

# WESTERN HUNTING & FISHING NEWS

JULY 2026



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# ...A Guide To Finding The Perfect Backcountry Creekside Fishing Camp

Idaho Dept. Fish & Game <https://idfg.idaho.gov>

**Don't overlook that high-mountain stream or creek next time you're looking for a backcountry fishing adventure.**

The dog days of summer are upon us. As the mercury skyrockets and the sun broils us 15 hours a day, few things are more attractive than leaving town and heading into the mountains to dunk a line (and maybe some sweaty feet) into a newfound creek or stream.

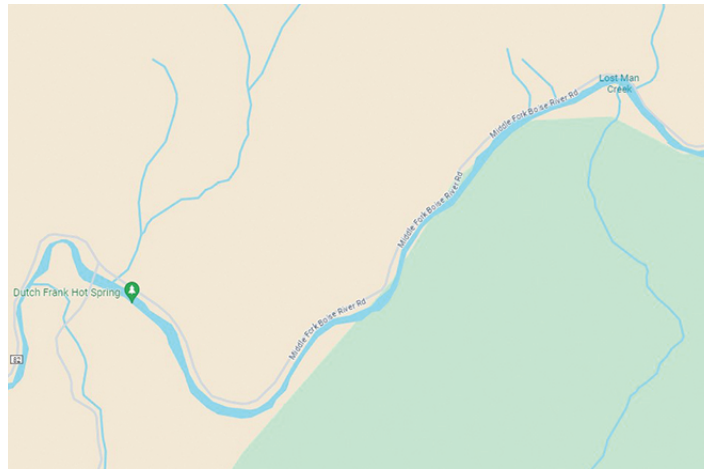
For anglers looking to escape the hustle and bustle of town, or potentially crowded lakes and reservoirs, mountain streams are a gateway to peace and quiet. Idaho is full of long, meandering river systems like the Boise, Big Wood, Salmon, Clearwater, and St. Joe that provide hundreds of easy, accessible fishing sites.

What's often overlooked are the headwaters and tributaries of those famous trout streams. They're typically teeming with trout, less crowded and provide an opportunity for solitude in the mountains.

Naming names would defeat the purpose of discovering backcountry streams.

It usually doesn't matter what its name is, or how narrow it is, chances are good there are fish to be caught and memories to be made.

If you're new to the concept of finding mountain streams to fish, here are some pointers to help find the perfect creekside fishing camp this summer.



## The long blue lines

Firstly, don't overlook those tiny streams trickling through meadows or snowmelt creeks flowing into larger rivers.

Often depicted as narrow, blue lines on a topographic map, these creeks and streams can provide ideal conditions for fish.

Using Google Earth, paper Forest Service maps or your favorite outdoor GPS app, pull up an area you're wanting to scope out.

Maybe drop in a nearby designated campground in the search bar for quick and easy directions.

Narrow in on widely used forest service roads that sometimes follow major waterways.

Now you've got a starting point. Oftentimes, main roads skirting along a river sprout side roads that traverse smaller creeks and provide any number of camping and pulloff opportunities.

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## Hot Tip:

You'll often hear experienced anglers talking about "pools" when it comes to fishing on flowing water. These barely moving, deep pockets along a waterway are where fish like to hang out most of the time.

Think knee- to chest-high water that you'd want to swim around in yourself.

When you're traveling along a road in search of a prime fishing spot, this should be the first feature you look for.

Lastly, before you embark on a weekend getaway into Idaho's deeper crannies, do your homework.

Look for roads that best suit your mode of transportation and comfort level, and follow those blue lines on the map.

Stick to wider, more-traveled dirt roads for passenger vehicles and 4x4, high-clearance mountain roads for more aggressive vehicles.

And just because a blue line on a map is pencil thin, doesn't mean it won't hold fish. A lot of times, it's where the bite is strongest.



### Bigger doesn't always mean better

When it comes to locating a creek or stream, bigger doesn't always mean better. By late summer, a lot of the spring runoff has slowed to a crawl and streambanks are exploding with green grasses and willows. Trout keep a watchful eye for any insect, ant or grasshopper that falls into the water and provides a quick meal.

While there are times when a hog of a trout winds up on the end of a high-country angler's line, the majority of fish found in mountain streams and creeks are going to be modest sized. But what they lack in size, they make up for in abundance and eagerness.

Lower sections of rivers can get uncomfortably hot for trout during summer; the upper elevations stay cool and the perfect temperature for trout, which keeps them active and feeding aggressively.

Fish in these waterways don't see the same level of angler effort that larger rivers and lowland lakes do. Their growing season is also a lot shorter. Oftentimes these ravenous fish will go after just about anything you throw in front of them. Anglers looking to head out on a backcountry fishing adventure in search of small streams and creeks should not be lugging along that 9-weight fly rod or a 25-pound test Chinook setup. Instead, you'll want to keep your setup as light as possible. Short, light and sensitive rods are the ticket for big fun catching small fish.



Photos courtesy Idaho Dept. Fish & Game <https://idfg.idaho.gov>

### Choose your weapon

There are two basic methods: fly rod or spin rod. Both are tried and true, and rely on different techniques to mimic fish food.

Spin rod fishing is slightly more affordable and a lot more approachable for newer anglers who are testing the waters. Not only are spinning rods durable, their compact design allows anglers to cast from even the brushiest of shorelines. (If you've snagged a \$10 lure on a pine branch it goes without saying).



A 5- to 7-foot spin rod with lightweight line (4-pound test is a good starting point) can be picked up at pretty much any sporting goods store.

A few aisles over and you'll be hit with an almost endless selection of lures, spoons, spinners and bait to choose from. Remember, keep it simple. Tying on a barrel swivel that connects to a spoon or spinner is a great way to get a fish's attention. Add a piece of worm to sweeten the deal. And keep in mind, alpine river fish like trout and whitefish aren't used to seeing the angler's same bag of tricks as say a 16-inch rainbow down at Arrowrock Reservoir. Dangle a little flashy lure or maybe a chunk of worm in front of their nose and they'll hit it like Conor McGregor.

**Hot Tip:** If fishing with young ones, let their budding fascination with bugs run wild. Letting your kids connect with nature by way of both fish and bait is a great way to instill outdoorsmanship in a young mind. If your little fishing buddy manages to capture a grasshopper or cricket, use it as bait to better your odds at attracting hungry fish.

Fly rods also provide a fun and challenging lesson in stream fishing. In general, a 7- to 9-foot-long fly rod spooled with 3- to 5-weight line is a good fit for alpine streams and creeks. Attach some 4X or 5X tapered leader to the end of your line, about 9 to 12 feet worth.

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# Why These Five Archery Elk Hunting Tips Will Transform Your Next Hunt

By Trail Kreitzer

Originally published at **GOHUNT**  GOHUNT.com

**F**ocus on the triangle for elk — food, water, bedding. One of the most commonly asked questions we get is, “How do I find elk?” ...

In essence, elk need all three — food, water, bedding — daily (the triangle theorem). Additionally, they’ll seek refuge from hunting pressure. We’re all getting better at evaluating a map and using the available tools to find what looks like great elk habitat, but the next step of that process is to discern where elk are likely to be after there’s some hunting pressure. Consider the trailhead, the roads and motorized trails, and where those are in relation to the best-looking habitat. If the access points are on the tops of the ridges, the elk are probably going to push off into the canyon bottoms. If the access points are in the canyons, they’re likely to move up into the timberline pockets in higher elevations. If there are tons of access, where are the pockets or barriers to entry? Find those and you’ll find elk.

Another tip is to find the glassing points and allow your binoculars to do the walking before you commit to an area. If the area is extremely thick, you’ll have to utilize calling to locate a bull. In those cases, cover ground with your ears — whether that’s driving at night and bugling or walking and bugling from ridges into drainages or high points. Use what the area gives you to locate elk. Lastly, you can do all the map work you want — and I’m certainly not saying you shouldn’t — but once you’re on the landscape, be observant. Always consider what elk need and use that to predict where the benches, saddles, feeding, and bedding areas are. Don’t be afraid to move to find elk. It’s not uncommon for my plans A, B, C, and even D to not produce, and in those scenarios, it’s easy to talk yourself into giving up and going home. Elk are big animals. They move and use the landscape on a much grander scale than I often think. Don’t be afraid to pick a spot based on your assessments and go for it.

An elk’s first line of defense is its nose. They’re social animals, especially during the rut. A herd of elk will make both a lot of noise and movement as they move across a landscape. They’re used to hearing sticks popping and seeing other elk moving through the timber, but they have no tolerance for human scent. That’s not to say they won’t bust you if you’re moving or if they hear your tromping through the timber, but always play the wind like your life depends on it.

To that point, you have to anticipate the thermals and the prevailing winds. You have to be cognizant of what the wind does when cloud cover rolls in periodically. In the mornings, cooler air moves downhill.

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Play the wind like your life depends on it



Photo credit Cody Boor courtesy GOHUNT.com

In the midmorning until late afternoon, the slope heats up, and the thermals will switch and begin rising uphill. Always think 30 to 60 minutes ahead so you’re in the right spot when the wind changes.

Your plan of attack has to keep the thermals and wind in mind. If the elk are moving uphill in the morning as they normally do, you’ll almost always have to come towards them horizontally in some fashion or chase them from below.

The same goes for evenings. If the air is still rising prior to it switching, you’ll have to come from above. Cloud cover will often cause unstable switching winds. If you’re in the middle of an approach, be aware of the cloud cover and plan accordingly. Overall, carry an ample amount of wind checker and use it incessantly.

Be one step ahead, predict where they are likely going and what the wind/thermals will be doing in the areas they are moving toward.

## **Read the herd temperament, match it, and be adaptable**

Ideally, you’ll have a bull bugle without having to engage him at all until you’re in his bedroom; however, if you haven’t heard one, you’ll have to try to get a response from a good listening or glassing point.

I’ll regularly test a cow call first to see if I can elicit a response. If I get a response from a cow call, I’m gauging the distance and location — and I’m probably going to stick with the cow call going forward, especially if he repeatedly sends out bugles as I sneak closer to the herd. If I don’t get a response with a cow call, I’ll utilize a locator bugle, which is a mid-volume, clean, three-note, four- to five-second bugle.

I’ll wait for a response and listen intently. Once a bull answers, I’ll move to close the gap, making sure to be aware of the wind and thermals as I make my approach.

The perfect scenario for me is that I don’t have to make another call until I am within about 100 yards.

One common mistake elk hunters make is that they fall in love with hearing the bull respond to their calls as they make their way towards the herd. In those cases, I think bulls often either push their cows away from the approaching bull (hunter) or they'll go silent because they don't necessarily want the competition. It's not always perfect, though, and in order to find the bull and close the distance as you go, you may have to use a locator call of some kind. My advice would be to call when necessary, but don't overdo it. Get close first if you can.

When I get within that 100-yard zone, I often open with softer cow calls and listen to his response. I try not to rush. I try to remain patient and read his temperament. He may amplify with some aggressive bugles — almost as if he's demanding that the cow come to him. In those situations, I'll add longer, whiny, cow elk calls and listen. He may also sound as if he's happy with his harem and not escalate with bugling or he may even begin to move away. At that point, I like to test him by adding a bugle, and I try to match his temperament. I may try to heighten the situation and add a chuckle or a more aggressive bull calling cow bugle. If he bugles aggressively back, I'll cut him off mid-bugle with my own excited bugles and chuckles. There's a lot of emotion conveyed in a bull's bugle. Try to read it and match it. I don't know that there's an exact playbook for calling in bulls. I think where the magic lies is in being able to listen and respond with what that bull, on that day, is most interested in. Be adaptable and don't give up.

I've often trailed bulls for miles in the morning, getting within 100 yards only to have them walk off, seemingly leaving me in their dust. Eventually, the herd will slow up as they approach their desired bedding area, and I have called bulls back in and killed them. Sometimes it's been in response to what they believe is a trailing cow, or sometimes an annoying satellite bull that just won't leave. The key is to listen, be adaptable, give them what they need, and don't give up!

