they were going, there would be no restaurants or hotels. So they planned accordingly. They learned quickly where to find food and how to get it; how to mend equipment, to make new or make do; they could sleep in a log, a cave, or just plain under the stars — and survive! How did they accomplish this incredible feat? Simply, they were prepared — mentally and physically.

Today, the same principles apply. When you head out into the woods, be prepared: for cold, rain or snow; to tend an injury; or to stay the night in the woods. It's not as difficult as it sounds. Here are a few nuggets of mountain man wisdom to help you survive:

Staying found

The old timers relied on "dead reckoning" for navigation: utilizing a compass to guide them in the general direction they wished to go. Sometimes in the absence of a compass, they relied only on "reckoning." As in "I reckon camp is back that way." The contemporary woodsman may have the handiness of a GPS, but owning one of these high-tech gizmos is not an adequate substitute for map and compass

skills. Just as with other conveniences (cellphones, cameras, flashlights), the batteries will invariably go dead just when you need them the most.

Learning how to read a map is not that difficult; up is north, left is west, and so on. The closer the lines are together, the steeper the country. Water is shown as blue, while man-made objects are black. It is simply a two-dimensional rendition of a three-dimensional world. Using a map and a compass to show you which way is north, you'd be hard pressed to get seriously lost. Sure, some practice is required, but that's all part of the preparedness thing.

Paying attention to where you're going can also be a big help to staying found. As you pursue your quarry, notice which way the shadows are falling. Have you been mostly climbing, or descending? Look for landmarks as you go. Not stumps and rocks, but big landmarks that give your relative position to the valley below, or that craggy peak to the west. Turn around and look behind you; what would it look like if you were going that way — back to camp or the truck?

The essentials

Unless your trip is taking you across the Gobi or the Brooks Range, you probably don't need to carry 50 feet of copper wire or spare fishing line and hooks. The largest wilderness area in Colorado can be traversed in a day or two by a man in decent shape. So, what are the essentials you need when you're on your own hook?

Water. Without it, you're dead in three days. Without it for a few hours, at 9,000 feet above sea level, you're not dead, but you may wish you were. Dehydration can lead to altitude sickness and hypothermia. But even worse, it can impair your judgment, induce panic and result in a fatal case of Lost.

Fire good ... Fire friend ... Fire number two in importance. Learn how to build one, without toilet paper and gasoline. It's as easy as one two three: One, you need dry tinder. Scratch

around under grass tussocks for the driest stuff. Get lots of it, about a volleyball-sized bunch. Two, kindling. You want about twice as much as the tinder you gathered. Kindling is small stuff — matchstick sized. Three is the fuel itself. Gather up plenty if it looks like you may have to spend the night. Pick dry branches one to two inches in diameter — these burn without difficulty and make it easy to control the heat. Of course, we can't overlook the match. You don't need to be proficient with a flint and steel, but you should have at least a couple of ways to start fire; it doesn't matter if it's a lighter or a fire plow, as long as you can get it lit.

Shelter. Now don't jump right into bivy sacks and backpacking tents. Let's take a step back and start at the beginning. Shelter starts with your clothing. Dress for the worst. And in a Colorado autumn, the worst can be pretty harsh. Pick synthetics — like fleece or polyester blends — but wool is best. Dress in layers: long handle union suit, light mid layer(s), and warmer outer layer. Dressing appropriately when you leave camp will find you well on your way to surviving a night in the outback even without a buffalo robe.

Make a plan and let someone know what it is. Leave a map open on the dashboard of the truck. You don't have to give up your secret spot with an "I am here" arrow, just circle a square mile or two. When you leave camp, a plain old "I'm gonna work this ridge out and come back down the crick" is enough to give your buddies a place to start looking for you if you should become "a fearsome confused." The important thing is to stick to your plan.

As you head into the high country this fall, see yourself as one of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; be prepared, both mentally and physically, for the challenges of the unknown. Keep your powder dry and your eyes on the horizon and you'll know that "lost" is, by and large, just a state of mind.

Chris Parmeter is a Colorado Park and Wildlife Manager in the Gunnison/Crested Butte area.

