Walk-ins play an important role in Alaska hunting, and some of the finest Dall sheep and mountain goat trophies taken today are done by boot and blister-travel.

Some of the advantages of walk-ins are obvious. Others are subtle, but no less important. Cost comes first to my frugal mind. If you are considering a sheep or goat hunt for the first time, a carefully planned walk-in may be your best bet. I have run across many novice hunters who should have used a couple of walk-ins as a proving ground before spending close to a grand on a fly-in just to find out they have nothing in common with sheep and goat hunters.

Several times over the years I've used a walk-in as a backup to bigger plans. Most of the pilots I hunt with are busy guys who are forced to change plans at the last minute once in a while. Instead of painting the house I went to Plan B and had a great time. My penchant for getting above timberline alone is often reason enough to take off on a Friday afternoon and spend a weekend hunting. It doesn't require a lot of planning, and the desires of a partner don't have to be considered.

Most of the places I use for walk-in hunts are areas where I photograph sheep and goats year round. Keeping close to home allows you to investigate the region throughout spring and summer, look for openings in the landscape, see opportunites, and plan for the fall.

SEE, OPPORTUNITIES, PAGE 8

Walk-ins are everywhere in Alaska. All you have to do is look around.

by Ace Sommerfeld

Many of the places I use for walk-in hunts are areas where I photograph sheep and goats year round. Keeping close to home allows you to investigate the region throughout spring and summer, look for openings in the landscape, see opportunities, and plan for the fall.

SEE, OPPORTUNITIES, PAGE 8

by Ace Sommerfeld

There's an age-old belief in most Alaska hunting circles which states that walk-in hunts are a waste of time. I've been on too many successful and memorable walk-ins to pass them off.

HUNTING ALASKA BY FOOT

Lower Koyukuk Moose Hunt Changes

By Randy Rogers, Wildlife Planner

The August 1999 Alaska Hunting Bulletin reported that the Department of Fish and Game had initiated a planning process to consider changes that might be needed in management of moose in the Koyukuk River drainage (see Map 1). After several months of hard work by a citizen's advisory body called the Koyukuk River Moose Hunters' Working Group, a draft management plan and several regulatory proposals were produced. Department staff and members of the Working Group presented the draft plan to the Alaska Board of Game at their March 2000 meeting in Fairbanks. The Board of Game adopted the plan, and it will be implemented for the 2001 hunting season.

SEE, CHANGES, PAGE 5

In This Issue of Alaska Hunting Bulletin

Action Key to Preserving Hunting ........... 14
Editorial ........................................ 2
Hunter Education Courses Calendar .... 11
Regional Game Reports ...................... 3
Road Accessible Hunting Opportunities .. 6
Status of Upland Game ...................... 2
HUNTING RESOURCES, IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE THE SPORT

It seems to happen every year after looking all summer at hunting data and what appear to be as distin- cts as squinted at through the wrong end of a pair of binocu- lars, that by the opening day looms just a few short days away. For hunters, priorities shift and be back up. Time to organiz- e gear, purchase supplies, and ma- ke sure that firearms, bows, and other equipment are in working order prior to heading to the field. Success- ful hunts also depend on the weather report on plans and research so that you'll have the right pants, boots, or hunting lottery tickets and are familiar with the rule- s for the areas you will be in. It's also time to reflect on the impor- tance of practicing to improve hunt- ing skills BEFORE attempting to take animals.

As I reviewed the material contained in this edition of the Hunter Bulletin, I was struck by the similar messages that resonat- ed throughout the stories addressing different topics. Whether talking about waterfowling, walk-in hunts, hunter behavior, the themes of pre-hunt preparation, skill development, and hunter conservation, the repeated myself as a bit different that what you would have seen in a similar pub- lication a decade or two ago. And there are important reasons why.

The field of wildlife manage- ment is becoming more challeng- ing all the time. If you follow the issues being debated before the Alaska Board of Game or are aware of the development of a parame- ter of public involvement in manage- ment process in the state it will be obvious that the art and sci- ence of managing wildlife is becom- ing more complicated. Wildlife biologists are still faced with the problems of understanding how wildlife species relate to their hab-itat and to each other, and how best to monitor animal populations in this vast and remote land. In addition, we have to face the challenges in determining the best way to manage wildlife popula- tions to meet the varied needs of the public.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation's mission is to conserve and enhance Alas- ka's wildlife and to provide for a wide range of uses of wildlife resour- ces by people. By tradition, the U.S., and under this state's con-stitution, wildlife belongs to "the people of the state" and to an increasing number of citizens and groups, with a variety of dif- ferent perspectives. Wildlife animals, are willing to speak up ab- out their own particular desired wildlife management are in working with the Department of Fish & Game. We believe s/he has been discrimi- nated at relatively low densities. This spring very few birds were de- pended sharply in 1999 and 2000. The consequences of failing are al- most unthinkable. The Koyukuk moose planning project described in this issue is a good example, where the planning group was able to make proposals to the Board of Game that had "buy in" a desired divers- ity of groups with different inter- ests. The Department took such efforts seriously, as shown by the passage of virtually the complete proposed subsistence user public planning efforts such as the Fortymile caribou plan, the Kenai caribou plan, the Program Unit 4 bro wn bear plan are good exam- ples of the department working with the public to determine how to optimize management of wildlife popula-

Why is this pertinent in a pub- lication for fish & game? In addi- tion to the issues of wildlife would be helpful in determining this is an example of good, where the planning group was able to make proposals to the Board of Game that had "buy in" a desired divers- ity of groups with different inter- ests. The Department took such efforts seriously, as shown by the passage of virtually the complete proposed subsistence user public planning efforts such as the Fortymile caribou plan, the Kenai caribou plan, the Program Unit 4 brown bear plan are good exam- ples of the department working with the public to determine how to optimize management of wildlife populations.

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The consequences of failing are almost unthinkable. The Koyukuk moose planning project described in this issue is a good example, where the planning group was able to make proposals to the Board of Game that had "buy in" a desired diversity of groups with different interests. The Department took such efforts seriously, as shown by the passage of virtually the complete proposed subsistence user public planning efforts such as the Fortymile caribou plan, the Kenai caribou plan, the Program Unit 4 brown bear plan are good examples of the department working with the public to determine how to optimize management of wildlife populations.

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**Region I**

**Black bear** - Black bear numbers appear to be healthy throughout Southeast Alaska. A bear research project on Kuitu Island began in June 2000 and shows promise of providing us with the information we need to conduct a population estimate on this heavily hunted population. No changes in bear trends or hunting regulations are anticipated.