**Know your shooting lane & range before you draw**  
Finding elk is hard. Getting into close proximity is very difficult. And making the shot actually count can seem next to impossible. One of — if not the biggest — reasons why I've missed shots is due to miscalculations in the range and not picking my shooting lanes.

Additionally, in my experience, it's been rare when a bull has naturally paused in a shooting lane and allowed me to draw and execute a shot. Mostly, I've had to recognize the travel route the bull is likely to take, then be observant and assess the situation as it develops to know when I can draw my bow without being detected. Then, I've had to stop them with a chirp or cow call when they are in a good spot to execute a shot. Prior to that entire scene playing out, I would have ideally ranged several trees, rocks or brush to gauge those distances and made a mental note of them.

(continued on page 35)



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# Managing Heat On Summer Hunts

By Josh Kirchner

Originally published at **GOHUNT**  GOHUNT.com

As the days tick by, we get closer and closer to the nearly fall hunting seasons. Soon, we'll be hitting the mountains and scratching that ever familiar itch that never seems to subside. For me, this all starts with a certain smell. Now, hold on and let me explain myself. When a certain time of year hits here in the desert and the summer air blows through the junipers it's like an alarm clock goes off for me. That very smell of warm juniper air mixed with the rain scent that comes from the creosote bush wakes me up. It tells me that summer scouting is in full effect and the early fall hunts are not far behind.

One of the biggest battles during this time of scouting and hunting is the heat, especially if you live in the desert like we do down here. Sometimes, it can get downright brutal and even unsafe if you aren't careful. If a hunter spends some time tromping the desert floor for years on end, they are bound to come up with a few tips and tricks for dealing with the summer heat. Dealing with scorching temperatures is a necessary evil if you are looking to be out and about this time of year. Here are some things I've personally learned living in cactus country.



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## Shade Is Key

The most obvious thing to make sure you are doing during the dog days of summer is finding shade. The sun is just relentless during this time and we've got to do what we can to manage its take on us. The shade is going to take the stress of the beating sun off of you and give you some relief. I try to map out my glassing locations based on where shade is. Doing so lets me stay there for longer periods of time, which means more time behind the glass.

Not only am I paying attention to trees and such, but also bluffs. A hunter can squeak out quite a few hours up against a shaded bluff, which is nice.

Plus, those rocks in the shade are oftentimes cool from the night's temperatures. The critters that like to bed up against these rim rocks have got it figured out. We can learn a thing or two from them. However, sometimes there is no shade. So, what do we do then?

## Create Your Own Shade

If you find yourself in a burned area or the barren desert, sometimes, there is little to no shade in sight. On top of us trying to stay cool, we've got to keep in mind where the animals are. If the best place for us to keep tabs on that area from has no shade, it's time to get creative. Carrying a small tarp with you in your pack is a great option for creating your own shade. They are lightweight and set up quickly. This is also great for when those summer monsoon storms roll in and you might need shelter from the rain. There are also small umbrellas that will attach to your tripod for glassing. I have never personally used one of these, but it's a great option. Aside from tarps and umbrellas, we've also used clothing tied off to tripod legs for shade believe it or not. You've got to do what you got to do out there!

## Should I Wear Sunscreen?

As hunters, many of us tend to be super cognizant of our scent. Anything that we can do to evade the searching noses of our quarry is usually in our best interest. I don't blame anyone for this. In the case of western hunting, this can be especially, though, and scent control is one of those things that almost becomes a moot point. Right when we leave the truck and start hiking, we are building up sweat and stench no matter how much of that spray you applied to your clothing beforehand. Where am I going with this? Well, this article is about dealing with the sun and the blistering heat that comes from that thing. Wearing sunscreen might be something that hunters turn their nose up to, but down here in the desert, you'd be smart to give it a good thinking before doing such a thing. I have routinely in the past carried a small bottle of SPF 50 from Sawyer in my pack. Even if that's just to put on the back of my neck or face. Better to smell like sunscreen and work the wind than get beat up by the sun and work the wind.

Aside from sunscreen, though, I personally try to keep covered up out there as much as possible. Call me crazy, but on hunts, I don't like wearing short-sleeved shirts, shorts or no hat.

I'm usually covered from head to toe with the hood up and all or at least a hat on. The hood is nice, though, because it protects the back of my neck from the sun. The same routine goes for my hands. Either I've got my thumbs in the thumb holes with the sleeve covering most of my hand or I've got a very lightweight glove on. Personally, I think this is good practice anyway if bowhunting. Covering up as much skin as possible is just less that can be seen. Some folks don't believe in camo, but I do 100%.

### Hydrate and Hydrate Some More!

Do not, I repeat DO NOT take water for granted out there in the summer. You absolutely need to make sure that you are staying hydrated. With all of the sweat that is pouring out of your body from the heat, replenishing that is vital. If you find yourself all of a sudden not sweating, you better start taking in some water. This means that you are dehydrated and on your way to heatstroke. It's best to stop that right in its tracks as heat stroke is some nasty business. Every year, people get helicoptered out of areas and some even die from dehydration during the summer months. Drink water and don't become a statistic. On summer hunts I won't even consider a 2L bladder. I'm rocking a 3L without a doubt and make sure that sucker is full before I leave camp in the morning.

On top of drinking water, I also think it's super important to mix in some electrolytes to replenish those.

Wilderness Athlete Hydrate and Recover is something that I carry in my backpack religiously for this reason.

At the end of the day, I'll shoot this down with dinner. It hasn't done me wrong and breaks up the monotony of drinking only water.

### Know Your Limits

Ever heard someone say, "I bit off way more than I can chew" or "My eyes were bigger than my stomach?" Well, these pertain to what we're about to talk about next and that is knowing your limits. Each and every one of us are different and can handle different degrees of punishment. In this case, we're talking about the sun, but the idea runs the gamut with hunting. Knowing your limits is really just about being honest with yourself. Don't worry what someone else's limits are because those are theirs and theirs alone. Those aren't going to help you come game day. Pay attention to your body and when it needs certain things. Some folks have to drink way more water than others. Personally, I know I am not one of those people. I'll drink a liter, maybe two, a day, and am fine. My wife, though? She'll pound through a 3L and then come to start drinking my water.

Another reason for knowing your limits comes down to safety. There are more than a few people out there that can be super hard-headed—myself included. Sometimes that hard-headedness gets me in trouble because I'm just being stubborn instead of listening to myself and looking at the overall situation at hand. Hunters tend to be a somewhat macho group from time to time. That, too, will get you in trouble if not careful. If you've got to take a break during a hike to gather yourself, don't feel less of yourself for doing so. Listen to your body.



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# What Should Be In Your Truck Before Elk Season Starts

By Ted Ramirez Jr.  
Caribou Gear Outdoor Equipment Co.  
[www.caribougear.com](http://www.caribougear.com)

Most elk hunters spend a lot of time preparing packs, optics, boots, and clothing before season.

Fewer spend the same amount of time organizing the truck.

But the truck is where most hunts start and where every packout eventually ends.

A good truck setup makes difficult situations easier to manage once fatigue, weather, recovery work, and meat care all start happening at the same time.

## The Truck Is Part of the Hunt

Most problems during elk season are not dramatic.

### They are small failures that compound:

- dead headlamps
- missing straps
- no gloves left
- empty water jugs
- disorganized coolers
- wet gear with nowhere to go

The hunters who stay organized at the truck usually recover faster once the hunt gets difficult.

## Meat Care Gear

Every truck should already have the basics ready before opening morning:

- game bags
- coolers
- clean water
- latex or nitrile gloves
- contractor bags for dirty gear
- paper towels
- basic cleaning supplies
- headlamps with extra batteries
- rope or hanging cord

### See game bag systems:

<https://www.caribougear.com/collections/game-bags>

## Repair and Backup Gear

Most elk hunts involve equipment failures eventually.

Keeping basic repair supplies at the truck prevents small issues from ending the hunt early.

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### Useful backup gear includes:

- zip ties
- duct tape
- electrical tape
- multi-tool
- extra boot laces
- pack buckles
- spare release or archery tools
- small tire inflator
- basic first-aid supplies

## Recovery and Road Problems

Road conditions change quickly during elk season.

Snow, mud, dead batteries, and rough trailheads can create problems before the hunt even starts.

### Good truck systems usually include:

- tow straps
- jump pack or cables
- shovel
- tire chains when appropriate
- air compressor
- extra fuel when necessary
- work gloves
- rain gear kept separate from hunting gear

## Water, Cleanup, and Organization

Clean water becomes important quickly during packouts.

Hunters often underestimate how useful dedicated cleanup supplies become once meat, mud, blood, rain, and gear all start piling into the truck.

### Simple organization systems help:

- labeled bins
- dedicated cooler space
- dry bags for wet gear
- trash bags
- separate food storage
- clean tarp space for sorting loads

### See Hunting Tarps:

<https://www.caribougear.com/collections/hunters-tarps>

## What to Check Before Opening Morning

Before the first hunt starts, most truck systems should already answer a few basic questions:

- Are coolers clean and ready?
- Do headlamps have fresh batteries?
- Are gloves, tags, and licenses easy to find?
- Is recovery gear accessible?
- Are meat-care supplies separated from dirty gear?
- Is there enough water at the truck?

Good organization before season usually prevents rushed decisions later.

## Elk Hunting Truck Checklist FAQ

### Why does truck organization matter during elk season?

The truck becomes the staging point for recovery gear, meat care, weather problems, repairs, and packout organization.

### What meat-care gear should stay in the truck?

Game bags, coolers, gloves, water, ropes, cleaning supplies, lighting, and tarp systems are all useful to keep ready before the season starts.

### Should hunters keep backup repair gear in the truck?

Yes. Small failures during elk season are common, and basic repair supplies can prevent unnecessary problems in the field.

### What is the biggest truck mistake before elk season?

Most hunters simply wait too long to organize the system before opening day.

### See hunting gear here:

<https://www.caribougear.com/collections/hunting-gear>

## Blackfoot River Closure Below Weigh Station Fishing Access Projected To Begin Mid-July

MFWP <https://fwp.mt.gov>

The Blackfoot River, from Weigh Station Fishing Access Site downstream to the point where the river crosses under Interstate 90, is projected to be closed for public safety related to railway bridge repairs beginning mid-July...

The BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) project includes building a temporary work bridge, and the construction equipment and work will impact enough of the river to make passage through the area unsafe...Small boats and tubes can still be carried in at the Milltown State Park Confluence Area as usual, just downstream of the upcoming closed area. The first public access site with a full boat launch downstream of the closure on the Clark Fork River is Sha-Ron Fishing Access Site (FAS). Upstream on the Blackfoot River, Weigh Station FAS is the last takeout above the closed area. The project will also impact part of the Gateway Trail that connects the state park's Confluence and Gateway areas...The trail will be open at both ends, but it will be closed in a small middle section for equipment use...FWP will provide more specifics in July ahead of the river closure. Signs will be posted at access sites along the river and updated online and in the news...



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# Elk Hunting Fundamentals: Elk Calling Strategies

By Zach Lazzari  
Table Mountain Outfitters  
<https://www.tablemountainoutfitters.com>

**E**lk season is coming and it's time to hone in calling techniques while strategizing for the hunts ahead.

At Table Mountain Outfitters, they have the benefit of hunting unpressured elk that can respond to a variety of calling strategies during archery and even rifle season. For their hunters and guides, it can be a thrilling experience.

If you're hunting with them this year, they look forward to seeing you. Their guides will be the primary callers, putting you in position to make a shot. In most elk hunting situations, the shooter does not do any calling. Instead, the caller (in this case, your guide) draws the attention of the elk, freeing up the shooter to draw their bow and make a shot.

But no matter where you're hunting this year, they thought it might be interesting to outline some fundamental elk calling strategies. Whether you're hunting with them in Wyoming this year or elsewhere, here's a brief look at what you can expect.

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Photo courtesy Table Mountain Outfitters <https://www.tablemountainoutfitters.com>

## Adapt to the Situation

Every elk hunter has a different approach to calling and some insist on doing things a certain way every time. If the formula works, go ahead and press forward. However, approaching calling with some flexibility can really increase the odds of success. Elk respond differently during various phases of the rut and reading the situation can factor into success.