Snow: an uncommonly normal event

By Dick Ray

First rifle elk season begins the first Saturday after the 8th of October in Colorado. The thought summons a vision of golden aspen leaves quaking in an autumn breeze and the music of a bull elk bugling on a distant ridge. In the past, on occasion, early snow has accompanied the first day of elk season. Well, snow is beautiful, too, and has some good positive value as well. Such as, easier game tracking, an aid against meat spoilage, and it can begin the annual downward altitudinal migration.

But, like fire, snow can be good or bad. A good fire warms your house on a winter night. A bad fire burns your house down. So it is with snow. When an early blizzard dumps three to five feet, as it has been known to do, you will soon know if you have enough horse feed, gathered enough firewood and just how durable you and your camp are.

Remembering some outstanding early snows in the '70s, '80s and '90s, I can recall storms that turned ordinary elk hunts into stories of survival. In Colorado, late season elk hunters hope and pray for enough snow to concentrate elk and deer on their winter ranges. However, when early October produces unusually heavy snows, those hunters who have packed into the higher elevations of the wilderness must change focus from hunting animals to simple survival.

In 1971, we packed four hunters from Louisiana into the headwaters of the Chama River — still in Archuleta County, but east of the Continental Divide. The season was nine days long. They went in the day prior and scheduled to come out on the eleventh day. They were well

provisioned and had a good camp at 11,000 feet. Good thing, because about 3 p.m. the first day of the hunt, it began to snow.

It snowed for 2.5 days depositing about 3.5 feet with some 5-foot drifts. Six days later, the snow had melted and settled enough for us to be barely able to get them out. They were all still friends. Their faith in God and their preparedness had seen them through. This was before the day and age of cellphones. Calling search and rescue was not even an option.

Same location, 1983. A group had packed themselves in and history repeated itself. Early October, early heavy snow. This group abandoned their camp, their mules and walked out to the highway. In a plea that made national news, they raised enough money to have the mules airlifted out to the highway at Cumbres Pass.

Mid-October 1994, a storm predicted to drop 16-18 inches in the high country overshot the prediction leaving up to 5 feet in its wake.

Everyone in Southwest Colorado was mutually inconvenienced. For high-country hunters, the task was survival. Even the lower-elevation roads were impassable until plowed by heavy equipment. Hundreds were in need of help. The question around town was, just how many fatalities will there be? Many hunters made it out on their own. Many were plucked from this white hell by military helicopter — forced to leave camp, livestock and firearms behind.

One particularly tragic incident occurred northeast of Pagosa Springs in the Turkey Creek drainage. Two hunters from Oklahoma abandoned their camp and two mules, attempting to walk out Oct. 15. About 7 p.m.,



Oct. 18 the older hunter, age 53, died in his wet sleeping bag at a makeshift camp. The younger hunter, age 40, was found and brought out by helicopter on Oct. 21. He suffered severe frostbite. As I recall, the human death toll attributed to this storm was eight. Primarily to hypothermia, heart attack or carbon-monoxide poisoning.

Nowadays, a satellite phone can call search and rescue from almost anywhere. However, in times of a widespread natural disaster, you may still be days away from help. A simple

thing like an ax lost in deep snow or a collapsed and ripped tent immediately become very significant. Trails obvious before a blizzard tend to disappear when buried under deep snow. Decisions made under pressure must be good ones.

The value of these stories of human pain and suffering is this: Some October, we will again have heavy snows and for those who venture forth, a well thought-out exit plan is in order. As the old shepherders always said, "Quidado" (be careful).

History: Wildlife matters

By Dick Ray

The American colonists had no real hunting tradition of their own as they generally came from countries where commoners were forbidden to hunt.

They had no knowledge of New World wildlife or hunting methods and brought only honest ignorance, faith and the will to survive. The need to survive fosters rapid learning, and survive they did.

In 1875, Colorado Territorial Governor William Gilpin was quoted, "We must do something to save Colorado's vanishing wildlife!"

