

Utah Wildlife News
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**Bull Elk Rifle and
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Sold Out**

Permits still available to hunt on extended archery areas

Permits to hunt bull elk with a rifle or muzzleloader in Utah sold out recently.

Permits to hunt on spike only units sold out on Sept. 24. Permits to hunt on any bull units sold out the morning of Sept. 25.

Last year, permits didn't sell out until Oct. 3.

Even though rifle and muzzleloader permits are gone, permits to hunt elk with a bow and arrow are still available. There's no limit on the number of general archery elk permits the Division of Wildlife Resources can sell, so there's no problem getting one.

Utah's general archery elk hunt ended across most of the state in early September, but hunts on the state's three extended archery areas will continue into December.

Extended archery areas are located along parts of the Wasatch Front, in parts of the Uintah Basin and in the Sanpete Valley.

More information about the extended archery areas is available on page 29 of the 2008 Utah Big Game Guidebook. The free guidebook is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks.

The guidebook is also available at DWR offices and from hunting license agents across Utah.

For more information, call the nearest Division of Wildlife Resources office or the DWR's Salt Lake City office at (801) 538-4700.

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

Are Anglers Keeping Too Many Cutthroats?

Checkpoint at Strawberry Reservoir nets interesting results

Wasatch County -- If there's one comment wildlife officers at Strawberry Reservoir hear time and again, it's "a guy at the fishing cleaning station had cutthroat trout that we're not allowed to keep. The fish were within the slot limit. I'm certain of it."

So what is the cutthroat trout slot limit at Strawberry Reservoir? Why does it matter? And how many anglers are breaking it?

Cutthroats at Strawberry

You may keep a total of four fish at Strawberry Reservoir. Those fish can be any combination of trout or kokanee salmon.

But there's also another rule: only two of the four fish can be cutthroat trout that are less than 15 inches in length. And only one can be a cutthroat trout that's more than 22 inches long.

You may not keep cutthroats that are between 15 and 22 inches long. All cutthroat trout from 15 to 22 inches must be released immediately.

Also, you may not fillet the trout and salmon you catch at Strawberry, or remove their heads or tails, until you get the fish home.

"This special limit on cutthroats is one of the main reasons Strawberry Reservoir is one of the best trout fishing waters in the country," says Alan Ward, the Division of Wildlife Resource's lead aquatic biologist at Strawberry.

"Bear Lake cutthroat trout are excellent chub eaters," Ward says. "They're the key to keeping the Utah chub population in the reservoir in check.

"If the chub population at Strawberry ever gets out of control, the fantastic fishing anglers have enjoyed at the reservoir for years will be gone forever."

So how are anglers at doing? Are they obeying a rule that's vital to ensuring that fishing at Utah's most popular fishery remains good for them and their kids and grandkids?

Recently, DWR and other law enforcement officers conducted a checkpoint at Strawberry. What they found provides some answers.

Checkpoint results

During the checkpoint, officers stopped and checked 346 vehicles. Of the anglers checked, just more than 3 percent of them (3.3 percent) were written a citation for committing some type of fishing violation.

That's slightly higher than the 2.5 percent compliance rate officers usually see at the reservoir.

"The results tell us that more than 96 percent of the anglers at Strawberry are obeying the law," Ward says. "We're very happy about that. But we won't be entirely happy until we get 100 percent compliance."

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Ward explains why it's so important to obey the fishing rules at Strawberry. "Anglers spend 1 million hours a year fishing at this award-winning reservoir. Because of the huge amount of pressure the water receives, it's absolutely vital that anglers obey the regulations," Ward says.

"It's really rewarding to see that our management strategy at Strawberry is working and to see the smiles on the faces of anglers who fish here," he says. "But we need the help of anglers to keep the reservoir one of the nation's best fisheries."

More information

More information about the cutthroat and rainbow trout in Strawberry, including easy ways to tell the difference between the two, is available in the DWR's free Strawberry Reservoir brochure.

The brochure is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov. You can access the brochure directly by typing www.wildlife.utah.gov/strawberry/pdf/strawberry_brochure.pdf into your Web browser.

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Contact: Alan Ward, DWR Strawberry Project Leader (435) 671-8600 or Sgt. Paul Davis, DWR Central Region Law Enforcement (435) 654-8676

Weather Wasn't Kind to Upland Game Birds

Quail and rabbits are doing well, though

A long, snowy winter and a hot, dry summer were not kind to upland game birds in Utah.

But don't give up hope. As Utah's upland game hunts get underway, there are some bright spots!

Utah's 2008 – 2009 upland game season started Aug. 23 with the white-tailed ptarmigan hunt. Since then, other hunts have started or will start soon.

Season dates for each of Utah's upland game hunts is available on pages 32 – 35 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook.

The free guidebook is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks. You can also obtain a copy at DWR offices and hunting license agents across Utah.