For example, challenge calls will often elicit a vocal response late in the rut. However, just because a bull responds, that doesn't mean he will move within range. Talking is fun, but it doesn't make sense if the bulls won't budge. Dropping the bugle and focusing on cow calls might get a bull to move in this scenario.

Having a wide range of tones and calling abilities will make you more effective in the field. What's more, elk don't always read the script the way we plan it. Whenever you're hunting elk – and especially in calling situations – expect the unexpected. Stay flexible and patient.

## Locator Calls

Bugling in high-pressure areas is not always effective but you still need to find elk. Table Mountain hunters have the luxury of avoiding pressure but locator calls remain relevant. A locator is generally a single bugle made in an attempt to generate a response. It's not about having a conversation or calling a bull into range but more about figuring out where that bull is living.

Use locator calls in the early mornings, evenings and even at night, and use them sparingly. Call once, wait and listen. When you get that response, note the location and make a plan to get closer. Locator calls can quickly narrow down an area and help you focus on specific terrain.

## Challenge Bugles

Once a bull is located, a challenge bugle can be a highly effective calling technique. It can be effective during the immediate pre-rut and early rut phase when bulls are searching for cows and competing for territory. However, it's best used when in very close proximity to a worked up bull – close enough to make him feel threatened by the challenger. If a challenge

is issued at too great a distance, the bull might just round up his cows and leave.

In these situations it's best to locate a bull first, either by glassing or listening. With a known location, hunters can get as close as possible with the wind in their favor, ideally within a hundred yards. With the gap closed, give a few soft cow calls, trying to elicit a bugle. When he does, belt out a challenge in response. This can be done in combination with raking and breaking branches. If the bull is motivated, be ready. He may come charging in hard.

Even if he doesn't respond vocally, be ready. He may come in silently to inspect the intruder. This is especially important for the shooter. While your guide is calling, stay patient and don't move. Unless your guide tells you to get up and move, stay put. It might seem like an eternity. But in these situations, a cool head and patience often pays off.

### Cow Calls

Calling elk plays on their instinct to fight or breed and cow calls appeal to that breeding instinct. If a bull has cows, he may not respond to bugles as readily. In these situations, he already has a harem and fighting might not be in his best interests. However, adding a few more cows to the mix might be enticing. Cow calls could help to close the deal.

Just like a challenge bugle, it helps to be as close as possible. A bull with a harem will be hesitant to leave them and go very far. Using the wind, get as close as you can. Just remember that it's not only the bull's eyes and nose that you have to fool. Those cows will be on full alert.

### Go Silent

If the elk are bugling and making noise, consider going dead silent. Find a glassing location and get eyes on them to strategize a stalk. A silent approach is especially effective when they become call-shy or when a herd bull doesn't want to leave his harem. It still pays to have a cow call ready during the stalk. You may need it to pull that bull away from his group of cows. Regardless, if you have the elk pinned down, get as close as possible before making a peep.

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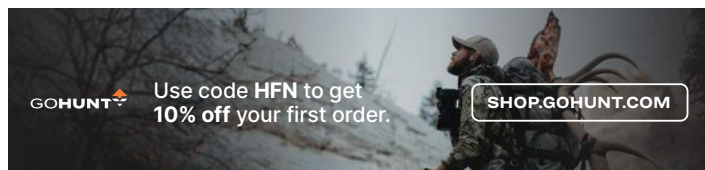
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Photos courtesy Northland Fishing Tackle <https://www.northlandtackle.com>

## Summertime Bass Fishing System

Northland Fishing Tackle <https://www.northlandtackle.com>

**S**weet summertime, long days, sun shining, warm water, and the bass are feeding! Now is the time to get out and do some bass fishing on your favorite lake or river. If you are new to bass fishing, or maybe going to a new body of water, here is a quick summertime bass fishing break down, which all can be done by following this summer bass fishing system

Out of the gate, you want to cover some water. By doing this, you can eliminate unproductive water, whether that be a certain depth range, or certain types of fish holding cover. If you fish something and it doesn't produce a bite, keep on moving.



One of the best ways to cover water is with a crankbait, and based on the depth of water you are trying to hit, there is a Northland Elite Series Crankbait for it.

On most lakes, the bass will be out in deeper water where the water is cooler, so a deep diving crankbait, like the Pro Sunny B Deep is a great choice. Give this bait a toss across main lake weed points, parallel to inside turn weedlines, or perhaps over a windblown flat.

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Pro Sunny B Deep (Hot Claw Crawdad)



Sunny B (Crooked Crawdad)

If the bass are shallower, maybe cruising the inside weedline, or if the lake or river you are fishing isn't as deep, then you can go to the Elite Series Sunny B, or Shallow Sunny B. Regardless of the model, or diving depth, starting off with a crankbait helps you identify potential fish holding areas.



Now, once you find a spot that you have gotten a few bites on, you can bring out the big guns, either a) to fire up the school, or b) to catch the biggest bass from the get-go. This means tossing out the Minnesota Mullet.

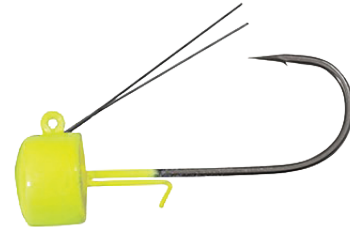
A big hair jig like the Mullet, many times right away will ignite a school of offshore bass, as they want to compete for that big meal that is going by their faces. Or if the school is small, you can usually get the biggest fish in that school to bite right away, as they may not eat much during the summer, if it is the middle of the day, so when they do eat, they want to eat something that fills them up!

Ok, so now you found the school of bass, and you whaled on them with the Mullet (hopefully), and either have caught a pile of them, or just a few big ones, now you want to slow down and pick apart that key fish holding spot.

This spot could be a good clump of coontail, or maybe a hard bottom spot that is nestled right up to the vegetation, regardless, you want to make some casts with a slower, more precise presentation to see if there are still some active bass in that school.

A jig worm or Ned Rig is a great way to target bass on weedlines, or open water, as you can change up the weight of your Elite Series Nedster Jig based on the depth of water, and cover you are fishing.

Most of the time the 3/16 oz size is a great place to start, and it pairs nicely with a compact plastic bait, like a 3" X Zone Lures Ned Zone. Don't be worried if the bait gets hung up in the grass, just give your rod a quick pop, and when your Nedster pulls free from the grass, a bass will likely grab it and start swimming away with it, so be ready!



Elite Series Weedless Nedster



Elite Series Nedster

Another great presentation to pick apart a fish holding spot, whether it is shallow or deep, is with the Elite Series Weedless Wacky Jig. If you are fishing shallower areas, like an inside weedline, or isolated clumps of grass, you can use the 1/16 oz jig to help get added casting distance with your wacky rigged Senko. Or if you are Neko rigging that Senko to a deeper water school of bass holding on a coontail clump, you can bump up to the 3/16 oz size.



Now, get off the couch and out of the AC, and get out on the water, as there are plenty of days left to take advantage of the summertime bass bite!

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# Bringing Watercraft Into Montana

MFWP <https://fwp.mt.gov>

Planning to Bring Watercraft into Montana?

## INSPECTION REQUIRED

All watercraft entering Montana are required to be inspected for aquatic invasive species. You must obtain an inspection before launching on Montana waters. Stop at all open inspections stations you encounter...

Boats with a ballast or bladder, such as wakeboard or wake-surfing boats, that intend to launch on Montana waters must be decontaminated before launching.

While planning your trip to Montana, if you find you will not encounter a watercraft inspection station on your way to your destination, Idaho, Wyoming, and Alberta inspection stations fulfill the before-launch requirements of Montana.

Stop at ALL open inspection stations you encounter in Montana where your watercraft may be re-inspected.

## PURCHASE VESSEL AIS PREVENTION PASS

Non-resident watercraft launching in Montana must purchase a Vessel AIS Prevention Pass (AISPP). Purchase the Vessel AISPP at FWP regional offices or online...Proof of purchase can be electronic (cell phone) or paper receipt, there is no decal.

Motorized watercraft fee is \$30.

Required for all motorized watercraft, including sailboats, powered by a fuel or electric motor.

Nonmotorized watercraft fee is \$10.

Required for all nonmotorized watercraft (both hard/rigid and inflatable) including drift boats, canoes, kayaks, rafts, catamarans, row boats, pedal boats, stand-up paddle boards, fishing pontoon boats and other similar vessels.

- Vessel AISPP is NOT required for inner tubes, water sports toys, windsurfers/sailboards and air mattresses.
- The Vessel AISPP expires on December 31.
- The Vessel AISPP is not transferable between vessels...
- It is illegal to transport aquatic invasive species, dead or alive, within the state of Montana. Aquatic invasive species can be plants, animals or diseases. MCA80-7-1010
- All watercraft being transported in the state of Montana must stop at all open watercraft inspection stations. MCA80-7-1011
- It is illegal to transport surface water in the State of Montana. ARM 12.5.706(e)
- All aquatic vegetation must be removed from watercraft and trailers prior to transport. ARM12-5-706(d)
- All watercraft must be inspected prior to launch in the State of Montana. ARM 12-5-706(b)...

**Questions?** Call 406-444-2440.

# Small Fish To Fry: Anglers Encouraged To Keep Small Walleye On Canyon Ferry

MFWP <https://fwp.mt.gov>

Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Walleyes Unlimited of Montana want to remind walleye anglers to keep more of the smaller fish they catch on Canyon Ferry Reservoir. With fewer small fish in the reservoir, larger fish will face less competition for food and will have the opportunity to grow.

The first walleye in Canyon Ferry Reservoir was captured in 1989 during rainbow trout fall netting. Since then, walleye have become a very popular target species in the reservoir. Walleye populations in Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter reservoirs are self-sustaining, or not supplemented through stocking, and require intensive active management to maintain a balanced fishery.

Current walleye fishing regulations on Canyon Ferry allow for 10 fish daily, with only 1 over 15 inches, and a possession limit of twice the daily limit. This management strategy focuses on keeping smaller size fish in check to benefit the overall population size structure.

“By focusing harvest on more abundant, smaller fish, biologists hope to increase the number of large walleye in Canyon Ferry,” said FWP Fish Chief Adam Strainer. “FWP and Walleyes Unlimited have a shared goal of maintaining a healthy walleye fishery for anglers to enjoy now and into the future.”

“I’m encouraged by the current walleye population trend on Canyon Ferry,” said Dale Gilbert, a Walleyes Unlimited of Montana member. “Walleye size in Canyon Ferry is improving with the current management strategy, so anglers must do their part by keeping more walleye under 15 inches to ensure the population remains on its current, positive trajectory”.

Under the 2020–2029 Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan, active walleye management — such as liberal fishing regulations — could be necessary to meet management goals. Those goals are intended to maintain walleye abundance to reduce impacts to other species while maintaining desirable size classes in the walleye fisheries.

Note — Dale Gilbert has been involved with development of the Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan since the 1990s and is currently a member of the Fish and Wildlife Commission -appointed Upper Missouri River Citizens Advisory Committee.



Photo credit Rapala [https://www.rapala.com/us\\_en/rapala](https://www.rapala.com/us_en/rapala)

## The New VMC Snitch Jig Will Get Walleye Anglers Talking

Rapala [https://www.rapala.com/us\\_en/rapala](https://www.rapala.com/us_en/rapala)

With a name that nods to the guarded secrecy with which cagey walleye anglers protect their favorite spots, the new VMC® Snitch Jig is sure to provide plenty of reasons for anglers to keep their lips sealed. It's a good thing jigs can't talk.

The new VMC Snitch Jig is a noisy, flashy, and versatile addition to the walleye angler's arsenal. It features a unique sculpted blade that rotates effortlessly against the bead stopper, even at super slow speeds, making it ideal for pitching, drifting, or jiggling.

The Snitch Jig features a weight-forward teardrop shaped head to maximize water flow to the blade which makes the blades turn at the slowest of speeds. As the blades spin, they effortlessly emit wicked vibration and flash, like a dinner bell for a walleye.