Thus bighorn sheep were covered by a total hunting ban from 1885 until 1953. In 1899, the Colorado Game and Fish Department was formed. In 1903, the first Guide and Outfitter law was passed. Elk season was closed from 1903 thru 1937 in Southwest Colorado; mule deer season was closed from 1914 to 1918. Market hunting and subsistence hunting were eliminated. Pronghorn were not hunted until 1945 and there was no open season on turkeys until 1963.

Predators, lions, bears, coyotes, etc., as well as scavengers such as ravens, crows and magpies, which exacerbate the need for the carnivores to make more frequent kills, were brought under control.

At the same time, additional law enforcement, habitat improvement, restocking to

rebuild ungulate species, i.e., conservation, was predominate. Deer and elk flourished.

Now, with deer, elk, turkey, pronghorn and even bighorn sheep being common, they are taken for granted. Public opinions are changing and predators — charismatic megafauna — are revered by Americans in a way that ungulates are not.

Although we must manage and respect all wildlife, preferred single-species management will have negative effects on many other species. We must engage in "ecosystem management" where all species are considered in relation to each other and in relation to the condition of their habitat. Our wildlife managers must strive for "balance."

Colorado's hunters are tools of Colorado's wildlife managers, affecting funding, harvest and providing input and information. By encouraging respect and stewardship, hunters build self-respect and gain respect.

As field naturalists, hunters provide value to wildlife management beyond their economic contribution.

Theodore Roosevelt described conservation as "wise use." He believed that certain natural resources were renewable and might last forever if harvested scientifically and no faster than they reproduced.

This is called sustainable yield. Wildlife matters, too.



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Setting up an elk camp: Where do I camp? What do we bring?

By Mark Strachan, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

One of the things I look forward to every year is elk camp. It's the time I get to spend with my friends in Colorado's vast and beautiful outdoors. It's also the time I use to reflect on the important things in life while pursuing one of the greatest animals on our continent, the Rocky Mountain elk. We all spend many hours every year in planning, preparation and scouting to make the most of this time in the field. Over the years, we discovered what made our time in the field even more enjoyable. Camp.

In this article, I will cover some aspects of camping in Colorado that will make your hunt more enjoyable, too. I'll address topics like where do I camp? What do we bring? How to make delicious, quick and easy meals! I believe in keeping things simple, and simple is always better when it comes to maximizing your time in the great outdoors.

The first topic to cover is the old question, where do I camp in Colorado? Our first choice is always public land. Colorado has an incredible amount of public land throughout the state. We always look for places that allow us to walk out of camp and into the field to hunt. This is not always possible, but has a lot of benefits. Make sure to mark down as many different camp options as you can. If you have the time, visiting the area and marking campsites on your map is a great idea. Look for spots that have good access and level areas for tents. Keep in mind that if you are camping in a forest, beetle-killed trees' roots weaken quickly, increasing the risk that they will fall during wind and snowstorms.

During elk season, there will also be some competition for the best campsites. Many of us will get there a day or two ahead of time to secure our favorite spot. It's also important to research the type of public land you are camping on. Forests, BLM and State Trust Lands have varying rules and regulations in regard to hunting, camping, wood collection and fires. Once you have identified the type of land you are camping on, you will need to visit that particular agency's website to find out which rules or regulations pertain to your area.

Another option is to identify local improved campgrounds. State or private parties may run these. Finding a camp in your area is typically very easy.

Now that you have established where you are going to camp, it's time to think about what you are going to need. The list can be simple, or extensive. The amount of gear you take is often limited by your method of travel. Camping in

the Colorado high country during the fall and winter means being prepared for anything. During the hunting seasons, you will see everything from 70 degrees and sunshine to below-zero temperatures with blowing snow. In Colorado, these kinds of variations in weather can even happen in the same day. You will need to be prepared. With this in mind, the first things to think about are shelter and heat.

