

start countdown to opening day action

this region's hunting prospects compiled by wildlife biologists follows. The units mentioned are those shown on the Oregon Game Management Unit Map available at license outlets. Hunters should note several changes in unit names and boundaries this year.

Northeast Region

Deer
Production and survival of mule deer has been good in Columbia Basin, Heppner, and Fossil units. Deer are well scattered due to abundant

water and forage. Trophy class bucks will be largely found at the higher elevations and yearling bucks are not heavily concentrated near agricultural lands as they were last year during drought conditions.

Buck hunting prospects for Walla Walla, Mt. Emily, and Ukiah units look good. Production and survival was excellent and should produce a good crop of yearling bucks with a substantial number of mature bucks also available. Low elevations wheat and

pasture lands in the Columbia Basin and Walla Walla units should not be overlooked as many deer are present near lowland agricultural areas.

Wallowa County mule deer populations wintered will in most areas and deer numbers are equal to or above 1977. Buck ratios have shown some improvement and, because of the excellent forage production, bucks have had better antler growth than normal. Fawn ratios were down slightly from 1977 in all units except the Imnaha and Snake River.

Prospects for deer hunting are good in Union County. Fair to good production of young last year coupled with excellent winter survival will provide abundant yearling class bucks. A bigger percentage of yearling spike bucks are present in local herds and hunters are urged to be certain of their targets. The Catherine Creek and Starkey units should produce best prospects for buck hunters. Portions of Wenaha, Sled Springs, and Mt. Emily units within Union County have

improved over last year. Deer populations in Sumpter and Keating units are fairly good. Buck carryover was fair to good in both units but fawn survival was not so good. There will not be as many bucks available as there were last year. The population trend is down from last year in Lookout Mountain and Pine Creek units. Buck carryover was low and so was fawn survival through last winter. Expect to find fewer bucks than were available last year.

A good buck season is expected in Grant County this fall but nothing like last year's record harvest. Surviving buck populations after last season were down 30 per cent from 1976 and considerable fawn loss last winter will reduce the number of available yearling bucks. Liberal antlerless hunts are designed to reduce total deer numbers back to the range carrying capacity. Permission should be sought before hunting private lands.

Elk
In Heppner Unit hunters will find elk scattered in small herds throughout the heavily timbered areas and in road closure areas. A high percentage of the available bulls will be taken opening weekend due to the extensive road system. Adverse weather will improve hunter success after opening weekend. Bull hunters in Walla Walla, Mt. Emily, and Ukiah units can expect only a fair season. A poor bull carryover from

last year and a less than normal calf crop is expected to provide fewer bulls than were available to the hunter in 1977. Elk will be scattered and success will depend on weather conditions. Elk hunting prospects are good in most of Wallowa County, Chesnimus Unit and Snake River 3-point unit are by permit only this year. Elk numbers are up in both units and success should be good for bulls. The bull carryover was down in the Minam Unit as was calf production. Success is expected to be considerably lower than 1977. The Wenaha, Sled Springs, and Imnaha units are expected to be similar to last year. Hunting pressure is expected to be heavy in all three units. Road closures will again be in effect in the Noregaard, Chesnimus, and Grouse-Lick Creek areas.

Union County elk hunting prospects look as good as last year. Survival of bulls and calf production were similar to last year and, as in other units, elk are widely scattered over a wide range of elevations. Sudden heavy snow prior to the season could move elk to lower elevations.

Elk populations are up in Sumpter and Keating units and there was a fair to good carryover of bulls from last year. Both units had a fair calf crop last year. Both units should be better than last season. A good area in the Sumpter unit is the Hunt Mountain area west of Haines.

Lookout Mountain unit, although not one of the best elk units, has improved some this year. Pine Creek unit populations are also up with fair carryover of bulls and improved calf production. Should be better than last year.

A high carryover of bulls plus better than average production for yearling class bulls will make the Desolation unit a good prospect for hunters this fall. Other units in Grant County are expected to produce below average hunter success as elk populations are still building after the years of either-sex hunting.

Upland Game

Upland bird production has increased over last year for all species in Gilliam, Morrow, and Wheeler counties. Because of the heavy cover, a good bird dog will really be an asset this year. Pheasant hunting should be fair opening weekend on the Irrigon and Willow Creek wildlife areas in Gilliam and Morrow counties.

Spring and summer conditions were excellent for all upland game bird species in Umatilla County and a very successful hatch was observed. Because of concentrations of the pesticide Heptachlor that have been found in the fat of Columbia Basin game birds, hunters are advised to skin birds and remove any fat deposits prior to cooking.

Large pheasant clutches and excellent survival of young birds should mean excellent hunting. Heavy wheat stubble and rank vegetation will provide an additional challenge. Quail populations are higher than they've been for three years. Hungarian partridge and chukar numbers are fair to good and birds are widely distributed. Huns, especially, appear to be more abundant this year. Fair populations of both blue and ruffed grouse are available in forested areas.

Waterfowl hunting success in Gilliam and Morrow counties will depend on receiving adverse weather. The rotten weather, the better the success on or near irrigation circles. Be sure to get permission on these private holdings.

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