The Snitch jig was made for use with live crawlers, but is also extremely effective with finesse plastics (both TPE and PVC) such as CrushCity® Mooch Minnow or Mayor™. A mono keeper keeps baits pinned to the shaft.

The Snitch Jig comes in 10 eye-catching colors: Blue Fire (UV Bright), Fathead, Iridescent Shiner, Voodoo Haze, Chartreuse, Firetiger, Natural, Chartreuse Orange, Fruit Punch, and Pink Sunrise.



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Mercury 175XL Pro XS

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Mercury 75ELPT

Shoreland'r Bunk Trailer

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Photos credit Northland Fishing Tackle <https://www.northlandtackle.com>

# Fishing Cabbage For Walleyes

Northland Fishing Tackle <https://www.northlandtackle.com>

**W**eed-bound walleyes are a worthy adversary given the traditional means we often use to pursue that species. A few hours of fishing cabbage, or playing in the weeds send most anglers to the relatively snag-free depths, where the worst hang-ups are caused by snail shells or clams. Rocks at least stay put, and typically only come up a few feet off the bottom. For these reasons and others, many anglers, and I included, have a hard time preferring to switch to weed bites. It's seemingly so much simpler to fish bare hooks, keep your sinker off the bottom, and stay away from the stringy stuff that can plague your tackle.

Ignoring weedy walleyes however is a mistake I've learned to correct over time, especially when there's a good wind headed for well-developed patches of the walleye-favored cabbage. Coontail beds are a close second, with both weed species holding resident walleyes nearly year-round. When the wind kicks up, walleyes get the best of all circumstances in being shallow with more meal choices, along with the competitive predatory advantage of reduced light levels and mixing water.

Always curious about how other anglers tackle weedy eyes, I recently chatted up Brett McComas, editor of Target Walleye and competitive walleye angler in his own right. We traded a few nuggets, as he detailed his favorite weedy walleye bite that's put him at the top of the heap in a few recent events. The beauty of it is the simplicity, and similarity to how so many live-bait rigging fans prefer to chase walleyes already.

## Location, Location, Location

Brett mentioned a few keys to the bite, however, and the first starts with location. "This is a shallower

pattern, usually anywhere from 9' – 14', with emergent or barely submerged cabbage beds all around and shallower. You're looking for a complex of weeds that hold bait and inactive walleyes, but also for the areas just off of the "wall" where cabbage comes up anywhere from 6-8' below the surface," says McComas. These areas hold fish that are actively eating, and maybe hiding just below the tops of those weeds.

## Weeds Love Wind

Brett also highlights the other major component of the tactic, which is a good wind. Shallow fish present an interesting opportunity in that they're typically more willing to eat than be resting, especially with a bit of wind. That said, cabbage thrives in relatively clear water lakes, and walleyes directly under-boat will spook without that very wind that both kicks the bite in gear and helps to hide your craft. McComas says, "One way to get away with borderline conditions is to simply let out more line and put your presentation further from the boat. It requires a bit more finesse to keep from tangling and snagging, but gives you the best opportunity to put your bait in front of fish that haven't been pushed around."

## Bass Tackle for Walleyes



Ultimately, this technique is all about rigging. Start with a 1/8 oz. bass-style bullet-nose sinker (1/4 oz. if really windy), then a bead, tied off to the smallest swivel you can find. Tungsten is preferred if you have it, mostly because of how small and unobtrusive it is in those sizes. "This sounds ultra-light, but remember that this is a shallow-water deal, so you'll need plenty of line out behind the boat to keep from spooking fish," mentions McComas. "A thin, braided mainline let me snap the rig out of cabbage leaves if it gets stuck and feel bites with lots of line out. If your hook snags the stalk of the weed, you'll likely have to pluck the whole thing out of the bottom."

McComas continues, "This is one of the few techniques where I think it's important to use a monofilament leader instead of fluorocarbon, simply because fluoro sinks and I don't want my bait dragging on the bottom if I drop down to super-slow speeds. I like using a 48" leader (usually 10-lb, not less), as anything longer seems to get wrapped up in the cabbage stalks too often." As for hooks, it's time to downsize a bit. "I drop down to a #6 or #4 Octopus Hook, or a #8 or #6 Walleye Wide-Gap Hook for the great hook-up ratios, yet streamlined shape that pulls through the weeds better than you might expect."

## Live Bait vs. Soft Plastics

As for the business end of the rig, McComas favors live leeches, as they're cleaner and can be rigged more quickly, but also mentions that "a worm-blower

enhanced 'crawler usually gets more bites." The beauty of this technique is that when soft plastics become necessary due to bait-stealing-bluegills, the life-like leech and nightcrawler imitations are just as, if not more, productive than their real-life counterparts. "You almost have to fish them in areas with lots of 'gills," says McComas, adding that "they work just as well if the speed is bumped up a bit."

Soft plastic leeches and crawlers can also be rigged in a variety of ways, from nearly weedless Texas-rigging options to slow-death styles that cause the bait to spin seductively in the water. Whether you use live bait or the next best (often better) thing, this is a pattern that's the prime time right now, but as McComas says, it "targets a certain population of fish that will be in the cabbage all year round, which are usually your better fish in the lake."

## Ocean Salmon Fishing At Ilwaco, Westport-Ocean Shores, La Push, And Neah Bay (Marine Areas 1, 2, 3, And 4) Opened June 20

Washington Dept. Of Fish & Wildlife <https://wdfw.wa.gov>

Recreational anglers will have the opportunity to reel in a salmon off the Washington coast beginning June 20 at Ilwaco, Westport-Ocean Shores, La Push, and Neah Bay (Marine Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4).

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) approved a recreational Chinook catch quota of 54,000 fish, up slightly from last year's quota of 53,750. The PFMC, which establishes fishing seasons in ocean waters three to 200 miles off the Pacific coast, also adopted a quota of 102,900 hatchery-marked coho for this year's recreational ocean fishery up from last year's quota of 99,720.

"These quotas represent strong forecasts for key Chinook and coho stocks that drive fisheries off the Washington coast and should provide good recreational fishing opportunity in the ocean this summer," said Kyle Adicks, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) intergovernmental salmon manager.

WDFW may use in-season management to sustain season length and keep harvest within the overall Chinook and hatchery-marked coho recreational total allowable catches in all four marine areas. These areas could close earlier if the respective guideline or quota is met.

### Season details are listed below:

#### Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco)

Open seven days per week beginning June 20 to Sept. 30. The daily limit is two salmon, and only one may be a Chinook. Anglers must release wild coho. The Chinook minimum size is 22 inches, and the hatchery-marked coho minimum size is 16 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. The Columbia River Control Zone is closed to salmon fishing, except from the north jetty when adjacent waters north of the Control Zone are open to salmon fishing or the Buoy 10 fishery is open to salmon fishing.

The Marine Area 1 Chinook guideline is 16,780 (16,600 in 2025) and the hatchery coho quota is 51,450 (49,860 in 2025).

#### Marine Area 2 (Westport-Ocean Shores)

Open seven days per week beginning June 20 to June 28. The daily limit is one salmon. Anglers must release all coho. The Chinook minimum size is 22 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. Open seven days per week beginning June 29 to Sept 30. The daily limit is two salmon, and only one may be a Chinook. Anglers must release wild coho. The Chinook minimum size is 22 inches, and the hatchery-marked coho minimum size is 16 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. The Marine Area 2 Chinook guideline is 21,910 (22,270 in 2025) and the hatchery coho quota is 38,070 (36,900 in 2025).

Salmon fishing seasons in Willapa Bay (Marine Area 2-1), Grays Harbor (Marine Area 2-2), and Westport Boat Basin and Ocean Shores Boat Basin, will be listed in the 2026-2027 Washington Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet.

#### Marine Area 3 (La Push)

Open seven days per week beginning June 20 to June 30. The daily limit is one salmon. Anglers must release all coho. The Chinook minimum size is 24 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. Open seven days per week beginning July 1 to Sept. 30. The daily limit is two salmon. Anglers must release wild coho. The Chinook minimum size is 24 inches, and the hatchery-marked coho minimum size is 16 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. Anglers must release chum beginning Aug. 1.

The Marine Area 3 Chinook guideline is 2,200 (2,280 in 2025) and the hatchery coho quota is 2,680 (2,590 in 2025).

#### Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay)

Open seven days per week beginning June 20 to June 30. The daily limit is one salmon. Anglers must release all coho. The Chinook minimum size is 24 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. Open seven days per week beginning July 1 to Sept. 30. The daily limit is two salmon. Anglers must release wild coho. The Chinook minimum size is 24 inches, and the hatchery-marked coho minimum size is 16 inches. Other salmon species have no minimum size. No Chinook retention east of Bonilla-Tatoosh line beginning Aug. 1. Anglers must release chum beginning Aug. 1. Waters east of a true north-south line running through Sail Rock are closed in June and July. Kydaka Point Area (area bounded by a line from Kydaka Point to Shipwreck Point) closed to salmon fishing through Aug. 15. The Marine Area 4 Chinook guideline is 13,110 Chinook (12,600 in 2025) and the hatchery coho quota is 10,700 (10,370 in 2025).

Throughout the summer, anglers can check WDFW's webpage <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/reports/creel/ocean> for ocean salmon catch updates...

Learn more at <https://wdfw.wa.gov>.



Photo courtesy Brett Smith and Vortex Optics <https://vortexoptics.com>

## Whitetail Deer Hunting Tips: 4 Steps To Scout And Hunt Mature Bucks

By Brett Smith

Vortex Optics <https://vortexoptics.com>

**T**here's no shortage of whitetail hunting advice out there. Everyone seems to repeat the same things: "Hunt the wind," "Find food," "Sit on a pinch point." And while those aren't bad tips, they're often too broad to really help on your specific property.

I've hunted deer across the country—from the Dakotas to Maine—and this one system has worked for me just about everywhere. Whether you're trying to tag your first deer or looking for a mature buck, these steps will help you find productive spots and give you a clear plan to hunt them effectively.

### Find Where Deer Congregate

Start with the obvious areas—crop fields, clear-cuts, mast-producing oaks, or small hidden food plots. These are spots where deer tend to gather, especially in the early season and evenings.

Instead of rushing to hang a stand here, walk the edges and look for fresh tracks, trails, rubs, and scrapes. You're trying to get a feel for how deer are using the area—and more importantly, where they go next.

If your property feels a little "dead," here are a few small, in-season tweaks that can pull deer closer during daylight hours:

- Rake out a mock scrape under a natural licking branch or hang a vine if one's not present. Deer often check scrapes all season, especially when placed near existing trails.
- Trim low-hanging limbs or saplings along field edges or trails to open up movement and make deer feel more comfortable passing through during daylight.
- Add natural screening with fallen branches, brush piles, or leftover cut limbs to encourage movement closer to your setup and give deer more daytime security.

These are quick, low-effort projects you can do with hand tools and minimal pressure.

### Backtrack Into Cover

After finding where deer feed or congregate, follow the trails that lead back into the woods. This is where the more focused scouting begins.

You're looking for a main travel route that's clearly used—look for consistent tracks, worn trails, and rubs. A great sign is a tree rubbed on both sides, which means a buck is moving in both directions on that trail. As you move deeper, keep paying attention to terrain, cover, and how tight the area starts to feel. That transition from open to thick often tells you you're getting close to something important.

### Look for Concentrated Sign

Eventually, you'll hit an area where the sign stacks up—multiple rubs, a cluster of scrapes, bedding areas, or that unmistakable buck scent. This is a buck's core area. His safe zone.

Don't make the mistake of hunting right in it.

It's tempting to set up shop where all the action is, but mature deer survive by avoiding pressure. One wrong sit too close to bedding and the game is over. Your goal is to locate this zone without disturbing it.

### Hunt Just Outside the Bedroom

Once you've found the buck's core area, back out to the last solid sign—maybe a scrape line, a fresh rub, or a well-worn trail. This is your best chance at catching him in daylight, especially if the conditions are right.

When you hang your stand, set it up on the back side of the tree—opposite the trail. That way, the tree itself gives you natural cover. You can lean out slowly for a shot instead of sitting exposed, especially on calm days when movement matters.