There are many types of tents on the market, but the most common type in elk camp is the canvas wall tent. Canvas wall tents are durable, sturdy and much warmer than nylon tents. This is not to say that nylon tents will not work, but you will be more comfortable and have more room for your gear in a canvas wall tent. At our camp, we choose to run multiple tents. We use one tent for cooking, eating and storing of gear and another tent for our sleeping quarters. In the sleeping tents, we use catalytic-style heaters attached to 20-pound propane tanks. These efficient little heaters are fantastic for keeping the chill off inside the tents. Two benefits to catalytic heaters are that they take up less space than a wood-burning stove and they do not produce carbon monoxide like other styles of propane heaters. One of the best things about this form of heat is not getting out of bed to stoke a fire in the middle of the night! For planning purposes, you will burn about 2 to 4 pounds of propane per night with catalytic heaters.

In the cook tent, we use a wood-burning stove for heat and for drying out clothes, if necessary. Here is a tip: We use the wax fire logs that come in a paper wrapper. Combine that with a wood log or two, and it will give you four-plus hours of easy-starting heat. For planning purposes, we bring two of these instant fire logs per day in the field. Even though we typically only use one per day, the other logs are what we bring for the "what if" factor of camping in the high country.

The "what if" factor of camping in Colorado high country are the scenarios you have to keep in mind that you cannot control. The weather in the mountains can be highly unpredictable. Some years, we hunt in T-shirts, and others we throw on every piece of arctic gear we own. This may mean packing more, but the year that the "what if" happens, you will be happy to have the gear you need not only to survive, but to continue with your hunt. I have seen many camps get broken down and their hunting ended early because of not being prepared. Things to keep in mind in the "what if" file are things such as axes, chain saws, extra fuel, extra wood, extra clothes, extra food, rope and tarps. We do take a few

nonessential items to our camp; we enjoy the additional comforts. It will be your decision as to what to bring and what not to bring.

When it comes to crawling into a nice warm place to sleep, there is nothing nicer than a good-quality sleeping bag and a cot to lie on. While there are those who wish to rough it, this is one of the things I will not leave at home. You work hard hunting during the day, so why not be comfortable at night? My personal choice of sleeping bags is a negative 20-degree bag that is flannel lined. These bags will keep you warm on the coldest nights. You can find these at most major sporting good stores for around a hundred dollars. I also choose to bring several packing blankets to go between the bag and the cot. This gives you a bit more padding and added protection from the cold. One thing not to overlook is a small tarp to cover over the top of your bedroll. Oftentimes, you will get condensation in large tents that can lead to wet spots on your bag.

For the last part of this article, I want to share with you a way to prepare food for your next camping trip. Many years ago, I joined a camp with some friends of mine, and their idea of dinner at camp was dehydrated food that you poured hot water into. While some of this stuff is OK, there are much better ways to enjoy a tasty, hot meal without the hassle of actually cooking in camp. In our camp, we use a boil-a-bag method. The weeks prior to hunting, I will cook meals at home. Foods such as pasta, potatoes, meats and even rice will reheat very nicely. Our camp favorites are rigatoni with Italian sausage and marinara, or what I call hunters' hash. Hunters' hash is a combination of diced potato, bell pepper, onion and ground beef. You can take these types of dishes and put several portions per hunter in a vacuum-sealed bag and freeze them for camp. The best way we have found to reheat these bags is with a turkey fryer. These are inexpensive and will boil water fast. Once you have the water boiling, you add your sealed bag of food and in 20 to 30 minutes, you have a piping-hot bag of great camp food and no pots or pans to clean! We burn our paper plates and throw away the empty food bag. Great food, less trash and virtually no clean up. Doesn't get any easier than that!

Hopefully, these tips and equipment lists will help you enjoy more of your overall elk hunting experience in Colorado. I know my first experiences would have been greatly improved if I had them starting out, and it is my hope that this article will do that for you. Good luck, hunt safely and have a great camp.

Know the rules and your own limits

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Hunting is challenging. Not only must you understand the habits of the animal you are hunting, you must also understand regulations, laws governing public and private lands and your own limitations.

Following are some reminders and things to consider before you start your hunt.

- To obtain a license, all hunters born after 1948 must present a Hunter Education Card from Colorado or another state.

- You must know the specific rules that apply to the Game Management Unit in which you are hunting. If you violate rules, you can be cited and fined.

- Be sure to know where you are hunting. You can only hunt in the Game Management Unit that your license specifies.

