

RECREATION
REPORT

The Observer & Baker City Herald

OREGON EXPANDS MOUNTAIN GOAT HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES IN ELKHORNS, WALLOWAS

Lucky hunters will have longer to get their goat

**SNOWMOBILE
POKER RUN IN
BAKER COUNTY
SET FOR FEB. 1**

UNITY — The Burnt River Snowmobile Club's annual Poker Run is set for Saturday, Feb. 1. There is a \$1,000 total pot with guaranteed payout, including \$500 for first place, \$200 for second, \$100 for third and two \$50 prizes for fourth place, plus five \$20 prizes for a loser's draw.

There will also be raffle prizes distributed.

The run will be from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cards must be returned by 4 p.m. to The Water Hole in Unity. Parking is at Phipps west of Unity, and the Blue Mountain Sno-Park between Unity and Austin Junction.

Cards and tickets are available at the Burnt River Market and The Water Hole in Unity, and at Austin Junction store and restaurant. Buy-in is \$5 per hand, best of 7 wins. Raffle tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5.

Proceeds benefit food banks in Baker, Grant and Malheur counties. For more information, or to buy raffle tickets, call Rick at 541-881-6069, Luke at 541-212-4682, Jim at 541-881-9622, Casey at 541-473-2073, or Dan at 541-823-3069 or by email at snowridingfool@yahoo.com

**JANUARY 31
DEADLINE TO
REPORT ON 2019
HUNT RESULTS**

Hunters have until Jan. 31 to report their 2019 hunts. If you purchased a tag, reporting is mandatory even if you didn't hunt or harvest an animal. Hunters who fail to report on deer and elk tags will be fined \$25 when they buy a 2021 hunting license.

WAYS TO REPORT

- Go online — it's the fastest and easiest way to report. You will need to verify or look up your account on the MyODFW.com licensing page. (Click on the Buy a License button) to report 2019 hunts. Once you have completed steps to verify your account, choose "Submit a Hunting and Fishing Outcome Report" or "Outcome Reporting / Mandatory Reporting" to complete your report. Be sure to go to the online licensing system, you can't report through the MyODFW app.

- Visit an ODFW office with a computer available for reporting: Adair Village/Corvallis, Bend, Clackamas, La Grande, Portland-Sauvies Island, Roseburg, Salem Headquarters, Springfield, Tillamook.

- Call ODFW Licensing at 1-866-947-6339 for assistance reporting.

By Jayson Jacoby
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The relative handful of hunters fortunate enough to draw a tag for a mountain goat will have more time to track down one of the cliff-dwelling animals in 2020.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has lengthened the season for several mountain goat hunts in the Elkhorn and Wallowa mountains, and in Hells Canyon, for this year's seasons.

ODFW also created two new goat hunts in the Wallowas, each offering a single tag.

- Southern Wallowas — all of the Catherine Creek, Keating and Pine Creek units, and the southern part of the Minam unit. The hunt will run from Aug. 1 through Oct. 31.

- Copper Creek — parts of the Minam unit in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The hunt will run from Sept. 1 through Oct. 31.

Both of the new hunts are much longer than has been typical for mountain goat hunts in Northeastern Oregon. Most of the existing hunts will run for one to two months in 2020.

In 2019 the majority of those hunts ran for eight to 15 days.

A goat tag is the rarest of big-game hunting opportunities in Oregon. And as with bighorn sheep tags, hunters can draw only one in a lifetime (bighorn hunts have also been extended to about one month for 2020).

ODFW officials decided to lengthen the goat seasons in part because the previous seasons were so short that unavoidable factors such as wildfires or early snowstorms could disrupt goat hunters' chances, said Nick Myatt, the ODFW official who lives in Baker City and has been leading the agency's multi-year effort to streamline and, where possible, to simplify hunting regulations statewide.

"These are once-in-a-lifetime hunts, and we wanted to make sure our season structure really reflected



Alex Pajunas / Baker City Herald file photo

Rocky Mountain goats in the Elkhorn Mountains.

that," Myatt said. "We felt that giving people the maximum flexibility is the right thing to do."

Heavy snow is a particular issue, Myatt said, since mountain goats spend most of their time at the highest elevations where blizzards aren't uncommon during September and October.

The addition of the Southern Wallowas and Copper Creek hunts brings the total goat tags for 2020 to 27, all in Northeastern Oregon. Two

of those tags — one in the Elkhorns and one at Hat Point — are for hunters who don't live in Oregon.

In 2019, about 12,500 people applied for one of the 25 mountain goat tags available.

Oregon's biggest mountain goat herds live in the Elkhorns and the Wallowas.

There are smaller herds in the Strawberry Mountains south of Prairie City, in parts of Hells Canyon, and in the Wenaha River area north of

Elgin.

ODFW trapped goats in the Elkhorns and moved the animals to each of those areas over the past two decades to either create herds or supplement existing populations.

Following are changes in the lengths of mountain goat hunts, along with the number of tags, and the number of applicants for each hunt in 2019.

Elkhorn Mountains

- No. 1 has 3 tags — 2020 hunt

will run from Aug. 1-31. The 2019 season was Sept. 7-15. Applications totaled 2,600.

- No. 2 has 2 tags (one nonresident) — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1-30. The 2019 season was Sept. 16-24. Applications totaled 774.

- No. 3 has 3 tags — 2020 hunt will run from Oct. 1-31. The 2019 season was Oct. 12-20. Applications totaled 1,488.

Wallowa Mountains

- E. Hurricane Creek has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31. The 2019 hunt was Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 484.

- W. Hurricane Creek has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31. The 2019 hunt was Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 316.

- Goat Mtn. No. 1 has 2 tags — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1-30. The 2019 hunt was Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 760.

- Goat Mt. No. 2 has 2 tags — 2020 hunt will run from Oct. 1-31. The 2019 hunt was Oct. 12-22. Applications totaled 321.

- Cusick Mtn. has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1-Oct. 31. The 2019 hunt was from Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 529.

Hells Canyon

- Hat Point No. 1 has 2 tags (one nonresident) — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1-30. The 2019 hunt was from Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 655.

- Hat Point No. 2 has 3 tags — 2020 hunt will run from Oct. 1-31. The 2019 hunt was from Oct. 12-22. Applications totaled 683.

- S. Snake River No. 1 has 2 tags — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1-30. The 2019 hunt was from Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 939.

- S. Snake River No. 2 has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Oct. 1-31. The 2019 hunt was from Oct. 12-22. Applications totaled 378.

Other areas

- N. Wenaha has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1 through Oct. 31. The 2019 hunt was from Sept. 7-22. Applications totaled 601.

- Strawberry Mountains has 1 tag — 2020 hunt will run from Sept. 1 through Oct. 31, the same period as for 2019. Applications totaled 1,936.

Pronghorns: Tougher Than They Look



Photo and caption by Jim Ward

Pronghorns are not the delicate creatures they appear to be. They prosper in some of the harshest conditions. Their coat consists of hollow hair and provides insulation that would insult your best goose down jacket. In a sprint, their enlarged heart and respiratory system takes in 4 times more air than the best Olympic runners. The pronghorn would give the African cheetah a run for his money and leave him panting in a long-distance chase. Their eyesight would challenge your best binoculars. The photo depicts a small portion of the Grande Ronde Valley herd, which has grown to over 50 animals in recent years.