A few more quick, in-season projects that can improve this setup:

- Clear a quiet access route with a rake or by hand-picking sticks and leaves. Quiet entries and exits matter more than most people realize.
- Trim a couple of shooting lanes well before your first sit. Don't overdo it. Just enough to shoot without being sky-lined.
- Flag your entry with reflective tacks or tape if you'll be accessing before daylight or after dark. This prevents you from wandering or making noise.

It doesn't take much to get a good spot dialed in. You're just removing obstacles—both for you and the deer.

### Final Thoughts

This 4-step system works whether you're on 40 acres or 400. It's about reading fresh sign, understanding how deer use your land, and making small, smart adjustments that get you within range—without tipping them off.

Good luck out there.



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Photo credit twildlife | depositphotos.com

## 3 Spot And Stalk Decoy Tactics For Antelope

By Zach Lazzari  
Table Mountain Outfitters  
<https://www.tablemountainoutfitters.com>

Wyoming is antelope country and hunters can approach their hunt in a number of different ways. Hunting from a blind over water is certainly the most effective method for archery hunters.

Rifle hunters can often use folds in the landscape to get close enough for a shot. Even so, antelope have excellent eyesight. The ability to shoot comfortably out to 300 yards and beyond is a major advantage.

Or you can get close. Spot and stalk antelope hunts are exhilarating and incredibly challenging.

Rifle and archery hunters alike can use the same decoy tactics to close the gap. Without the use of a blind, decoys are a fun way to get within range on a spot and stalk antelope hunt.

### 1. Start Out Still

Antelope are curious by nature. Before you jump behind the decoy and gallop into a group of bucks and does, just set up and wait. If you have a vantage for glassing with cover behind a tree or rock, set your decoy and watch the antelope to feel them out.

You can sit 300 or more yards out with a decoy and a curious buck might roam into range to check things out. At the least, they will become more comfortable with the decoy presence while you plan a route into range.

### 2. Draw a Play in the Sand

Always make a plan to approach. Expect the plan to evolve as you go. After all, the antelope are not static. They are likely to move around or change positions throughout the stalk.

Your biggest obstacle to a mature buck is often the does. If they bust you, you'll hear a snort or wheeze and the whole group will bust out of range.

Draw your play to work around the does in the most efficient manner. You may account for the wind, but remember that an antelope's first line of defense is its eyesight. Look for natural breaks and features in the landscape and use them to move through the terrain safely.

Also, plan the route based on the animal you want to harvest. If you want the best odds, focus on the satellite bucks and find a way to reach a position with multiple shooter bucks. If you want that one big buck dominating the herd, expect a more challenging stalk to navigate past the does and satellite bucks.



Photo credit pictureguy | depositphotos.com

### 3. Buck and Doe Decoys

You can go with your gut on this one and see where the cards fall. Otherwise, doe decoys are perfect for the satellite bucks as a general rule. They will create some curiosity and are ideal for a less aggressive stalk. If you want to get the big herd buck moving, try a buck decoy to challenge and draw him out.

You can also get really creative and go with a cow decoy. Montana Decoy Company makes a big red heifer cow style cow decoy. When you are hunting around cattle, these can really put the antelope at ease and the big footprint is easy to hide behind.

### Antelope Hunts With Table Mountain Outfitters

If you'd like to learn more about antelope hunts in Wyoming at Table Mountain Outfitters, please call 307-632-6352 or contact them online at: <https://www.tablemountainoutfitters.com/contact-us/>.

To learn more about antelope hunting with Table Mountain Outfitters, please visit their antelope hunting page at: <https://www.tablemountainoutfitters.com/hunts/antelope/>.

Zach Lazzari is an outdoor writer, fly fishing guide and hunting enthusiast.

Follow Zach at [bustedoarlock.com](http://bustedoarlock.com).

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# What Western Hunters Should Check Before Summer Scouting Starts

By Ted Ramirez Jr  
Caribou Gear Outdoor Equipment Co.  
www.caribougear.com

Summer scouting usually looks simple on paper. Drive in. Cover country. Glass new terrain. Learn access routes. Find fresh sign.

But by the time summer arrives, conditions across the West often look very different than they did during spring scouting.

Roads open. Roads close. Water changes. Pressure increases. Access shifts. Fire restrictions start appearing.

The hunters who check those details early usually waste less time once scouting trips start stacking up.

**Check Access Before You Leave the Driveway**  
Many scouting trips fail before the first boot hits the ground.

Seasonal gates, washed-out roads, trail reroutes, private-land changes, fire restrictions, and active logging operations can all change access quickly during early summer.

Do not assume a route that worked last year still works now.

Before leaving, verify:

- road openings and closures
- fire restrictions
- public land access updates
- trail conditions
- camping restrictions
- bridge washouts or reroutes

Burning half a scouting trip on a bad access assumption happens more often than hunters admit.

## Update Maps Before Summer Trips Start

Offline maps that have not been updated recently create problems fast.

Summer scouting usually means more movement, more route experimentation, and more vehicle access than early spring trips.

That makes accurate boundaries, road layers, trail systems, and land ownership even more important.

Before scouting season starts:

- download updated offline maps
- review private boundary changes
- mark backup access points
- save potential glassing locations
- identify water and camp options



Photo credit Ted Ramirez Jr. Caribou Gear www.caribougear.com

The goal is not just finding animals.

It is building a more efficient system once season arrives.

## Water Conditions Change Faster Than Most Hunters Expect

Snowpack, runoff timing, drought conditions, cattle use, and early heat all change how country looks heading into summer.

Some water sources disappear earlier than expected.

Others suddenly become pressure points once temperatures rise.

Hunters should pay attention to:

- dry drainages
- mud around active water
- new cattle pressure
- heavily used trail systems
- fresh ATV activity
- changes in feed conditions

Summer scouting is often less about “finding elk” and more about understanding how conditions are shifting before fall.

## Gear Problems Show Up During Scouting First

Summer scouting usually exposes weak gear systems before hunting season does.

Broken buckles, worn boots, dead headlamps, bad pack fit, weak batteries, torn rain gear, and damaged straps are easier to solve in June than September.

Scouting trips are the best time to pressure-test:

- packs
- boots
- hydration systems
- optics setups
- truck organization
- navigation systems
- weather layers

Most expensive hunting problems start as small scouting problems hunters ignored earlier.

## Pressure Starts Building Earlier Than Many Hunters Think

Summer pressure changes scouting quality quickly.

Campers, anglers, hikers, shed hunters, side-by-sides, trail cameras, and other scouting traffic all increase once access improves.

That matters because heavy summer activity often changes how animals use visible terrain before hunting season even starts.

Hunters who pay attention to pressure patterns early usually build better opening-week plans later.

## Turn Summer Scouting Into a Better Fall Plan

The best scouting trips are rarely the most dramatic.

They are usually the most efficient.

Good scouting systems help hunters learn:

- how country actually moves
- how access changes
- where pressure develops
- what routes waste time
- what problems need solving before season

Most Western hunters eventually realize good scouting starts before the trip itself.

## Summer Scouting FAQ

### What should hunters check before summer scouting?

Hunters should verify access, maps, road conditions, fire restrictions, water conditions, and gear readiness before leaving.

### Why do summer scouting conditions change so quickly?

Road access, runoff, drought, fire conditions, cattle movement, and recreational pressure all increase as spring turns into summer.

### Should hunters update maps before scouting season?

Yes. Updated offline maps and land boundaries help avoid access problems and wasted scouting time.

### Is summer scouting mainly about finding animals?

No. It is also about learning access, pressure, terrain movement, water conditions, and route efficiency before hunting season begins.

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# What to Replace in Your Kill Kit Before Elk Season

By Ted Ramirez Jr  
Caribou Outdoor Equipment Co. [www.caribougear.com](http://www.caribougear.com)

A kill kit does not need to be complicated. But everything inside it needs to work when the animal is down and the clock starts moving.

Most kill-kit failures are not dramatic.

They are small problems: dull blades, missing gloves, torn bags, short lengths of cordage, dead batteries, or supplies that were used last season and never replaced.

Those problems are easy to solve before season.

They become much harder to deal with once the work begins.

## Start With Anything That Gets Used Up

Consumable supplies are usually the first items to disappear from a kill kit.

A kit may look complete from the outside while the small items inside are already running low.



Photo credit Ted Ramirez Jr. courtesy [www.caribougear.com](http://www.caribougear.com)

## Before season, replace or restock:

- nitrile or latex gloves
- replaceable knife blades
- flagging tape where lawful
- zip ties
- electrical tape
- paper towels or cleanup wipes
- contractor bags for dirty gear
- spare batteries

Do not assume last season's supplies are still there.

Open the kit and count what is actually left.

## Check Every Knife Before You Pack It

A knife can still be in the kit and still be a problem.

Dull edges, damaged handles, loose components, and missing spare blades all slow down a field job.

## Inspect:

- fixed-blade sharpness
- replaceable-blade handles
- spare blade count
- blade storage
- small sharpeners
- multi-tools

Replaceable-blade systems only work if the replacement blades are actually inside the kit.

That sounds obvious until the first breakdown starts.

## Pull Out Every Game Bag

Game bags should not stay buried in a storage sack until opening morning.

Take them out.

Open them fully.

Inspect every seam, closure point, and drawcord.

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## Look for:

- tears
- damaged seams
- worn drawcords
- missing bags
- stains or odor from poor storage
- bags that were never cleaned properly after last season

A complete game bag system should match the animal and the way you plan to break it down.

Hunters reviewing their system before elk season can compare Game Bags for Elk, Deer, and Big Game at: <https://www.caribougear.com/collections/game-bags>.

## Replace Cordage Before It Becomes a Weak Point

Cordage is easy to overlook because it rarely gets attention until it is needed.

But short pieces, frayed sections, tangled knots, and missing lengths can create avoidable problems during hanging, staging, or tarp setup.

## Check:

- overall length
- frayed sections
- knots that should be removed
- cut sections that are now too short
- separate lengths for hanging and tarp use

Replace worn cordage before season and keep it organized inside the kit.

## Do Not Forget Gloves and Cleanup Supplies

Gloves disappear faster than most hunters expect.

They tear.

They get used during scouting or vehicle work.

They get handed to another hunter and never make it back into the kit.

Carry more than you think you need.

Cleanup supplies matter too.

## Useful items include:

- extra gloves
- cleanup wipes
- paper towels
- contractor bags for dirty equipment
- a separate bag for used blades
- hand sanitizer

Keeping dirty gear separated makes the truck easier to manage once the packout ends.

## Reset Your Identification System

Organization gets harder once several bags, multiple trips, and loose cuts start moving toward the truck.

That is where a basic identification system helps.

Make sure labels, markers, and tags are ready before season.

## Record what matters:

- hunter name
- animal
- contents
- date
- destination
- processor or donation notes when needed

Game Bag ID Tags can help keep meat loads clearly identified from the field to the truck, processor, freezer, or donation destination.

## Inspect the Container Holding the Kit

The contents matter.

So does the bag holding them.

(continued on page 27)



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**HONDA**

# Hunting Reliability: The Short Pre-Season Rifle Checklist For Success

By Brady Miller

Originally published at **GOHUNT**  GOHUNT.com

**A** pre-season rifle checklist that prevents hunt-ruining failures

Backcountry hunts don't forgive small mistakes, and the same can be said for any hunt, for that matter. When I go on a hunt, I do everything I can to ensure my rifle performs when it needs to.

I don't care if you're carrying a brand-new rifle or a rifle that's been in your family for 30 years—most "rifle problems" that show up on a hunt aren't mysteries. They're preventable. They're mainly from neglected maintenance and/or surprises that didn't get caught at home...

This checklist is what I do before every season and before any backcountry-style hunt where a quick trip to the truck isn't an option. It's written with hunting rifles in mind—but the process applies to just about any serious rifle.

## If you do nothing else, do this: prove your rifle is reliable before the hunt.

Nothing is worse than showing up to a hunt with a poor shooting rifle.

The way I like to phrase this is to make sure your rifle is "boring"—in the best way. Meaning it functions 100% of the time, and just works. I trust my rifles will hold up no matter the conditions, but it's always great to check twice and shoot once.

