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See Hundreds of Wild Elk

Hyrum -- You can take a sleigh ride that gets you close to as many as 600 wild elk.

The rides are available four days a week at the Hardware Ranch Wildlife Management Area.

On Dec. 9, more than 100 elk were at the WMA. Now that winter weather has arrived, more elk should be visiting the ranch soon.

Hardware Ranch is 17 miles east of Hyrum. Its winter elk viewing season begins Dec. 18. The WMA offers the following during its winter season:

Sleigh rides

Enjoy the sights and sounds of Utah's state mammal by taking a sleigh ride through a herd of up to 600 Rocky Mountain elk.

The sleigh rides last 20 to 30 minutes. They wind through the center of the elk herd and make occasional stops so you can get a perfect photograph.

During the rides, the sleigh drivers share the history of the ranch and explain why the elk behave like they do. They're also happy to answer questions you might have.

The sleighs are pulled by a team of large breed draft horses. If snow conditions get poor, the sleighs can be converted into wagons.

Visitor center

In addition to the sleigh rides, the Hardware Ranch WMA also operates a visitor center. The center has interactive wildlife displays and staff who can answer your questions.

When it's open

The WMA's winter season should run until March 15. The sleighs are running and the visitor center is open during the following days and times:

Friday – noon to 5 p.m.

Saturday – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Sunday – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday – noon to 5 p.m.

The WMA will be closed on Dec. 25.

If you want to take a ride through the elk herd, you must buy a ticket at the visitor center before 4:30 p.m. The last sleigh ride leaves at 4:30 p.m.

The sleigh rides cost \$5 for those nine years of age and older, and \$3 for those four to eight years old. Children three years of age and younger can ride for free.

How to get there

The Hardware Ranch WMA is located at mile marker 22 on SR-101 in Blacksmith Fork Canyon. The ranch is about 115 miles north of Salt Lake City (about a two-hour drive). It's about 17 miles east of Hyrum and 22 miles southeast of Logan.

Good lodging, food and entertainment are readily available in Cache Valley, within 45 minutes of the ranch. The roads up Blacksmith Fork Canyon are usually plowed and sanded by noon each day.

For more information about the Hardware Ranch WMA, call (435) 753-6206 or visit hardwareranch.com on the Web.

Hardware Ranch is a wildlife management area owned and operated by the Division of Wildlife Resources. It provides important big game winter range for elk, deer and moose.

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Contact: Marni Lee, Hardware Ranch WMA Assistant Manager at marnilee@utah.gov or (435) 753-6206

Bull Elk Killings in Central Utah

Price -- Wildlife officers have solved three bull elk poaching cases in east-central Utah. Now they need your help to solve seven more.

"The seven bulls were taken on the Central Mountains-Manti and the Wasatch Mountains bull elk hunting units in east-central Utah," says Casey Mickelsen, a sergeant with the Division of Wildlife Resources.

"Each of the bulls was killed illegally and then left to rot," says Ben Riley, another DWR officer who is investigating the shootings. "Each one that was lost means fewer hunting opportunities for hunters and fewer chances to see these bulls while camping and hiking."

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"We need the public's help to catch the people who killed these animals," Mickelsen says. If you have information, please call Mickelsen at (435) 820-6010. You are not have to give him your name.

Because most of the bulls that were killed are considered trophy animals under Utah state law, you might be eligible for a limited-entry elk bull permit for the 2010 season or a cash award if you have information that leads to an arrest and conviction.

In the photo that accompanies this story, conservation officers Brandon Baron, Casey Mickelsen and Ben Riley (L-R) are holding the sets of antlers from the three cases that have been successfully prosecuted. In front of them are the antler sets from the seven unsolved cases. (Each antler has a yellow tag next to it.):

#1 5x6 bull elk found on Oct. 18 on the Wasatch Mountains unit near Long Ridge in Utah County. Officers believe the elk was shot during the last week of the general-season spike elk hunt.

#2 Spike bull that was also found on Oct. 18 near Long Ridge in Utah County. Officers believe whoever killed the 5x6 bull killed this bull too. The person left the elk to rot.

#3 7x8 bull elk poached in October 2008 on Black Mountain in the Muddy drainage in Emery County. Although the bull was killed more than a year ago, officers haven't closed the case. They're still searching for clues that will lead to the arrest and conviction of the person who killed this trophy animal.

#4 5x6 bull elk poached in Seeley Canyon in Sanpete County during the first week of the 2009 general-season spike elk hunt. This elk may have been killed by a spike elk hunter who shot into a herd of elk. Officers think other hunters may have been in the area and may have witnessed the shooting.

#5 6x6 bull elk poached near the intersection of the Buck Flat all-terrain vehicle trail and the North Face Road on Ferron Mountain in Sanpete County. This bull was probably shot during the last few days of the 2009 general-season spike bull hunt. Whoever shot this bull dragged it behind an ATV and then covered it with branches and logs. Officers hope another hunter may have seen someone dragging an elk with an ATV.

#6 6x6 bull elk discovered on Sept. 28 on the Central Mountains-Manti unit near the Indian Creek drainage in Emery County. The elk was shot and left not far from the Spoon Creek trailhead. Officers believe the elk was killed during the last week of the early limited-entry elk hunt. A limited-entry elk hunter may have shot the animal and then left it to try to find an even bigger elk to kill.

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#7 6x6 bull elk poached during the overlapping 2009 muzzleloader deer/muzzleloader limited-entry bull elk hunt. The carcass was found in the canyon directly east of the Indian Creek Campground at the base of East Mountain in Emery County. Officers think a muzzleloader elk hunter may have shot the bull.

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Contact: Brent Stettler, DWR Southeastern Region Conservation Outreach Manager
(435) 613-3707 or (435) 613-3700

Become a Hunter Education Instructor

Training offered in Salt Lake City, Brigham City, Logan and Springville

Have you ever thought about sharing your passion for hunting with someone else?

You can by serving as a volunteer Hunter Education course instructor.

Starting in January, the Division of Wildlife Resources will train new instructors at classes in Salt Lake City, Brigham City, Logan and Springville.

The DWR will also hold classes in southern Utah this spring.

“You can make an amazing difference in the life of a young person by volunteering to serve,” says Kirk Smith, assistant hunter education coordinator for the DWR.

“And don’t be concerned if you don’t have any experience teaching young people. Our training will help prepare you to be a good Hunter Education instructor.”

The instructor training is free. More information about the training—including dates and locations—is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/huntereducation/instructors.

After reaching that part of the site, scroll down to the “See schedule” selection at the very bottom of the page. Dates and locations are available there.

“If you look at the schedule and you don’t see a training session in your part of the state, please call us,” Smith says. “If there’s enough interest in the area of the state where you live, we’ll put a training session together for you.”

You can reach Smith at 1-800-397-6999.

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Contact: Mark Hadley, DWR Relations with the Public Specialist (801) 538-4737