**Brown bear** - The Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Team report is out, and the team's efforts will be a major part of the fall Board of Game meeting in Juneau this November. DWC biologists are working with USFS staff in trying to establish management recommendations for brown bear harvests in the region, especially for nonresident hunters. Fall BOG proposals may include one that would put the Unit 5 hunt on a registration permit (like the remainder of the region), and some form of season restriction on the Unit 1 season.

**Elk** - Elk population in Unit 3 continues to grow, and for this fall 70 permits have been issued. The target of 20 bulls was not hit last fall (16 bulls were killed), and at the BOG we will recommend an increase up to 120 permits for bulls on Eolin and Zarembo islands and an elk hunt for Units 1, 2, and the remainder of Unit 3.

**Furbearers -** Marten research in the region is in the course of being wrapped up, and biologists are in the process of analyzing years of data and preparing final questions for changes to trapping regulations at the fall BOG.

**Mountain goat** - Mountain goats are considered stable, with some question about the effects of helicopter flights in the Juneau area. At the BOG we will suggest a liberalization of the season in the Chilkat Range south of Haines.

**Moose** - Moose populations seem to remain stable, with the exception of the apparently growing herd in the Gustavus Area. We are considering a proposal to implement a cow season there, and will also likely suggest an increase in the level of the Berners Bay harvest to the BOG.

**Sika black-tailed deer** - Deer populations experienced a mild winter in 2000 for the most part. We do not anticipate any staff proposals to the BOG this fall.

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**Regional Hunting Reports**

**Wolf** - The Unit 2 (Prince of Wales Island) wolf hunting season trapping was closed 1 month early in winter 2000. Our research continues and biologists are tracking wolves this summer.

**Nongame -** Goshawk researchers are conducting what may be one of the last field seasons on the longer-term research project, and final data analysis and report preparation is underway.

**Region II**

**Black bears** - The highest densities probably occur in western and northern Unit 6D and in eastern Unit 6A of the Prince William Sound. Reported harvest during 1997-98 was 221 be bears including 129 males and 92 unidentified bears, with 161 bears taken in Unit 6D. This past year's harvest was above the previous 3-year average. In Unit 177 bears were killed, percent males and average male skull size (17 inches) remained unchanged. As in the past, nearly 80% of the harvest occurred during the spring.

Black bears in Units 7 and 15 of the Kenai Peninsula are difficult to count because of the dense habitat in which they live. Black bears are abundant throughout suitable habitat on the peninsula. In Unit 15 bear density is estimated at 205 bears per 1,000 square kilometers for areas within the 1947 burn and 265 per 1,000 square kilometers in the 1969 burn. Three thousand black bears were estimated for 15,288 square kilometers of available habitat. This is a stable level but probably will decrease slightly over the next decade due to fewer moose in the 1969 burn area and the possible habitat encroachment by humans.

Black bears are numerous in portions of Units 11 and 13, while the rest of the state is sparsely populated by black bears. The 1997-98 harvest of 101 black bears was the highest reported. Harvests in GMU 11 are low with only 7 taken in 1997-98 and present no influence on overall bear abundance.

It is estimated 250 to 300 bears inhabit Unit 14C in the Anchorage area and the population has increased in recent decades. Only about 17 black bears are harvested annually by hunters, primarily because bear hunting is not allowed in most of the Subunit and baiting is prohibited. Defense of life and property shootings are increasing, from 1995 to 1998, the Subunit averaged 12 black bears taken per year.

**Brown Bears** - The population of about 750 bears is probably stable or increasing in the Prince William Sound. The bulk of brown bears (280) are in Unit 6D. Hunter harvest in 1997-98 was 53 bears, including 40 males. The average male skull size was 25 inches. Fifteen bears were taken in Unit 6A and 27 bears taken in Unit 6D.

Brown bears are difficult to count due to the dense cover over most of their range on the Kenai Peninsula. We estimate the 13,848 square kilometers of brown bear habitat support a average density of 20 bears per 1,000 square kilometers, resulting in a population of 277 bears (range 250 to 300) in Units 11 and 15.

The population is stable in the Kodiak Archipelago Unit 8 with an estimated 2,800 animals and an average annual hunter harvest of 160.1 bears between 1990 and 1998. Bear numbers in northeastern Kodiak Island seemed to have increased in the last two decades as a result of less intensive conflicts between cattle ranchers and bears.

The population estimate for Unit 9 of the Alaska Archipelago Peninsula area of Unit 9. This unit produces almost one-quarter of the state's brown bear harvest, with guided hunters accounting for 70 percent of the take. Annual harvest has averaged 270 over the past 10 calendar years, with a record of 285 taken during Fall 1997. Harvests have been evenly balanced between fall and spring hunts and have remained within desired limits, resulting in high quality hunting.

Since 1991, fall and spring hunts have produced an average of 62 percent and 77 percent males with average skull sizes of 25.4 and 25 inches, respectively. Unit 15 is considered good interior habitat, varying in type from tundra to timber with bears numerous throughout the unit. A population estimate obtained in 1996 and 1998 resulted in about 1,500 bears in Unit 15. Brown bears are found throughout GMU 11 but no population estimate has been made. Harvests are extremely low, with only four taken in 1997-98, and have no impact on the population.

Densities are stable or increasing in the Matanuska and Susitna Valley area. While the density in highly settled 14A appears lower than adjacent Subunits, brown bear numbers appear to be increasing. Harvest tracking suggests the large adult male segment in 16B had decreased. During 1992 through 1996 hunters harvested an annual average of 8 female brown bears in 14A and 14B and in Unit 16 they harvested 96 owls.

The estimated population of 55 to 65 appears stable with most of the bears in or near Chugach State Park in Subunit 14C. Very little of the unit is open to brown bear hunting and brown bears are seldom taken by hunters.

**Deer** - Highest densities are found on Hawkins, Hinchinbrook, Montague and Knight islands in 6D. Numbers increased considerable in 1996 and final data analysis and report is out, and the team’s efforts in response to relatively mild winters. The population could be approaching the level reached during the last peak in the mid-1980s. During 1997 to 1998, 1,485 hunters reported taking 2,525 deer. Seventy-one percent of the harvest was males and 66 percent of the hunters were successful. Clear-cut logging of old-growth forest on private land in 6D is a concern. Extensive logging occurred on the mainland in eastern 6D and in Patton Bay/Beach River on Montague Island.