- As you are hunting, be aware of buildings, homes, roads and your overall surroundings. Make sure you know what is behind an animal before you shoot. A bullet shot from a

high-powered rifle can easily carry for more than 1,000 yards.

- Make sure that someone at home knows where you are hunting, your vehicle's license plate number and where you are staying.

- Weather in the fall can change rapidly in Colorado. A day that starts sunny and warm could end with a snowstorm. Be sure you are prepared for all weather conditions.

- Make sure you can recognize the symptoms of hypothermia in your hunting partners.

- Know how to get back to your camp.

- Cellphone service is not reliable in the mountains. Don't expect to contact someone by phone if you are lost or if your vehicle is stuck.

- Make sure to drink plenty of water. Colorado's dry air and high altitude can quickly dehydrate you and deplete your energy stores.

- Be sure to consult Colorado Parks and Wildlife regulations to understand antler requirements for taking bull elk.

- Do not attempt to shoot at animals that are in areas

where you could not retrieve the meat. Know your physical limits.

- If you harvest an animal, make sure the carcass is properly tagged. Tags must remain with all processed meat.

- If you transfer an animal killed by another hunter, ensure that it is properly tagged. You could be cited for illegal transport of a game animal even if someone else made the error.

- Do not strap a harvested animal on the outside of your car.

- Operate ATVs and OHVs responsibly. The vehicles must be registered in Colorado — even if it is registered in another state. Off-road vehicles can cause resource damage. Be sure to know the local travel management rules for public lands. OHVs also disturb animals and other hunters.

- If you see hunters violating laws, please report the actions to a wildlife officer or other law enforcement agency. Actions by a few hunters can reflect badly on all hunters.

For more information cpw.state.co.us.

Other big game hunting in Colorado's high country

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Deer and elk are the most commonly hunted species in Colorado. But hunters also go to the high country to pursue other magnificent big game animals: bighorn sheep, mountain goats, bears, moose and mountain lions.

The numbers of these animals in the state are significantly lower than deer and elk, so licenses are few and difficult to get. But those who obtain a license can look forward to a high-quality hunting experience.

Bighorn sheep

The bighorn is perhaps the most recognized and sought-after animal in Colorado. The curled horns of the rams display one of the most magnificent characteristics of any wildlife species.

But while the hardy animals live in harsh terrain, bighorns are a fragile species and Colorado wildlife managers are keeping a close watch on them. The population of bighorns is estimated at only about 7,085 and the population has dropped slightly in the past few years.

For the 2020 season, Colorado Parks and Wildlife issued only 304 licenses for the entire state, and 188 animals were harvested, including 148 rams and 40 ewes, a 66 percent success rate.

Getting a license is difficult, with most hunters waiting a minimum of five to seven years to draw a tag. Depending on the unit, many hunters have waited more than 10 years for a license.

The preferred habitat of bighorns is steep, rocky slopes with little vegetation.

"They are very challenging to hunt," says Scott Wait, senior terrestrial biologist for the agency in southwest Colorado.

While not meaning to be discouraging, Wait doesn't mince words about the realities of hunting for sheep. Preseason scouting is essential.

"They are very wary. The stalk is usually long, strenuous and in difficult terrain," Wait said. "Most hunters must make long shots, often 200 yards or more. So you'll need high-quality optics, and rifles must be properly sighted in."

Retrieving an animal, of course, adds to the hunting challenge.

The good news for hunters is that bighorns are most active during the day and follow predictable daily patterns.

Unfortunately, for the bighorn, their

predictability contributes to their fragility. Unlike other big game species, they do not adapt easily to new areas. They like to stay on their home turf, even when they are pressured by development or other animals — wild and domestic.

When pressured, the animals become stressed and do not reproduce well. Sheep also are susceptible to diseases spread by domestic sheep and goats, and wild mountain goats.

All the herds in the state are closely monitored by agency biologists.

Mountain goats

The adaptable, hardy mountain goats seem to be able to defy gravity. These snow-white critters inhabit terrain that is even more severe than the haunts of bighorn sheep.