### 1) The 5-minute inspection that prevents 80% of problems

Before you do anything, always ensure you're starting with a safe rifle: confirm it's unloaded in both the chamber and the magazine.

Back at home and before I leave for a hunt, I like to start out by checking the usual suspects:

- Scope ring and base screws: anything loose here can shift your impact. Confirm your rings are torqued to the proper specs.
- Action screws (stock to action): you should have already done this by now... but dig out that manual, or call your rifle builder and figure out the torque specs. Then write down that information in a book you keep for this rifle.
- Magazine: ensure it locks in place securely, if it doesn't, well... time to fix it.

- Muzzle devices: look for nicks or obvious damage; ensure a brake/suppressor is tight if you use one. Clean them if needed. I'll even take a Q-tip or a patch and push it through my brake to ensure I get all the sections clean.

- Check to ensure your barrel is still free floating. Don't assume that just because it was in the past, it doesn't mean you didn't get a small stick or a rock between your barrel and stock when you were packing out your last animal, or from that rifle competition you just got back from.

- Have a bipod? Is the Picatinny or Arca-Swiss rail you have for your bipod securely attached to your rifle? Better check that the bolts that secure it to your stock are tight.

- Run the bolt hard and fast: just to make sure everything is running smoothly.

- If you take the bolt out for cleaning your rifle, please don't forget it.



Photo credit Brady Miller GOHUNT.com

### 2) Clean the barrel, but don't overdo it, per se

When did you last clean your rifle? Oh, you just cleaned it yesterday, and you're leaving later today.

Does your rifle actually shoot well after a clean barrel?

If you don't know that, you'd better head to the range. I do clean my rifles a lot, but do whatever makes your rifle shoot best.

### Click here to learn how to clean the bore of your hunting rifle:

<https://www.gohunt.com/browse/tips-and-tricks/rifles/how-to-clean-the-bore-of-your-hunting-rifle>

- If you haven't cleaned your rifle in a year, maybe consider cleaning it, unless you're certain your rifle shoots well with the number of rounds you have down the tube since your last cleaning. So... clean the bore until it's "good," not laboratory perfect.

- Clean the bolt, if needed, with a degreaser, then apply a minimal amount of bolt grease/lube to the bolt lugs, then wipe them down until they look almost dry. You don't want to attract dust. You can even disassemble the bolt and perform a deep clean.

- If your rifle tends to shoot best with a little fouling, fire a couple of fouling shots before final zero. Again, track this information in your rifle book for how many shots you need to take after a clean.

### 3) Prove your zero (not “it was zeroed last year, so I’m good”)

This should be self-explanatory: use the exact ammunition you’re hunting with. If you changed loads or even lot numbers, verify again. I will shoot 100 yards a lot with my hunting rifles.

Minimum standard in my opinion:

- Shoot a 3-shot up to a 10-shot group to confirm your zero is perfect
- Adjust if needed
- Shoot another group to verify the correction

Then shoot at least a few rounds from a real hunting position (prone off a pack, shoot off your bipod in the dirt with your backpack as the rear support, seated—whatever you actually do). Bench groups don’t automatically equal hunting hits, unless you’ve practiced them.

If you travel a lot for hunts (flights, rough roads), plan for a post-travel confirmation shot whenever possible. Which is why I will always fly or drive with a small packable target in my truck. I’ve been using a system created by MOA Gear which is their Offgrid Target system that I toss in my truck or rifle case when I fly. And then I can check the zero in the field once I drive or land near my hunting area.

Also, pack a rifle cover of some sort that will protect your scope, action, and the end of your barrel. Depending on the hunt, I’ll use the GOHUNT Essential Rifle Cover, or Marsupial Gear Padded Scope and Muzzle Cover. I’ve also been eying up a scope cover called the DRT Recon Lounger Bundle (this is a rifle and muzzle cover, plus it doubles as a glassing chair or shooting mat).

### 4) The tiny truck kit that saves hunts

There are times when you’ll wish you had some tools to fix some random issues you might encounter on a hunt.

You don’t need a full toolbox—just the items that can help you get back out hunting. Most of the time, I’ll have some tools stashed in my truck. Other times I might bring some items in the field and stash them a few miles in. So some of these items make it into my backpack, and the others go in my truck.

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## What to Replace in Your Kill Kit Before Elk Season

(continued from page 25)

A kill kit that spills open, soaks through, or disappears inside the pack creates unnecessary delays.

### Check the kit bag for:

- damaged zippers
- torn seams
- wet contents
- poor organization
- items buried where they cannot be reached quickly

Keep blades, gloves, cordage, tags, and cleanup supplies separated enough that the kit is easy to use when time matters.

### Run a Five-Minute Kill Kit Reset

A kill-kit reset does not need to become a major project.

Five focused minutes can solve most of the problems hunters regret later.

### Before season:

- count gloves
- count blades
- sharpen fixed blades
- inspect game bags
- replace worn cordage
- restock cleanup supplies
- check batteries
- replace missing tags
- remove anything that no longer belongs in the kit

The goal is not carrying more gear.

The goal is knowing the gear inside the kit is ready when the work starts...

Learn more and shop Caribou Outdoor Equipment Co. online at [www.caribougear.com](http://www.caribougear.com).



Photo credit Kawdy Outfitters <https://www.kawdyoutfitters.com>

## Stone Sheep Trivia Quiz

### Do You Know These Mountain Icons?

Kawdy Outfitters <https://www.kawdyoutfitters.com>

For all you sheep hunting fanatics and hopefuls out there, we've got a quiz to test your knowledge of our favorite wild sheep – the Stone Sheep.

Test yourself, and then scroll down for the answers...

#### Stone Sheep Quiz

**1. What is the correct scientific name for Stone Sheep?**

- A. *Ovis ammon stonei*
- B. *Ovis dalli dalli*
- C. *Ovis dalli stonei*
- D. *Ovis canadensis stonei*

**2. Stone Sheep belong to which major wild sheep grouping?**

- A. Desert Sheep
- B. Thinhorn Sheep
- C. Bighorn Sheep
- D. Argali Sheep

**3. True or False? Stone Sheep are classified as a subspecies of Dall Sheep rather than a completely separate species.**

Write True or False.

**4. When aging a Stone Sheep ram, which horn feature is most likely to cause inaccurate age estimates if not interpreted carefully?**

- A. Tight curl formation
- B. Horn flare width
- C. Broomed horn tips
- D. Closely spaced annuli near the horn base

**5. Compared to Dall Sheep, Stone Sheep rams are most often known for which horn trait?**

- A. Straight horns with minimal curl
- B. Reduced annual horn growth
- C. Heavy bases and greater horn mass
- D. Narrow bases and extreme curl

**6. Which seasonal period has the greatest influence on a Stone Sheep ram's long-term horn growth potential?**

- A. Autumn pre-rut feeding phase
- B. Late winter
- C. Peak summer forage window
- D. Early spring snowmelt period

**7. Why do Stone Sheep frequently select steep, broken alpine terrain for bedding and travel routes?**

- A. Wind protection
- B. Easier grazing access
- C. Better access to mineral licks
- D. Predator avoidance and visibility advantage

**8. From a management perspective, what is the primary biological reason Stone Sheep harvest regulations typically focus on full-curl or mature rams?**

- A. Older rams are more aggressive
- B. Horn growth stops after maturity
- C. Younger rams are harder to locate
- D. Mature rams have lower reproductive impact

Stone Sheep are one of the most iconic mountain animals in North America – and in our very biased opinion, the most beautiful of all the North American wild sheep.

Now... let's see how you did on the quiz.

#### Stone Sheep Quiz Answers

**1. Answer: C — *Ovis dalli stonei***

Stone Sheep are classified under the thinhorn sheep complex as *Ovis dalli stonei*.

**2. Answer: B — Thinhorn Sheep**

Stone Sheep and Dall Sheep make up North America's thinhorn sheep group.

**3. Answer: True**

They are a subspecies within *Ovis dalli*, not a separate species.

**4. Answer: D — Closely spaced annuli near the horn base**

As rams age, horn growth slows and annual rings compress near the base, making accurate field aging more difficult.

**5. Answer: C — Heavy bases and greater horn mass**

Stone Sheep are known for thicker horn bases and heavier overall mass compared to Dall Sheep.

**6. Answer: C — Peak summer forage window**

The short alpine growing season drives most annual horn growth and long-term horn development.

**7. Answer: D — Predator avoidance and visibility advantage**

Steep terrain provides escape routes and better sightlines against predators.

**8. Answer: D — Mature rams have lower reproductive impact**

Harvesting older rams helps protect breeding ewes and overall population health.

Learn more about guided hunting trips with Kawdy Outfitters at <https://www.kawdyoutfitters.com>

Phone Colin's cell at 250-306-8624 or Alisha's cell at 250-540-1179.

Email: [hunting@kawdyoutfitters.com](mailto:hunting@kawdyoutfitters.com)

## Vortex® Continues Support Of Boone And Crockett Club Youth Camps

Boone And Crockett Club <https://www.boone-crockett.org>

Vortex® has renewed its dedication to fostering the next generation of conservation advocates by continuing the Vortex Outdoor Adventure Camps Fund with Boone and Crockett Club for 2026. Designed to support youth participation in Boone and Crockett's Conservation Education programs at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, this initiative reinforces Vortex's role as a Silver sponsor alongside other leading organizations. These sponsorships are integral to assisting with the Club's overall mission to promote the conservation and management of wildlife, especially big game and its habitat, to preserve and encourage hunting, and to maintain the highest ethical standards of Fair Chase and sportsmanship in North America. Vortex's sponsorship will support youth scholarships plus gear for the Club's Outdoor Adventure Camps.

"Vortex's renewed support empowers the next generation to become stewards of wildlife and conservation," said Tony Schoonen, Chief Executive Officer of the Boone and Crockett Club. "Thanks to these scholarships, we're able to inspire youth to engage with conservation efforts, fostering a shared commitment that this generation will carry forward long after their time at camp..."

Visit <https://www.boone-crockett.org>.

# FREE ENTRY FEE

Thanks to a generous donation, the Boone and Crockett Club announced that the \$40 entry fee will not be charged for entries received after January 1, 2026.

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# Tactics For Scouting Mule Deer In Their Summer Range

By Steve Alderman

Originally published at **GOHUNT**  GOHUNT.com

**A**re you in need of a few tips to help you locate mule deer during the summer months? There are a few things to consider before heading out the door to find the buck of your dreams.

## Find the Food and Water — Find the Bucks

First and foremost is feed and water. Obviously, deer need both to survive. What you might not know is deer get a lot of their water intake from the plants they eat, which means they don't need to go to water every day. They do need fresh water, but on many occasions they can go a couple of days without hitting the water hole. This is even true in the more arid regions of Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Texas and New Mexico. Deer in these regions have cacti, which have water on the inside. Don't overlook water, but don't spend all of your time looking for it or watching it. In all honesty, it is different in all regions. Take the Arizona Strip, for example: if it wasn't for water holes and tanks, most of the deer you see come out of that region wouldn't get shot. I spend most my time hunting Rocky Mountain mule deer, so we will focus on that species in this article. Here are few ideas that will get you pointed in the right direction.

## Google Earth Scouting

When I'm looking into a new area to hunt, I always go to Google Earth and get familiar with the region, even sometimes printing aerial shots of the area to take with me. Now there are programs where you can overlay Google Maps over the topo on your GPS... What this does is give me a starting point, away from roads but close to water, whether it be a stream, seep, pond, river or lake.

Once I visit the area in person, I'm looking for green vegetation. The greener an area is the higher water content in those plants. Not only is there higher water content in those plants, but there is often higher protein content as well.

## Habitat Clues That Will Lead You to Deer

Younger, healthier, greener plants are higher in protein than older, drier vegetation, which is why deer move so often from June through the end of July. They are going to where the food holds more protein and moisture. Some of the best vegetation for mule deer during the summer are bitter brush and snow brush.