After reaching an historic high in the mid-1980s, the population experienced a major decline fol-
Steel is lighter than lead. To compensate for steel’s lighter shot weight than lead and retain more energy beyond 40 yards, the generally eroding steel shotshell is now produced in two sizes larger than you would with lead (example: #2 or #3 steel instead of #4 lead). Because steel shot is rounder and deforms less. Unfortunately, the shotshell marketplace is often not in tune with our needs. In particular, the high prices on bismuth-tin (s$15 per shell) and tungsten-iron (s$2.25 per shell). Steel shotshell configurations are different. Better pattern efficiency and more payload volume in the same-size steel shot can buy lighter steel loads (e.g. 1 ounce vs. 1-1/4 ounce) and get effective patterning at less cost.

Hunting Strategies for Waterfowl—Arts and Ethics
Prior to the North American duck hunting season, about 5 million people hunted migratory birds annually in the U.S. Harvesting 12.15 million ducks and 1.5 million geese each year. Alaska has averaged about 10,000 waterfowl hunters, taking about 1,000 ducks and 200 geese. Unfortunately, on average, one in every four waterfowl shot by hunters are not returned to the gamebirds’ natural habitat. In the days gone by, when one bird was lost—they recover, survive as injured birds, or die. Even under ideal circumstances, like a study in Illinois where skilled shooters and guides were involved, 15% of the birds are lost. Any experienced waterfowler will attest to the challenge of cleanly bagging ducks—they are fast, hard to target, and often erode even their small size to the decoys when least expected. There are some major factors contributing to lost (and missed) birds and an efficiency checklist for planning your hunt strategy: Species of Bird—Each kind of game bird behaves differently, and the care and anticipation on the right day will make the hunt more interesting and keep you out of trouble with the restricted bag limits on some species. Summer duck-watching and leafing through the field guides is a good way to prepare for fall hunting.

Hunt Methods—Pass-shooting can result in bird losses as high as 30%,? especially when you use wrong choke and ammunition selection to meet the challenge of wing shooting. Less effective patterning at less cost will make the hunt more interesting and keep you out of trouble with the restricted bag limits on some species. Summer duck-watching and leafing through the field guides is a good way to prepare for fall hunting.

Hunting in dense marshes presents unique challenges. The waterfowl shot needs to be used to decide which birds are downed, compared to the successful recovery of birds on open water. Plan ahead, get to know the hunt area in advance, and select a shooting stand that offers good visibility in your zone of fire and watch every shot bird carefully until it is down. In Alaska, it is not unusual to lose birds on outgoing tides or down-river. Hitting a boat and dog where they are needed is essential.

Hunt Methods—Pass-shooting can result in bird losses as high as 30%, especially when you use wrong choke and ammunition selection to meet the challenge of wing shooting. Less effective patterning at less cost will make the hunt more interesting and keep you out of trouble with the restricted bag limits on some species. Summer duck-watching and leafing through the field guides is a good way to prepare for fall hunting.

Gun Dogs—the Waterfowler’s Best Friend
I often have reason to re-evaluate my choice to live with three active hunting dogs and a spouse who prefers dog training over pure leisure (sleep) on the weekends. But as I scroll through the “dog-day” memories... old Charlie the Labrador’s midnight sneak into Bill’s bunk after a hard Susitna Flats opening day... Miss Ruffian making a “pop-fly” catch on Ann’s first white-fronted goose... and 6-month-old Griz enthused about feeding, training, and technology.

Steel is harder and deforms less. Because steel shot is rounder and deforms less. Unfortunately, the shotshell marketplace is often not in tune with our needs. In particular, the high prices on bismuth-tin (s$15 per shell) and tungsten-iron (s$2.25 per shell). Steel shotshell configurations are different. Better pattern efficiency and more payload volume in the same-size steel shot can buy lighter steel loads (e.g. 1 ounce vs. 1-1/4 ounce) and get effective patterning at less cost.
FROM PAGE 1

changes made by the Alaska Board of Game. Involvement of hunters and state and federal hunting regulations with rural public comment concerning the Koyukuk Area (KCUA). This means permits and coordination between rural and non-rural Koyukuk moose hunters and state and federal wildlife and land managers was crucial to the success of the project. The draft plan will remain open for public comments through November 1, 2000.

Changes to the lower Koyukuk moose hunts include:

- Moose hunting permits will not be required for the entire Koyukuk Controlled Use Area (KCUC). This means permits will be needed from the mouth of the Koyukuk River and above. Previously permits had been required only in the portion of the KCUC downstream from Huslia.

- The general registration hunt has been changed to a drawing hunt. The Board authorized issuing up to 400 permits in one season with 88% of the permits to be awarded to residents and 20% to non-residents. The actual number of permits available each year will be determined by the Galena Area Biologist, based on the moose population status and other biological factors.

- Beginning with the 2001 hunting season, there will be a winter application period and drawing for Koyukuk moose general hunting permits. The fall hunting season for the fall 2001 hunt must be submitted between November 1, 2000 and December 6, 2000. Winners will be notified in January 2001. There are two separate, 10-day drawing hunts in the early and late portions of the season. Permit holders who are successful in any Koyukuk moose hunting draw will not be eligible for any Koyukuk moose drawing permit the same hunting year.

- Permit holders will be required to stop at Ella’s Cabin check station or in Huslia or Hughes within 48 hours of being awarded a Koyukuk moose permit. Applications for federal hunting season, there will be a

- The draft Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan was developed through the cooperative efforts of the Koyukuk River Moose Hunters’ Working Group, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies. The Working Group is a citizen-based advisory body composed primarily of representatives from state fish and game agency and commercial operators. Agency personnel have been involved in the planning process as technical advisors. The recommendations of the Working Group were developed through a consensus decision-making process. Working Group members agreed that Koyukuk River moose are biologically cautious with the moose resource, and to manage for a quality hunting experience. The Working Group recommended that the number of hunters who participated in the hunt in 1998 be used as the baseline for the maximum level of hunting that management should provide for in the lower Koyukuk River area.

Mission Statement

Protect, maintain, and enhance Koyukuk River drainage moose population size and habitat quality of calves and yearling bulls and a moderate recruitment, be on the order of 25%. The estimated harvest for 1999 is approximately 2500 moose.

GOAL 2: Protect and enhance moose habitat within the Koyukuk River drainage in order to support existing or, in the case of areas with depressed moose population levels, increased population levels.

GOAL 3: Manage predation on moose so that moose abundance can be maintained or increased, human harvest levels can be maintained and populations of predators remain viable.

