

Big game prospects look bright as hunters

Although game populations have had some ups and some downs, this year the prospects are bright for a generally good season for Oregon's hunters.

The well-remembered 1977 drought hurt fawn production and survival on many eastern Oregon mule deer ranges, meaning fewer yearling bucks in some herds this fall. But in many areas there was a good carryover of bucks from last year and the populations in these areas will show an increase in older age-class bucks. In a few units with lower buck ratios the season will be only one week long instead of 12 days in the general season.

Overall, mule deer numbers are relatively high as they have been the last two years and sportsmen who opt for an east side tag should find prospects fair to good. Numerous controlled unit hunts and agricultural damage hunts for antlerless deer are scheduled in mule deer country this year to keep herds in balance with winter range carrying capacity or to reduce specific agricultural damage. Hunters who received permits for those seasons will find generally good hunting.

Minor fluctuations in local elk populations have been noted in various parts of the state but generally elk herds are relatively stable and major changes occur only gradually over a period of time.

Elk hunting regulations, however, have undergone several major adjustments this year, and elk hunters should consult 1978 regulations to avoid problems and disappointment.

Saddle Mountain, Tioga, and Snake River units, for example, are under a 3-point bull regulation and a hunter who wishes to hunt in any of these units must exchange his bull tag before Oct. 17 for a permit that restricts him to that unit. The permits are free and there is no limit on their number. There will be no general season bull hunting in these three units without the appropriate permit.

The Chesnimnus unit in northeast Oregon will again be open during the general bull season only to permit holders. Three thousand permits were available on a first come, first served basis. The Sled Springs unit, which was under a permit system last year, has again been opened to unrestricted general season bull hunting.

Roosevelt elk populations in traditional north coast and south coast range areas are gradually declining as these forest lands grow back up to mature timber. But herds are steadily building in central coast areas and in drainages on the west slopes of the Cascades due to trapping and transplanting operations during the last ten years.

Tag Sales End Before General Season Begins

Hunters are reminded that the sale of deer and elk tags will end again this year before the general seasons begin. No deer tags will be sold in Oregon after Sept. 29, no Rocky Mountain elk tags after Nov. 3, and no Roosevelt elk tags after Nov. 10. Sale of elk bowhunting tags ended on August 25 prior to the opening of that season and bear tag sales ended on July 31.

The most consistently successful bear hunters are those who specialize in his activity and use trained dogs. Still, the largest numbers of bear are taken each year by deer or elk hunters pursuing those species. Bears are found throughout most forested regions of the state with heaviest concentrations in the coastal

mountains and in northeast Oregon.

Vehicle restrictions will again be in effect in many parts of the state. In these closure areas a few main roads remain open to vehicle traffic but side roads are closed and all off-road vehicle use is prohibited. The purpose of these closures, which have been heartily endorsed by most hunters, is to give game animals a more even break in areas that have been heavily roaded, usually for forest management purposes. Road

closures put the hunt back in hunting, yet enough roads are left open to permit reasonable access. Cooperative road closures are detailed in the game mammal general regulations booklet available free from license agents throughout the state.

Upland Bird Seasons Show Promise In 1978

Upland bird seasons look promising this year for most species. Quail populations have dropped back somewhat

from unusually high levels the past two years in western Oregon, but only to what would be considered near normal levels. Reports from most eastern Oregon areas indicate good quail populations.

Pheasant production in eastern Oregon is much improved this year, a welcome change after reduced populations last year in the wake of a poor nesting season.

Grouse numbers are up or down this year depending on local areas but generally good

hunting for these elusive birds can be found by those who hunt specifically for blue and ruffed grouse. Sage grouse populations remain low again this year and no season was set for the big desert birds. Oregon is on the fringe of good sage grouse habitat and populations have been low for several years.

Chukar production is up in the more popular areas in southeastern Oregon and the Snake River Canyon should also provide fine chukar hunting again this year. Be-

cause of excellent moisture conditions this summer and an abundance of green feed, chukars are widely distributed so hunters will probably have to cover a lot of ground for their birds.

A good waterfowl season appears likely. Production of waterfowl on Oregon's wetlands was improved this year with much better water conditions than last year when many lakes and marsh areas were dry. Production of Canadian birds was also good and a fine migration is expected.

Fire Danger Is Down, But Heavy Forage With Dry Weather Could Bring It Back

The edge was taken off forest and range fire danger over most of Oregon when heavy rains fell in late August. But biologist, especially in eastern Oregon, point out there was an exceptionally heavy growth of grass, brush and other vegetation this year which could increase fire danger if a drying spell occurs in the last weeks before major hunting seasons open.

If there is doubt about fire danger, hunters are urged to watch the newspapers and other media or check with fire control agencies for information on fire danger and possible restrictions.

As always, hunters are urged to protect the future of their sport by respecting the rights of private landowners and seeking permission before hunting on any private property.

A more detailed report of

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