As the food sources dry up, mule deer are easier to find due to the lack of green vegetation holding them in specific areas. I usually start scouting at the end of June when all the hills are green. The down side to this is the deer are harder to find this time of year due to the palatable food being so abundant. Come the end of July and August, vegetation starts to dry up and the deer are more predictable as to where they are going to be and what they are going to do.

## When to Start Scouting

The best time to start scouting, in my opinion, is the end of July. The smaller water seeps have dried up and much of the vegetation in the mountains has turned dry and brown and has become less palatable to the deer. This concentrates the mule deer into smaller home areas. Focusing this time of year on the green areas with water within a half a mile will be your most productive time spent in the field prior to the opening of your season. A lot of the time deer will feed in the mornings and hit the water on the way to their beds. A good 90% of my time in the field is spent looking for vegetation that mule deer need in their diet with the highest in protein and water content. In the remaining time I have, I look around the water. Once I have found deer or tracks around a water source, I set up trail cameras and let them do the work for me. I will spend my time focusing on the feeding and bedding areas. I know I didn't touch on bedding areas, but this is by far the hardest spot to find deer. It takes lots of patience and lots of practice to find a deer in his bed. Lots of hours behind good glass, so your eyes don't fatigue. One thing I will tell you, and it's pretty obvious, is deer need to have shade all day long. Most of the time it is on the north-facing slopes or a cool draw. Don't get me wrong when I say north-facing slopes, it could be on the south side of the mountain, but it will be a cut or draw with a north, northeast or northwest face to it.

You can increase your odds of finding your dream buck during the summer if you concentrate on the green vegetation with water nearby. Scouting early in the season is not always the best as they are harder to find and keep track while they are still moving around looking for the most palatable food they can put down. The later you find them in the summer, the more predictable they are going to be. Their feeding sources will have dried up making their home range smaller. More times than not when you find a deer in August, he will be there through the first part of October. Now, go find him and get him.

Learn more or join GOHUNT at GOHUNT.com. Shop online with code HFN and get 10% off your first order. Some exclusions apply.

# Summer Deer How-To: Make A Mock Scrape

By Mike Hanback Big Deer Blog <https://bigdeerblog.com>

**G**o to your hunting woods right now and make a couple of stinky scrapes and hang trail cameras near them.

Several studies have shown that whitetail bucks will hit scrapes with fresh scent year-round, and noticeably in the summer months.

The fake scrapes are great places to get images of bucks that will roam your area this fall.

Here's how Wisconsin hunter and friend of BIG DEER Kim Redburn, who is a big fan of summer scrapes, makes them...

A mock scrape is not only scent-based, but also visual. Rake out at least a 2 foot by 3 foot area below an overhanging branch. As you rake, envision a buck. He scrapes with his hooves primarily in one direction, and your raking should be done the same way, leaving the debris on the back side of the scrape.

Make your scrape directly below a prominent "lick" branch that bucks will most definitely rub with their eyes and racks, and chew on. The branch should be approximately 4 feet high—never touch it!

Use this Wildlife Research dripper system with a scrape solution:

<https://www.wildlife.com/product/magnum-scrape-dripper/?Magnum-Scrape-Dripper-1>.

## Note:

**Do not use doe in heat or an estrus scent in the summer!**

While any dirt will do, the best long-term mock scrapes where you set cameras to get buck pictures year after year have soils with real deer scent in them.

Once you create a mock scrape in a spot you like this summer, make it a point to collect urine-soaked soil and droppings from real scrapes later this fall.

Rake an existing scrape down to bare soil and trowel 3 to 5 pounds of the deer-scent dirt into a plastic bag.

Carry the dirt to a mock scrape and spread it evenly across the soil. While this urine-scented soil is not necessary, it adds realism and makes for a more consistently attended scrape year-round.



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# POLARIS

# How To Sight In Your Rifle In 3 Shots Or Less

Vortex Optics [www.vortexoptics.com](http://www.vortexoptics.com)

## HERE'S A SIMPLE WAY TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY AT THE RANGE, ALL WHILE GETTING YOUR RIFLE BIG-GAME READY

A couple of things before you get started: This method assumes your optic's reticle has subtensions. These subtensions will act like a ruler in your optic during the sight-in process. You need to be familiar with your reticle's subtension measurements for this process to work. However, you don't need a complicated "Christmas Tree" reticle. A simple BDC reticle will work just fine. (For more on choosing the right reticle, check out this podcast <https://youtu.be/bCNr9iB8c-Y?si=fLHR2-XemteUA8dT>)

This method also assumes that you understand MOA and MRAD, and that you know how to dial adjustments using your chosen unit of measurement. (Need a refresher? Check out this video: [https://youtu.be/6VK5Pec\\_nAY?si=VyuFnE8m9UFU2YUG.](https://youtu.be/6VK5Pec_nAY?si=VyuFnE8m9UFU2YUG.))

### STEP ONE: BORE SIGHT YOUR RIFLE.



Photos courtesy Vortex Optics [www.vortexoptics.com](http://www.vortexoptics.com)

Bore sight your rifle to get started. This is always a smart idea as it can get you on paper with your first shot, saving you ammo and time.

### STEP TWO: FIRE THE FIRST ROUND AT YOUR TARGET.

Before pulling the trigger, make sure you have done everything you can to create a stable shooting platform. We recommend using sandbags if possible as they allow your rifle to recoil naturally without overstressing rifle and optic components.

In the video "How to Zero a Riflescope in 3 Shots or Less" ([https://youtu.be/WGUqAugLlys?si=4VOgS\\_SsaGmxvOSQ](https://youtu.be/WGUqAugLlys?si=4VOgS_SsaGmxvOSQ)) our target is 100 yards away, but distance is arbitrary using this technique:

Choose a distance you're comfortable with and one where you can spot your impacts through your optic. Fire your first round at your target's center.

### STEP THREE: MEASURE AND MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS.

Place the center of your reticle on your bullet impact. Use your reticle's subtensions to measure how far your impact was from your original point of aim. This will tell you how far you need to dial for elevation and windage.

(Remember: If your impact was high, dial down and vice versa. If it was left, dial right and vice versa.) Dial your turrets accordingly.

### STEP FOUR: FIRE A SECOND SHOT.

Step three should put your second shot very close to center, but you'll likely need another round to get locked in. Fire your second shot.

### STEP FIVE: MEASURE AND MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS.

This impact should be much closer to your point of aim, likely inside of 1 MOA. If your subtensions are not precise enough to measure exactly, use your best judgment, keeping in mind that four clicks usually equals 1 MOA of movement. Dial your adjustment.



### STEP SIX: FIRE YOUR CONFIRMATION SHOT TO ENSURE YOU'RE LOCKED IN.

If you've followed the preceding steps, this shot should be a victory lap. Fire your confirmation shot. Of course, if your zero isn't exact, you can make another round of adjustments.

To see these steps in action, checkout the video: "How to Sight In Your Riflescope in 3 Shots or Less" (<https://youtu.be/WGUqAugLlys?si=aw65FhM09mxLLm4.>)

Learn more or shop online at [www.vortexoptics.com](http://www.vortexoptics.com).

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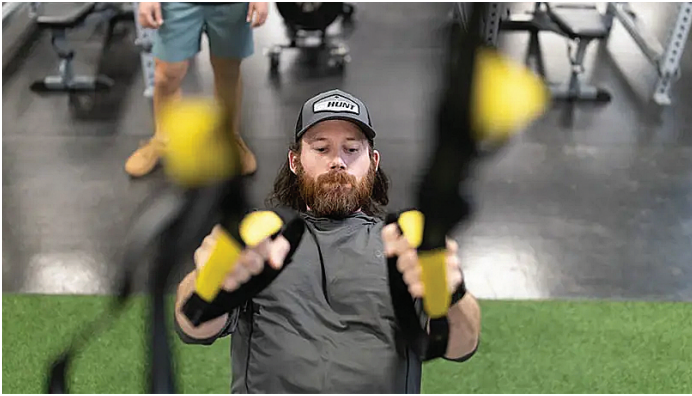
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Brady Miller demonstrating offseason fitness for hunters.  
Photo courtesy GOHUNT.com

# Reasons To Get In Better Shape This Summer

By Jake Horton

Originally published at **GOHUNT**  GOHUNT.com

## Starting slow and correct

The most important thing about getting back into shape or getting into better shape is remembering to start slow and correct.

If you are ready to get back into shape, you might think to yourself that you will run 10 miles today; however, that is not the best idea if you have not run 10 miles combined in the last month. What will most likely happen if you can complete the 10 miles is that you will be too sore from running for the next three or four days or dismiss the goal of getting in shape since you are not as young as you used to be.

Instead, you would be encouraged to make a goal calendar that is obtainable every day.

For example, for week one, your goal might be to run one mile every day, then week two to run two miles every day and so on.

Starting slow will be better for your routine and your body.

The second part of starting is doing your workouts correctly.

The main point that I want to make about this is to make sure you stick to the general guidelines.

This means you should do pre-workout stretches and warm-ups, use proper form lifting weights in the gym and then cool down your body and stretch again. These are things that I didn't use to have to do, but now they are becoming necessities if I want to continue working out day after day.

Start slow and correct and you will have a better chance to stick it out and reduce your chances of getting hurt along the way.

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## Hunt harder

It is a proven fact that those hunters who take the time and put in the work in the offseason can out hunt other hunters. They can go in deeper or higher if they have to and do it in less time.

I have often hiked past another slower hunter on the trail to the mountain. This allowed me to decide where I wanted to go, not based upon where the other hunter was not.

A person who is in excellent physical shape will see elk, deer or other game a few miles away and have the confidence that they can get there and get back. A hunter in lesser shape will not be so sure and may leave those elk or deer until the next day when the animals might be long gone or another hunter might be there.

## Hunt consistently

Another great reason to get into better shape before hunting season is to physically be able to hunt consistently.

Every year, I hunt elk for somewhere between seven to 10 days during archery season. I feel as though I am pretty blessed to have that much time to chase elk and I try to hunt as hard as possible. I can feel it when I am getting to the mountains during years when I push my body to the limits during the offseason and am in top physical shape. Those are the years where I hunt hard every day, all day long. The years where I am in good shape, but not great shape end up being years where I need a recovery day or two along the way.

Hunting consistently hard every day can make a difference in your success, so be in shape so you physically can do this.

## Hunt enjoyment

By far, the most important reason to get in excellent physical shape before your hunting trip is to enjoy the hunt.

Nothing can make your hunt more difficult than huffing and puffing every day and being in physical pain each step of the way. Trust me, I have been there.

Pushing your body hard in the offseason can reduce that pain level by enough that you can bear it enough to enjoy the hunt.

Each hunt is brutal whether you are in shape or not; however, it is less challenging and more enjoyable if you are in shape.

Learn more about GOHUNT or join at GOHUNT.com.

Shop for hunting gear at SHOP.GOHUNT.com and use code HFN for 10% off your first order.

\*Some exclusions may apply.

# Why These Five Archery Elk Hunting Tips Will Transform Your Next Hunt

(continued from page 5)

The last thing you want to be thinking about when the bull is moving into a shooting lane is whether you should move your sight or, worse, have no idea what the range is.

Commonly, I see hunters not pre-range, not know when to draw (drawing too early, drawing when they are in the open and get detected), or they don't stop the bull in their desired shooting lane.

It's very common for us to get overwhelmed with adrenaline and either draw too early or stop the bull too early.

You have to be able to do all three steps to be successful in most cases. So, practice ranging without a rangefinder prior to your hunt. Pre-range objects in advance of a calling scenario, draw your bow when you can do so without being seen, and finally, stop the bull when he's in your shooting lane. After that, take your time, trust the process, and execute a perfect shot.

## Stay in the game mentally on an elk hunt

Archery elk hunting is a marathon. It's not a sprint. I've killed a few bulls on day two or three, but most hunts have required seven to 10 days for an opportunity. I've also had hunts where I was within range of a bull almost every day, but, as I alluded to above, everything has to go just right to finally line up for the perfect arrow to be released.

Every elk hunt I've ever done has been a grind, and at some point, I've had the thought that killing an elk with a bow and arrow is impossible.

Expect it to be hard because it is, but guess what? It's not impossible, and in a matter of moments, it can go from the worst hunt to the most memorable moment of your life.