Moose Population Status

Aerial trend count surveys are the most common use of monitoring surveys used on the Koyukuk River drainage. Trend counts are conducted in the highest density areas because counting the greatest moose possible provides for more accurate estimates of sex and age ratios. Sex and age ratios are the most important aspect of trend count surveys because they provide the best indicators of populations trends.

In general, total moose population was not observed in 1999. Although the survey was conducted in 1999, the results of the 1999 aerial survey are not comparable to the 2000 survey due to the lower number of observers.

Figure 1. Hunters and moose harvest in the KCUC.

From 1988 to 1998 numbers of non-local Alaska residents declined from 2658 to 1590 (77%). During this time there was a decrease in the number of non-resident hunters from 1994 to 1998, with 47-48% shot a moose. These are high harvest and use rates when compared to interior Alaska non-resident hunters, showing the importance of moose as a subsistence resource in this region.

Predation

Moose are the predominant prey species in the Lower Koyukuk drainage for wolves. For most of the year, moose are the primary prey species for wolves, and are the major prey species for bears. Moose populations and habitats in concert with other components of the ecosystem and provide for fair and equitable human uses of the moose resource.

Management Goals

The plan draft includes eight different goals that address a variety of topics including harvest, habitat, population, predation, commercial operations and enforcement. Objectives and actions needed are listed beneath each goal in the plan. The first three goals in the plan are:

GOAL 1: Manage Koyukuk River drainage moose on a sustained yield basis to provide both hunting and other enjoyment of wildlife in a manner that compliments the wildlife and remote character of the area and that minimizes disruption of local resident’s lifestyles.

GOAL 2: Protect and enhance moose habitat within the Koyukuk River drainage in order to support existing or, in the case of areas with depressed moose population levels, increased population levels.

GOAL 3: Manage predation on moose so that moose abundance can be maintained or increased, human harvest levels can be maintained and populations of predators remain viable.

Moose Harvest Trends

Harvest has been increasing within the KCUC of the lower Koyukuk drainage during the past 10 years. At the Ella’s Cabin check station in 1990, a total of 735 hunters were checked and they harvested 367 moose. This compares to the 299 hunters that harvested 181 moose in 1988 (Figure 1).
ROAD ACCESSIBLE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

by Tom Reale

Big game hunting in Alaska is a multidimensional challenge—the state is immense, the varied number of species available for hunters is greater than anywhere else in the U.S., and terrain and weather present significant hurdles to the prospective hunter. Although much of the hunting effort is conducted in remote regions, assisted by airplanes, outfitters, and guides, many sportsmen choose to try and find animals near cities and towns where road access is possible.

This strategy has its advantages and its drawbacks. The main advantage to hunting on the road system is cost, or lack thereof. Reaching wilderness areas by chartering an airplane can send hunting costs into the thousands of dollars, and when you add outfitting and guiding costs as well, the final price tag can be formidable, to say the least. Also, flying in for a big game hunt demands a time commitment that many hunters can’t afford, especially if you’re trying to hunt for a few days. However, the downside of this open-ended nature of such plans, since weather problems can extend your stay in the field by several days.

Finally, hunting in a close-by, familiar area allows you to scout the area before the season opens, and if you do so year after year you acquire an intimate knowledge of the region and of the animals that frequent the place. It’s possible to hike and backpack into an area reachable by road during the spring and summer and look for game trails and signs, and evaluate the area’s potential for hunting success.

However, the downside of hunting accessible areas is that they aren’t accessible just to you. Although the total number of hunters in the state is small compared to that in other states, when you concentrate them in our relatively few miles of roads it sure can seem like a lot of folks. If you want to experience moose hunter overload, try driving the Hatcher Pass Road near Willow on the opening day of moose season—you’d think that word got out that someone had dropped bailes of dollar bills out of the sky. And if there’s one suggestion that gets overdone, try driving the Hatcher Pass Road near Willow on the opening day of moose season—you’d think that word got out that someone had dropped bailes of dollar bills out of the sky. And if there’s one suggestion that gets overdone, try driving the Hatcher Pass Road near Willow on the opening day of moose season—you’d think that word got out that someone had dropped bailes of dollar bills out of the sky.

Lots of hunters on the road means less chance of success for any one person. To increase your chances, try to try that you’re that one person, you’re going to have to expend significant effort, both mental and physical.

First, the mental part—you must become a student of the hunting regulations book. Each Game Management Unit (GMU) has a number of special areas that demand study if you want to separate yourself from the pack. Controlled use areas, game refuges, management areas, parks, etcetera, all have rules and regulations that affect your ability to access and hunt them.

Next, you should become an amateur cartographer, studying topographic maps in great detail. The Alaska Atlas and Gazetteer is invaluable for getting an overall look at the topography of the area, getting a feel for the steepness of the terrain and an idea of the vegetation cover. Although the maps aren’t detailed enough to serve as your field maps, they show many roads and trails not shown on USGS topo maps. The topo maps haven’t been updated in decades, and the atlas can point out access possibilities that would otherwise go unnoticed. Most of the places on the road system are covered by the 1:24,000 (1 inch = 2400 feet or 1 inch = 15 to 1) USGS section maps, and some areas have the even more detailed 7 minute (25,000 to 1) maps available. You can’t have too much detail when scouting or travelling in unfamiliar terrain. Do not attempt to use the maps in the hunting regulations book to determine exactly where you’re going to hunt—those maps are rudimentary at best, and intended to serve as rough indicators of areas, not as exact delineations.

Another source of information often overlooked is hiker’s trail guides. Gall Volt of the Anchorage office of Fish and Game suggests looking over all the guides for trailhead and access information. “Even the mountain biking books have trailhead information that the other guides don’t have,” she said. So be creative in your search for information. Track out fishing books, cross-country ski books, mountaineering sources, anything and everything that might lead you to some of the lesser-known trails and access points.

The next step in your quest is to determine who owns the land you want to hunt. Although the vast majority of Alaska is publicly owned, the areas near the roads are checker boards of private, state, federal, and Native corporation lands, and it’s your responsibility as a hunter to know where you are at all times and to be sure that your presence is allowed by law. The best sources of information are the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Recorder’s Office, and the Bureau of Land Management Lands Office. These offices have detailed land use maps that show who owns the land, and how to get in touch with owners. They also show areas where hunting isn’t allowed, such as campgrounds, restricted areas near trailheads, etcetera. The people who work at the offices are knowledgeable and helpful and can show you how to use and read their maps.