Goats balance on narrow bands of rock on sheer cliffs, and eat lichen and small plants. They seem to think nothing of jumping from one precipice to another. Goats also remain at high elevation year around, enduring brutal winter conditions above timberline at more than 11,000 feet.

Mountain goats were transplanted in Colorado from other states in the 1940s. There is still debate if they were ever native to the state.

Goats are very adaptable and can move long distances to get to new terrain. Unfortunately, they also carry a disease that might infect bighorn sheep. Consequently, wildlife managers work to keep the goats in areas where they've long been established and where they don't interact with bighorns. These areas include the Raggeds Wilderness near Gunnison, in the mountains around Georgetown, in the Collegiate Peaks west of Buena Vista, in the Gore Range in the central mountains and in the San Juan Mountains near Silverton.

The DOW estimates the mountain goat population at about 1,610. In 2020, 220 licenses were issued and 170 goats were harvested, an 83 percent success rate

Those who want to hunt goats should expect to wait five years or more to accumulate enough preference points for a license.

Black bears

It's estimated that more than 20,000 bears live in Colorado. Bears are mostly solitary and reproduce slowly. Sows do not start producing cubs until they are four or five years



Colorado Parks and Wildlife

old and then can only give birth every other year. Cubs often stay with their mothers for up to two years.

Bears range generally in size from about 175 pounds for a sow and up to about 300 pounds for a boar. Few bears exceed 350 pounds in Colorado.

Bears live primarily in the range of 6,000 feet to 9,500 feet in elevation in thick oak brush and aspen groves. Population and reproduction vary depending on the availability of their favorite foods — acorns from oak brush, berries, grasses and forbs. When the weather is wet, that's good news for bears. During drought, fewer bears are born. Most bears are killed by hunters during September when the animals are most active searching for food before they go into hibernation.

The difficulty in obtaining a hunting license depends on the season and the specific game management unit. Bear-only rifle licenses, obtained through the draw, usually require preference points depending on the unit. During the regular big game deer and elk seasons, a limited number of bear licenses are available over-the-counter, but a hunter must have a deer or elk license for the same season.

In 2020, some 30,455 hunters harvested 1,561 bears, a 5 percent success rate. One reason for the low harvest rate is that bears are difficult to hunt because they live primarily in thick brush. Also, after September their eating slows down and they are more difficult to find. By early November, most bears are curled up for their six-month nap.

Most bears are harvested when the weather is warm, so a successful hunter must attend to the carcass quickly. Remove the hide as fast as possible after the kill and trim away the fat. Then get the meat on ice as soon as possible. In warm weather, meat will spoil quickly.

Anyone who harvests a bear must bring the carcass to a parks and wildlife office within five days of the kill so the sex and size can

be determined and entered into a database. A small tooth — the first premolar — is also removed so that researchers can determine the age of the animal and how many times the sow has given birth to cubs.

Mountain lions

The most elusive big game animal in Colorado is the mountain lion. Also known as pumas or cougars — they live in areas where there is dense vegetation and often very broken terrain such as canyons and rocky hillsides. Deer are the primary prey for Colorado's biggest native cat.

The population of lions in the state is estimated to be from 3,000 to 7,000. For the 2019-20 season, 2,474 hunters harvested 483 lions, a 20 percent success rate.

Licenses for lions can be purchased over-the-counter and the fall season lasts from November through March. There is also a season during April. Hunters who obtain licenses must call in every day to check if quotas have been filled in specific game management units.

Most lion hunting occurs when there is snow on the ground. Dogs pick up the scent from tracks and chase the lions into trees. The chase is often long and difficult through challenging terrain.

Moose

Moose were introduced to Colorado in the late 1970s. Moose are solitary and reproduce slowly. It is estimated that about 3,180 moose live in Colorado. They are concentrated primarily in North Park, on the Grand Mesa, in the Taylor Park area, in the upper Rio Grande River drainage and in the La Garita Mountains south of Gunnison.

Moose licenses are difficult to obtain. In 2020, roughly 40,000 hunters applied for a license but only 483 licenses were issued. A total of 334 animals were taken during the season.

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