Keep thinking, planning, and moving. Stay positive and don't treat slow periods as dead time.

Every step, every new drainage or ridge could be the one that puts you in bow range of a bugling bull.

When you need to, take naps, go to town and get some pizza, talk to your friends and family if you need the support, but stay in the game as much as possible.

I often think when I'm hunting that in just a few short days I'll be back behind my computer, going about my daily routine, but today... today, I'm elk hunting, and I'm going to hunt like it's the rare opportunity that it is.

Learn more or join at [GOHUNT.com](https://www.gohunt.com).

# RMEF Names KUIU As Official Hunting Apparel Partner

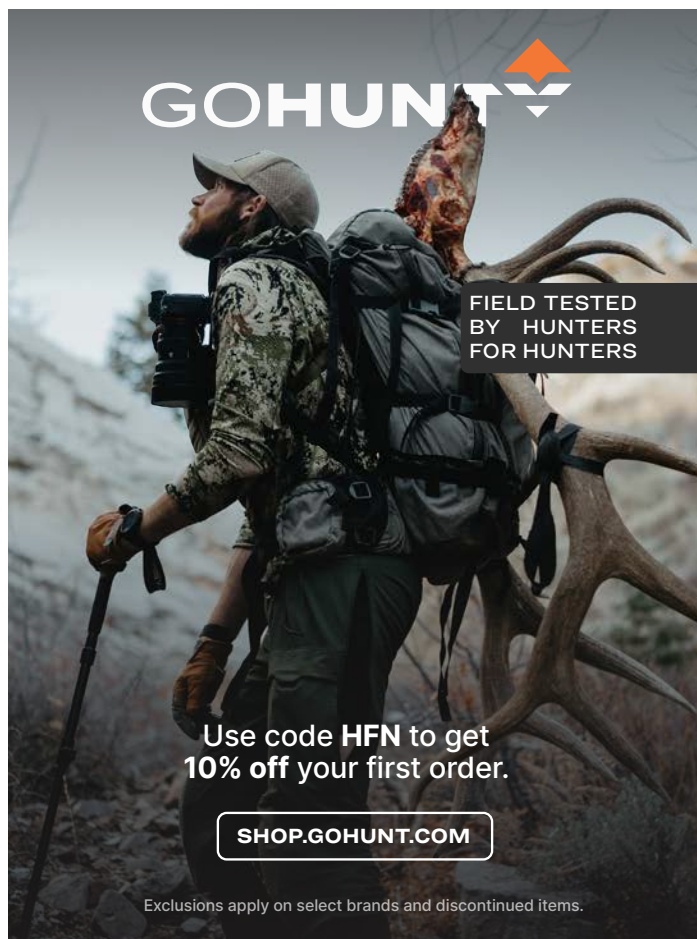
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The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation proudly welcomes KUIU as Official Hunting Apparel Partner, aligning shared missions of conserving and enhancing big game habitat, expanding access for hunters and upholding the vital role hunting plays in sustaining healthy wildlife populations. Known for high-performance technical clothing tailored for big game hunters, as well as its active participation in hands-on conservation, KUIU enters the long-term partnership to support a wide range of RMEF programs and projects.

"We couldn't continue our impact on millions of acres of critical habitat without strong partners like KUIU," said Steve Decker, RMEF chief revenue officer...

Based in Dixon, Calif., KUIU was founded in 2011 to raise the performance of ultralight hunting gear through the development of innovative technologies and features. The company's products have become staples of big game hunters who demand the utmost in lightweight durability, functionality and comfort. A direct-to-consumer retailer, KUIU will soon have a product selection available at the RMEF Visitor Center in Missoula...

KUIU is honored to partner at this level with RMEF, an organization that produces results for not only elk, but all big game," said Kevin Wilkerson, KUIU vice president of brand marketing...



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Photo credit Jillian Sanford courtesy GOHUNT.com

## Mule Deer Tacos Recipe

By Jillian Sanford

Originally published at **GOHUNT** GOHUNT.com

There are hundreds of ways to make tacos, but today we are making one of my favorite ways to make wild game tacos. This recipe is definitely a family favorite around my house.

### Items Needed

- Tortillas
- Ground wild game (today we are using mule deer, but you can use whatever you have in your freezer)
- Taco seasoning
- 1 small can of diced green chilis
- 1 can of refried beans
- 3 to 4 ripe avocados
- Half of an onion diced
- Fresh bundle of cilantro
- Shredded cheese
- Sour cream...
- 1 stick of butter

### Step One

Add half a stick of butter into your pan and let it melt. Add your diced onion and can of green chilis. Once they have cooked down and are tender, add your ground meat. Cook until the meat is all browned. At the same time, start warming up your beans in a small pot.

### Step Two

Once the meat is nice and browned, add your package of taco seasoning. Mix thoroughly.

### Step Three

Start frying up your tortillas on a flat skillet or wide enough pan. Add butter and coat the tortilla in butter. Cook until a light golden brown.

### Step Four

Time to build your tacos and enjoy! Top with tomato, avocado, cheese, cilantro, sour cream (if you have it), hot sauce or anything else you'd like to add on there...

## Department Of The Interior Announces Proposed Expansion Of Hunting And Fishing Opportunities

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service <https://www.fws.gov>

The Department of the Interior today announced the largest proposed expansion of hunting and sport fishing opportunities in the history of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, opening or expanding more than 1,450 opportunities across 111 stations in 32 states.

The proposal would make more than 92 million acres, or over 95% of National Wildlife Refuge System lands, available for hunting, marking a significant milestone in expanding public access to America's lands and waters and reinforcing the Administration's commitment to outdoor recreation, conservation and rural economic growth.

This effort advances President Donald J. Trump's priorities to expand access to public lands and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, including Executive Order 14192, "Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation." It also implements Secretary's Order 3447, which directs the Department to remove barriers to hunting and fishing access and better align federal regulations with state wildlife management frameworks.

"For too long, access to hunting and fishing on federal lands has been limited by unnecessary restrictions and disconnected federal rules," said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. "Under President Donald J. Trump's leadership, we are opening more land, aligning with state expertise, and putting decision-making back where it belongs. This is about commonsense access, supporting rural economies, and ensuring the next generation can experience the outdoors the same way so many of us did growing up."

The proposed rule would increase access at 111 field stations, including 107 national wildlife refuges and four national fish hatcheries. It also includes first-ever hunting or sport fishing opportunities at 14 refuges and three hatcheries, reflecting continued progress toward maximizing access where compatible with conservation goals.

**In total, the proposal would deliver more than 1,450 new hunting and sport fishing opportunities. An "opportunity" is defined as the ability to hunt or fish a specific species at a specific location, providing a clear measure of expanded access across the system.**

The rule also reflects a broader effort to simplify and modernize federal regulations. The Service is proposing more than 500 revisions and deletions to existing regulatory provisions, reducing complexity and making it easier for hunters and anglers to understand and comply with applicable rules.

By better aligning federal regulations with state fish and wildlife laws, the proposal reduces confusion for the public, improves consistency across field stations and reinforces the role of states as primary managers of fish and wildlife resources.

“Hunting and fishing are traditional recreational activities that bring families and communities together. Many national wildlife refuges, national fish hatcheries and other Service lands and waters offer hunting and fishing access that helps boost local economies and affords high-quality publicly available recreational opportunities to all Americans,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Brian Nesvik. “We are pleased to continue to increase access for hunters and anglers while fulfilling our conservation mission, and we are committed to responsibly managing these areas for the benefit of future generations.”

#### Examples of proposed changes include:

- Opening hunting or fishing opportunities for the first time at multiple refuges and hatcheries.
- Expanding upland game, migratory bird and big game hunting across additional acres.
- Increasing access to sport fishing, including new opportunities at previously closed locations.
- Updating station-specific regulations to reflect current conditions and management practices.

The proposal also includes targeted regulatory updates to improve clarity and consistency across the Code of Federal Regulations, helping reduce confusion caused by overlapping or outdated federal requirements.

Hunters and anglers play a central role in conservation in the United States. According to the Service’s most recent National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, more than 39.9 million Americans fish and 14.4 million hunt, contributing more than \$144 billion annually to the U.S. economy.

These activities support jobs, fund conservation efforts and sustain outdoor traditions that connect communities to the land and to each other. Hunting and fishing also provide important sources of protein for many people, which supports the Trump Administration’s updated Dietary Guidelines that puts real food back at the center of preventing chronic disease and promoting lifelong wellness.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, established to conserve fish, wildlife and plant resources, is the world’s largest network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation. The system includes 573 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts, with more than 71 million visitors each year.

National wildlife refuges provide vital habitat for thousands of species while also offering high-quality recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography and environmental education...

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*Thank you for your continued support!*

[www.boone-crockett.org](http://www.boone-crockett.org)

# ...A Guide To Finding The Perfect Backcountry Creekside Fishing Camp

(continued from page 3)

Then, decide on whether you want to use dry flies or subsurface flies (nymphs or streamers). Fish in alpine waters can be picky at times, but if you find the right pool at the right time of day (generally early mornings or late afternoons) you might catch them while they're active.

Watching a fish go after a fly or lure is one of the most exciting moments in an angler's life. Keep it simple and keep moving. If you don't catch anything in one spot, move up or downstream. A good strategy is to pick a stretch of water, say a half mile or so, and try to get a lure or fly into every spot that looks "fishy."



## Your own private Idaho...beach

Mountain streams and creeks also offer new and experienced anglers and their families abundant opportunities to "fish from camp."

For families in particular, this is an added benefit. With a streamside camp, children are safe from the road and can roam to their heart's extent flipping over rocks, collecting treasures, observing wildlife and maybe even sniff out some insects for bait.

It's no secret that Idaho boasts one of the greatest camping opportunities in the country. There's no shortage of public lands, designated campgrounds, dispersed campsites and roadside pullouts to get yourself front-row fishing access right out your camp's backdoor.

When you're researching places to go, look for rivers, streams and creeks that follow along forest roads. Once you ballpark a location, turn on the satellite image feature and zoom in to look for natural access sites. Roadside pullouts, large meadows, trails, gentle sloping banks and designated campgrounds can all be seen from the air and can be a great place to start.

To take your backcountry adventure to the next level, try combining a day of fishing with a night out camping. Pick a spot along a mountain road that feels safe and accessible to the river. That basalt cliff might provide

a sweet view at sundown, but it's going to be nearly impossible (and unsafe) to reach the river. Oftentimes you can find cozy little cutouts with a rock fire ring and ample trees for shade. Once you establish home base for the night, it's time to park the car and rig up the poles.

## To the fisher go the spoils

There's one final element to backcountry stream fishing that can cap off the perfect outdoor experience: eating your catch. (Just double check the Idaho Fish Seasons and Rules booklet here:

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/seasons-rules-fish-2025-2027.pdf> to make sure harvest is allowed on your stream.)



The day is finally winding down and you start to feel the sun's heat give way to the evening mountain shadows. Your skin is cooked and your feet are sore. For those anglers who pleased the fishing gods and walked away with a fish or two for the cooler, the reward for hard work and patience is minutes away from sizzling in a skillet.

**Hot Tip:** If you're steering more towards a camping trip, be sure to pack a few essentials in case you do haul in a few fish. A good cast-iron skillet with butter and herbs is a choice way to cook up some trout. Alternatively, you can stuff the fish with lemon and butter, then wrap it in a couple layers of aluminum foil to set over a low fire.

There's nothing quite like the taste of a wild-caught fish from mountain waters. Sure, they're not the whopper that's going to land you in the state record books, but they will surely fill up space in your scrap book. What they lack in size they make up for in flavor and memories.

So next time you're sitting around your streamside campsite wondering how to cure the boredom blues, be sure to include a fishing rod, some basic tackle, lures or flies and a few kitchen fixins to connect with nature in a fun, new (and delicious) way.

To learn more and to check fishing regulations and rules, check out the 2025-2027 Idaho Fishing Seasons and Rules booklet available online (<https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/seasons-rules-fish-2025-2027.pdf>), at license vendors or any Fish and Game offices.

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