Once you’ve got some ideas on where you’d like to go, your next step ought to be the closest Alaska Department of Fish and Game office (ADF&G). There they have large, detailed maps of the state marked to indicate hunting units, closed areas, controlled use areas, etcetera. The personnel at Fish and Game offices are helpful in answering questions about hunting areas. However, don’t expect to call or walk into an office and ask where you can find a moose. Do your homework first, narrow down your options, and be as specific as possible when posing your questions. You’re much more likely to get a positive response if you ask about the relative merits of two or three possible sites, than to expect a wildlife biologist to divulge the location of his favorite hunting spot.

Fish and Game offices also have handouts, copies of topo maps outlining designated hunting areas. These are not meant to be used in the field—they lack detail and merely outline the areas involved. It’s up to you to obtain the topo maps for the areas you’re interested in and mark the appropriate boundaries on the maps you carry.

When you visit the DNR, BLM, or Fish and Game offices, bring your topo maps with you. You can mark exact locations on the maps you’ll be carrying in the field so there’s little chance of error or misunderstanding.

When you’re investigating your options, of special interest are the controlled use areas—many of these restrict or prohibit access by motorized vehicles. This is a boon for a couple of reasons. The first is that quite a few hunters won’t go anywhere they can’t get to by truck, boat, airplane, or ATV. (This is where the physical part of your strategy comes into play.) If you’re willing to expend some effort, you’ll leave most folks behind you at the roadside. There are also places, such as along the Denali Highway in the Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area, where it’s possible to reach hunting areas by canoe. You can paddle and line a canoe upriver...
lowing three consecutive severe winters beginning in 1987-88. Northern Kodiak and Afognak islands experienced particularly severe mortality. Light to moderate winter mortality has occurred in previous years and has been generally consistent since then, and improved winter conditions have resulted in an increasing population in the southern portions of Kodiak. The population is well below that of the mid 1980s and recovery on northern Kodiak and Afognak islands has been slow. Hunters reported that in 1998 deer were not as prevalent as in previous years and that larger bucks were scarce. The estimated annual harvest during the past seven years has averaged 8,213. The estimated number of hunters afield ranged from a high of 6,157 in 1989-90 to a low of 2,946 hunters in 1993-94.

Goat - The population is about 3,200 in GMU 6 of the Prince William Sound area of the Kenai Peninsula. Over the past 10 years, numbers have declined dramatically in Units 6A and 6B. The population in 6D (East) declined from 1988 to 95, but increased during the past two years. In 6D (East), the population recovery may be temporary because much of the goat winter range is in private ownership where extensive logging is progress in progress.

Following a steep decline on the Kenai Peninsula (Unit 7 and 15) beginning in the late 1960s through the early 1970s, the goat population began to grow by the mid 1970s. Growth continued until the early 1990s when the population was estimated to be approximately 4000 goats with 27 bulls to 100 cows. South of Beluga River we experience heavy snows followed by warm periods, causing crustng and icing conditions in 1992-93. In 1997 to 1998 conditions were similar, however, late winters beginning in 1987-88. Northern Kodiak and Afognak Islands experienced particularly severe mortality. Light to moderate winter mortality has occurred in previous years and has been generally consistent since then, and improved winter conditions have resulted in an increasing population in the southern portions of Kodiak. The population is well below that of the mid 1980s and recovery on northern Kodiak and Afognak islands has been slow. Hunters reported that in 1998 deer were not as prevalent as in previous years and that larger bucks were scarce. The estimated annual harvest during the past seven years has averaged 8,213. The estimated number of hunters afield ranged from a high of 6,157 in 1989-90 to a low of 2,946 hunters in 1993-94.

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**Walk-in Hunts Abound in Alaska**

**From PAGE 1**

Summer. This is a bonus to walk-ins for several reasons: you learn the country, get in shape, and test your limitations. A lot of stalks have been blown because hunters didn’t know the terrain well enough.

Walk-ins allow you to walk-in into an area devoid of aircraft access can be a boon to your hunt. Not only do you eliminate the immediate competition of hunters with fleshier legs, who probably did a fly-around and know where the game is, but you are likely to be in an area that in general gets less hunting pressure. Walk-ins allow you to hunt where you want to, as opposed to where someone is willing to take you. The meaning of a “good strip” is often different for a hunter and a pilot who has an airplane to think about.

Walk-ins allow a hunter to take advantage of Alaska’s expanding wilderness trail system. Using trails often makes it possible to spend more daylight hours on a mountain. If I know I can hit a trail at the base of a mountain near dark, I don’t mind pulling the pin on that last 100 miles the next day. Knowing where the trail comes out insures a safe hike without the worry of getting lost in the dark. Trails usually lead to a hiking route in low country. The importance of using trails hits home on late season goat hunts when days are short, and snow may overload travel slow.

The idea of fly-ins being easier on the body than walk-ins is unfounded. When I consider the miles I put on after landing on a remote strip, I realize many of those trips were as long and tiresome as any walk-in I’ve experienced. Careful planning is more important than flying out to unexplored territory. Talking to veteran hunters and studying harvest reports should help a walk-in turn into a successful hunt.

My walk-in hunts began almost as soon as I moved to Anchorage in 1976. I hooked up with a couple guys who did nearly all their hunting off the road. The Kenai Peninsula was our primary target for goats. Few restrictions existed back then; so road-side bilies were hard to come by. We did all right, but long walks were required to get away from heavily hunted herds. Picking a drainage, and pressing a few miles into its headwaters was an effective way to hunt. Most of the time we’d go in without overnight gear, and arrive at the outfit at dusk. We would all hike out; before the early mountain permit system in 1980, serious goat hunters got a big break. Shooting a mature billy with fresh meat to bring back home became possible. The two-tiered permit system consists of an early draw hunt and a later registration period where quotas are not filled by drawing hunters. Both hunts present good walk-in opportunities for different reasons.

Like the early season hunt which runs from August 10 to September 30, because it allows a hunter to enter an area where elk permits are not valid. If you are holding a goat permit it may be easier to coax a partner along if they realize a ram may be in store for them. A hidden advantage to an early hunt is the possibility of holding out for a billy with exceptional horns, and combining it with a billy that has fresh winter hair.

At the same time, I still hold out until the last few days of the early season for a billy. Late September is a little early for the best hair conditions, but old bilies are beginning to look good. The pattern of having fewer animals in all areas of the Kenai to mature, and by late September they are moving below the snow line onto vulnerable mountain-tailsides to higher trails.