Quail

California and Gambel's quail are doing well in Utah this year. Both species are found in only a few areas in the state, but if you can find them, you should have some good hunting.

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One of the best places to find quail is the Uinta Basin in northeastern Utah. Parts of south-central and southwestern Utah, especially Millard County, also have good numbers of birds.

You'll typically find California quail on private property. Please remember that you must get written permission from landowners before entering their property.

Cottontail rabbits

Depending on where you hunt, you could find yourself in the middle of a bunch of cottontail rabbits this season.

Cottontail rabbits are known for their cyclic population patterns, which means the population will erupt and then crash over a certain period of time.

For that reason, you'll find different rabbit numbers in different areas of the state.

"Focus your efforts in northern, south-central and southwestern Utah," says Dave Olsen, upland game coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "That's where the state's rabbit populations are doing the best this year."

In other areas of the state, rabbit numbers are down a bit.

"A cottontail rabbit population cycle generally covers a 10-year period," Olsen says. "Rabbit numbers will build for a few years. Then they'll decline for a few years before they build again."

"In parts of central and northeastern Utah, rabbits appear to be headed into the downward side of that 10-year cycle."

Whether you're in an area that has lots of rabbits or just a few, you should still find enough rabbits to keep your kids interested. "Rabbit hunting is a great hunt for kids and families," Olsen says. "It's a good way to get your kids outdoors and give them a good chance for some fun shooting."

Other upland game birds

Olsen says the number of forest grouse and ring-necked pheasants available in Utah should be similar to last season.

Chukar and Hungarian partridge numbers should also be similar to last season. And last season, their numbers weren't that good.

"Even though most of the state received a good amount of snow and rain this past winter and spring, those storms missed much of the West Desert and other chukar and partridge areas in Utah," Olsen says.

"The West Desert has most of the chukar habitat in Utah," he says.

"Unfortunately, the poor water conditions in the desert did not produce the vegetation, insect life and water sources that chukars rely on."

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Reminders

Walk-In Access program

If you're looking for a new area to hunt, visit www.wildlife.utah.gov/walkinaccess. The Web site lists private land that's now open to public hunters through the DWR's Walk-In Access program.

"Most of this land is in northern Utah," Olsen says. "Those who work in the program are always looking for additional productive wildlife land to enroll in the program."

Olsen reminds you to remember your ethics and behavior when hunting on Walk-In Access areas.

"Landowners who allow the public to access their lands are providing sportsmen with a real courtesy," he says. "Each of us needs to do all we can to make sure landowners have a positive experience."

Birds with bands

Researchers have banded sage-grouse in certain parts of Utah.

If you're one of the 1,120 hunters who were lucky enough to get a permit for this season, you might also be among those who are lucky enough to take a bird with a band on it.

If you take a bird that's wearing a leg band or a telemetry radio transmitter, biologists need your help.

Two telephone numbers are listed under the "Attention chukar and sage-grouse hunters" heading on page 5 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook. Please call either of these numbers and report the band number to the person who answers the phone.

In return, the researcher you visit with will give you a summary of the bird's life history. That history includes where and when the bird was banded, its age and other information he has about the bird.

Keep track

Page 27 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook is a chart that lets you track your upland game hunting success this season. Olsen encourages you to make the form your hunting diary this season.

"After every hunting season, we randomly survey hunters by telephone," Olsen says. "If you use this chart to track your hunting success, you'll be ready to provide us the information we need to help us better manage Utah's upland game.

"It's also fun to track your success from year to year."

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Take a kid hunting

Olsen says upland game hunting is one of the best ways to introduce young people to a lifetime of hunting and outdoor activity.

“Upland game hunting is often the gateway that gets kids interested in Utah's outdoors and hunting,” Olsen says. “Remember how you got introduced to hunting and the outdoors, and return the favor—take a kid hunting with you this season.”

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

Apply for a Cougar Hunting Permit

Applications accepted until Oct. 6

If you want to hunt cougars on limited entry units in Utah this season, you need to get your application in soon.

Applications must be received at www.wildlife.utah.gov no later than 11 p.m. on Oct. 6.

If you need help completing your application, please call (801) 538-4700 no later than 6 p.m. on Oct. 6.

You'll be applying for a limited entry cougar permit. Permits to hunt on Utah's harvest objective units go on sale Nov. 6.

“If you draw a limited entry permit, you cannot buy a permit to hunt on a harvest objective unit,” says Judi Tutorow, wildlife licensing coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. “Before you apply for a limited entry permit, make sure a limited entry hunt is the hunt you want to participate in.”

More information about the two permits is available in the 2008 – 2009 Utah Cougar Guidebook. The guidebook is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks.

The guidebook is also available at DWR offices and from hunting license agents across Utah.

If you have questions about hunting cougars in Utah, please call the nearest Division of Wildlife Resources office. You can also call the DWR's Salt Lake City office at (801) 538-4700.

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