During closure of the season on September 30, harvests are tallied and quotas for registration are set. The late season opens October 15. A lot has happened up high in two weeks. Bilies’ hair has grown to nearly full length. Mornings are still cold, but the business of getting them to as low as they’ll get you all year. It’s perfect opportunity to steal a billy on a very easy hunt. I recall making stalks of less than two hours from the highway. All it takes is studying the mountains you buzz past on the way to the Russian River.

The Kenai Peninsula was also my primary sheep hunting area in the 1970s. My first two rams were shot during the late season. They weren’t big rams, and that was the reason most veteran sheep hunters considered the Kenai Peninsula to be an easy zone. However, young hunters like myself harvest the first legal ram that ended up in our sights.

Times have changed on the Kenai since the state went to 4/4, or full curl in 1988. Under the old 5/4 and 7/8 curl system most rams became legal to harvest after four years and six years, respectively. Now most legal rams are eight years old. The new system has put more rams in the mountains, and getting a mature specimen is guaranteed.

For decades Kenai sheep were considered inferior. Early biologists unwittingly classed them as a smaller subspecies. Modern studies and the 4/4 regulation have proven the early Kenai rams with the best mainland rams. Sev­ eral 40-inch-plus rams have been taken in recent years on walk-in hunts in the Resurrection system. The Cooperative Hunting Post Office and inspect the ram hanging from the clerk. I measured the skull as having a 42-43 inches. That’s a lot of ram in any mountain range.

Looking for photographic opportunities when the upper reaches of the mountains get blanketed with snow has helped me realize some interesting things about Kenai sheep. Rams in Aug­ ust range season also plays a part, but rams show up in strange places in mid-September just before the sea­ son closes. Every year I see legal rams in areas accessible from a highway. My brother Greg shot a late-season ram that nearly rolled to his truck a few years back.

Not all Kenai sheep are count­ing headlines above the highway. In fact, it’s possible to get a good look at a billy just by walking a few extra candy bars and go for a walk. Side valleys along the Resurrection system offer chances to see game in places that aren’t filled by drawing hunters. Both eastern side of the peninsula has more sheep than many hunters realize. Finding them is mostly a matter of walking a route close to the right mountain at the right time. Some sheep hunting areas have been set aside for hikers for a long time. One such area is the Russian River.

Gary McCarthy and Gene Heckler began their 28-year sheep hunt­ ing career by walking 26-miles into a honeybecue setting, high in the Resur­ rection system area twice. Area 14C, reputed to be the best Dall sheep hunting in the world, must be done by walk-in only.

Holding out for a 4/4 permit is equivalent to waiting for a mule’s management position. Both could take a lifetime.

Sheep hunting in Alaska is guaranteed. There will always be secrets on which to depend. Perhaps your next secret is to depend. Perhaps your next secret is to depend. Perhaps your next secret is to depend.

Good luck hunting.
On April 20, 2000 the Mobile Shooting Sports trailer began a two-month, 2,500-mile tour journey to deliver more than a dozen Hunter Information and Training Program clinics and workshops to hunters and shooters of southeast Alaska communities. The Mobile Shooting Sports Program began its maiden tour from its homebase in Anchorage. First stop was the annual Fairbanks outdoor show held at the Carlson Center. At the Fairbanks show, program coordinator Kirk Lingofelt and wildlife technician Matt Bobus, Deputy Director of Wildlife Conservation gave instructions during the shotgun clinic held at the Juneau Gun Club shooting grounds. Students were taught about wound factors and shot placement.

The trailer and crew took a moment to enjoy the scenery while traveling through Canada to Southeast Alaska.

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Participants in the Reloading Clinic held in Juneau at the Juneau Gun Club chronograph their bullets.

After leaving Fairbanks, Kirk and Matt traveled through Alaska and the Yukon headed for Haines. Planning and managing the logistics for such a lengthy trip was no easy task for the Mobile Shooting Sports program coordinator, Kirk Lingofelt. "We had quite a few obstacles to overcome in order to reach southeast Alaska including traveling through Canada and working within the ferry schedule. As any Alaskan carrying firearms and ammunition knows, the Canadian government has their own set of guidelines for transporting these items through their territory. As you can imagine with the focus of our trip being hunter training, we had quite a large amount of supplies needed to conduct shotgun, reloading and muzzleloader clinics, as well as the interactive DART shooting system." But Kirk did his homework well and reports that Canadian customs were gracious and helpful, permitting passage of the mobile program without a hitch. At Haines the mobile shooting sports crew

SEE, MOBILE, PAGE 14
er along several different streams, and hunt along the way and on the road back downstream.

The other advantage of the restriction is that without dozens of ATV’s scurrying around the area, the animals will be less spooked and more likely to come along. Look over all the listings at the beginning of each GMU’s section in the regulations book, and see where you might be able to escape from the crowds.

**The Lower Koyukuk Moose**

Members of the Koyukuk River Moose Hunters’ Working Group were able to achieve consensus on most issues and exercised a great deal of cooperation and compromise. The Working Group has been of great assistance to the Department in recommending subsistence moose management program, because of their secrecy they’re often hard to see.

The Working Group has been of great assistance to the Department in recommending subsistence moose management program, and the only differences from brand new.

When it comes to learning new hunting techniques, there are plenty of other options to pursue while you’re in the field. Small game hunting is available everywhere, and you can hunt birds and bunnies with shotgun, .22 rifle, or handgun. Snowshoe hare populations are just past their 10-year peak, but good numbers are still available in many interior locations. Grouse numbers aren’t great, but with some prospecting you can find good shooting. Parmigan numbers are quite good, especially in the Denali Highway region, and waterfowl opportunities exist as well. And don’t forget that the boreal brine can be quite a challenge, but you can learn to avoid places to go, networking isn’t just a yuppy buzzword—it can be invaluable in finding information on hunting opportunities and learning new techniques.

**Common Violations**

Road-accessible hunting doesn’t necessarily mean road hunting, or at least it shouldn’t. Part of the joy of hunting ought to be to get away from mechanical contrivances and use your body and brains to secure food for your family. The best places where you’re likely to run into trouble are areas that are not subject to “drive, herd, or molest” game with the sense that things when hunting along the road is the road is the road.

Learn to use a GPS unit so you can be sure of your position relative to boundaries. There are many instances of mock ins and the only differences from brand new.

A large percentage of the black bears are numerous in many parts of Southcentral and the Interior, but because of their secretive nature they’re often hard to see. A large percentage of the black bears taken every year are taken incidentally while hunters are after other big game. These bears die in a foolish and unnecessary manner, make sure you’re familiar with all the animals that are present locally, and memorize beforehand which ones are legal for you to take. You don’t want to stumble across a potential target and find yourself leaving through the regulations book, trying to find out if the season’s open, if you’re within the right boundaries, if the animal is legal for you to take, etcera. Under no circumstances be in a precarious position. The Working Group has been of great assistance to the Department in recommending subsistence moose management program, and the only differences from brand new.

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GREENHEADS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

FROM PAGE 4

Over the past 4,000 years, hunters have bred and trained a wide variety of bird dogs to search for, attract, point, flush, trail, and retrieve game birds. The common goal of their efforts has been to ensure an efficient, non-wasteful harvest of wildlife. In our present era of shrinking wildlife habitats, more intensive use of fewer public hunting areas, and the need for more careful conservation of bird resources, hunting with bird dogs not only ensures that we receive the rewards of our efforts in birds for the table, but also adds a satisfying new dimension to our enjoyment in the field.

As I mentioned in the section above on gunning, the unfortunate loss of unretrieved game birds results from the nature of wing-shooting with a shotgun, but most of it is directly related to hunter skills and choices made by hunters. The choice to hunt with or without a dog is an important hunting and conservation decision. The use of trained dogs can reduce the losses of downed waterfowl by up to 70%, depending on hunting conditions. In North America, only 18-20% of waterfowl hunters use dogs, but it is interesting that recorded rates are highest in British Columbia and Alaska.

In a survey of Alaskan hunters, the Department of Fish and Game was surprised to learn that 31% used dogs for waterfowl hunting. The highest level of use was on Kodiak (46%) and the Alaska Peninsula (41%), where sea duck hunting and retrieving in marine waters are common. You can bet that Alaska’s duck dogs earn their keep and provide many of the birds for our special winter meals.

Even if owning a gun dog is not for your family, most hunters that use dogs welcome the opportunity to work the dog with friends and help others recover birds in the field. A well-trained dog is a joy to watch and is especially appreciated when skin-ice is on the pond, or the tide is running. We should never use retrievers as an excuse for shooting beyond our abilities—we should be grateful for their skills and devotion that enrich our imperfect hunts.

Alaska Gun Dog Organizations

Alaska Retriever Club (AKC)
P.O. Box 100703
Anchorage, AK 99510

Alaska Women’s Retriever Club (AKC)
P.O. Box 771876
Eagle River, AK 99577

Fairbanks Retriever Club (AKC)
P.O. Box 60463
Fairbanks, AK 99706

Interior Alaska Gun Dog Association (NAHRA)
P.O. Box 55398
North Pole, AK 99705

Midnight Sun Gun Dog Association (NAHRA)
P.O. Box 241293
Anchorage, AK 99524

Peninsula Retriever Association (NAHRA)
P.O. Box 443
Soldotna, AK 99669

Alaska Bird Dog Association
P.O. Box 90701
Anchorage, AK 99509

(NAHRA) clubs located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Kenai Peninsula. AKC has a long history of promoting breeding and training of pure-bred working dogs, and conducting competitive field trials for retrievers. NAHRA focuses on dog work done under simulated hunting conditions, and offers non-competitive testing of dogs against standards of performance. The popularity of training for hunting situations has spawned a major expansion in AKC Hunt Tests and NAHRA events. Alaska’s newest hunting and dog group, Alaska Bird Dog Association, is providing more opportunities to train and test the flushing, pointing and versatile dogs for upland and waterfowl hunting. Members of all these clubs are avid hunters and can offer a wealth of advice, training opportunities, and hunting friendships.

Throughout this article, I have tried to emphasize the importance of being knowledgeable about waterfowl and the gear used in waterfowl hunting, both for more rewarding hunting experiences and conservation of game bird resources. After all, the responsibility for maintaining waterfowl hunting opportunities and an efficient harvest of migratory birds rests in the minds and trigger fingers of hunters in the field. With the level of public scrutiny on hunting and the educational resources that are available to waterfowlers today, there is no room for the excuses that “I can’t cleanly kill birds with steel shot”, and “I couldn’t tell what kind of bird it was when I shot”. If you take full advantage of all the opportunities to learn and practice the hunting arts, you can extend your enjoyment of waterfowling throughout the entire year—perhaps to the chagrin of your spouse, employer, and all the relatives that expect you to entertain them. Check out some videos, go to the shooting range, or join a gundog club—it will pay off in green-heads and great memories!

2000 HUNTER EDUCATION COURSE SCHEDULE

Anchorage Area Basic Hunter Education Course Schedule Fall 2000

October 10-21
2 Tues. & 2 Thurs., 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Location - Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (six sessions total)

November 7-18
2 Tues. & 2 Thurs., 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Location - Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (six sessions total)

December 5-16
2 Tues. & 2 Thurs., 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Location - Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (six sessions total)

For more information call:
Hunter Information & Training Program
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Anchorage at 267-2733
Or sign up at Hunter Information Center, 333 Raspberry Road

Anchorage Area Bow Hunter Education Schedule Fall 2000

Classes held in the Classroom Bldg., at Rabbit Creek Range. Field shoots are held at the same location.

October 7
Complete course (1:00 pm field shoot) 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

October 14
Complete course (1:00 pm field shoot) 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

October 21
Complete course (11:00 am and 1:00 pm field shoot) 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

November 4
Complete course (1:00 pm field shoot) 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

Course Location: Rabbit Creek Range (Toward Huy near Potter Marsh).

Alaska Department of Fish & Game in Anchorage at (907) 267-2733

Fairbanks Area Basic Hunter Education Course Schedule Fall 2000

Call 459-7206 or 459-7206 to sign up for the following classes.

To reserve your seat, pick up your student packet at the ADFS&:G office at 1300 College Road. Cost of class is $5.00.

October 2-4
Oct 2-3: 6-9 PM Includes Shoot. Call to sign up for class.
Just show up for shoot on 5 pm Oct 4. If you have completed class work Class. Hunter Ed. Bldg. Shoot: Creamer’s Farmhouse

October 8
9 AM - 6 PM Includes Shoot. Call to sign up for class.
Just show up for shoot on 3 PM if you have completed class work. Class. Hunter Ed. Bldg. Shoot: Creamer’s Farmhouse

November 12
9 AM - 6 PM Classroom only. Shooting exam must be completed at later date if you have completed class work. Next shoot will be spring 2001. Hunter Ed. Bldg. 1501 College Road.

This schedule is subject to change.

Palmer/Wasilla

Please call the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, Palmer office (746-6300) for further information on Basic Hunter and Bow Hunter Education Courses.

Scheduled Basic Hunter Education Course

Oct. 3-14
Tuesday/Thursday 6-8:30 pm
Saturday (8am-2pm) Location: (Sign up at the Palmer office)

Juneau/Douglas

For the next available Basic Hunter and Bow Hunter Education courses please contact:

Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Douglas office
Area Biologist, Neil Barten
(907) 465-4267
The moose population in Unit 14C declined 25-30 percent to an estimated 1,550 by November 1996, due to starvation and vehicle causes of death during the harsh winter of 1994-95. Since then the population has rebounded to about 1,900 with a ratio of 3:1 calves to cows. Numbers in the unit, hunting is by drawing permit only. Demand for these permits is high. In 1997, 5939 hunters applied for 220 drawing permits. The number of hunters in the 1990s has ranged from 465-730 with success rates of 21-29 percent. Annual harvests increased steadily during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but began declining in 1992. The average annual harvest from 1985 to 1990 was 26 bulls to 100 cows and in 1995 it was 21 bulls to 100 cows. The total harvest from the Nelchina Caribou Herd for all state and federal units in 1995 was 3,501; in 1996 it was 2,317, and in 1997 it was taken was 2,500 to 3,000. Fall hunting conditions have been very difficult the last three years, with caribou spending most of the hunting season in remote parts of the unit, especially the Lake Louise flats where ORV use is limited. Traditional fall ranges such as the Denali Highway were only lightly utilized by caribou in 1996 and 1997, but in 1995 and few caribou were spotted and provided hunting opportunity along the highway. The majority of caribou harvested along the road system were taken between Sourdough and Paxson on the Richardson Highway. This is the NCH migration corridor between summer and winter range. The last two years the herd has crossed here during late October and early November. Hunt conditions are crowded whenever the herd crosses during the hunting season. This area is also federal land and open to the federal subsistence hunt.

The Mentasta Caribou Herd continues to decline. The spring 1998 census resulted in only 415 caribou observed with only 13 calves to 100 cows surviving to late June. This was typical of the low calf production and/or survival seen in this herd during recent years. The fall 1998 extrapolated population estimate was 535 caribou with 10 calves to 100 cows and 43 bulls to 100 cows.

During 1997 we conducted an aerial survey of a major portion of the Rainy Pass Caribou range utilizing sheep surveys of the Alaska Range in Sub units 14A, B, and Unit 16. Observations revealed 1,130 caribou and classified 720 with calves representing 17 percent of the herd. An estimate of the herd was 1,750 to 2,000.

The Mulchatna Caribou Herd - The Mulchatna Caribou Herd peaked in numbers in 1996 at 200,000 caribou and has declined some since the peak. It has continued to expand its range, including instances in the fall of 1996 and fall 1998 where groups of Mulchatna caribou traveled as far north as Unit 19D. It appears that the Rainy Pass, Ton- nozema, and Greenville-Big Mountain herds are declining in size. The Beaver Mountain Caribou herd is estimated at a minimum of 129 caribou in 1999. Three recognized herds of caribou are located in the Big Fron- west of Willow, and Ray Mountain. Each herd is associated with and named for a mountain peak within the range of moose where the herd grazes. The Ray Mountains Caribou Herd numbers approximately 1,500 to 2,000 caribou, the Wolf Mountains Caribou Herd approximately 600 to 850 caribou, and the Galena Mountain Caribou Herd 250 to 500 caribou. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd is frequently found in the northern part of GMU 24, and occasionally travels into the western-most portions of GMU 21D and 24. Large numbers of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd have wintered in the Nulato Hills the past several winters. Total annual harvest from the three resident herds seldom exceeds 20.

Elk - The population on the Kodiak Archipelago in Unit 8 has been increasing steadily since 1993 after a moderate decline following severe winters. The 1998 population was estimated at 1,400, with an estimated 218 bulls on Raspberry Island and 1,150 elk in eight herds on Afognak. Elk have been sighted on Kodiak Island several times during the past decade. The southwest area where a sustainable population seems to have established itself is on the Kupreanof Peninsula where up to 40 elk have been observed. The Malina Lakes herd is the largest of the Afognak herds, with at least 350 elk. The Tonki Cape herd is the smallest with approximately 35. The density of several herds exceed two elk per square mile, a level considered near carrying capacity.

Region III

Black Bear - In the Delta Junction area, an accurate estimate of black bear population size and trend is not available in Unit 20D, however, black bears are numerous in the forested portions of the unit. A Unit 20D bear population estimate was obtained from recent harvest data in adjacent Unit 20A and resulted in a Unit 20D estimate of 750 black bears. Hunting black bears in Unit 20D is popular, and bait stations are commonly used in the spring. Total harvest averages about 20 bears/year.

In the Tok area, black bears are present in all suitable habitats in Units 12 and 20E and population size is estimated from 2,000 to 2,500 in Units 12 and 20E combined.

In the Galena area, bears are numerous in most of Units 21B, C and D and suitable forest habitat is present. Subsistence hunters estimate harvest to be approximately 30 bears in Unit 24, 25 in Unit 21D. Black bears are common in the Fairbanks and including Units 20A, 20B, C, F and 25C. There has been an increasing trend in harvest in Units. Spring bear hunting at bait stations is especially popular in Unit 20B. Harvest and hunter effort is high near Fairbanks.

Brown Bear - In the Delta Junction area, brown bear mortality has increased in northern Unit 20D since implementation of the tag fee exemption and longer

hunting season. Brown bear mortal-
in this area. In the Fairbanks area, brown bears predominate. Harvest is generally low except for regions of Units 20A and 20B. High harvest results in reduced numbers and little or no impact on harvest of female bears still exceeds objectives. Current estimates indicate that the number of adult female grizzly bears in the study area has not reached the pre-reduction level of 23 bears.

**Caribou**- The Macomb caribou herd is a small herd ranging primarily in the eastern Alaska Range of southern Unit 20D, however, winter ranges extend north of the Tanana River and into Unit 12. In the 1980's herd size varied from 700-800 caribou. Herd size decreased in the early 1990's due to severe winter and summer weather and poor calf survival. The Macomb herd was estimated to only have 100 moose in 1989. Herd composition was estimated to be a ratio of 22 calves to 100 cows and a ratio of 57 bulls to 100 cows at that time.

**Macomb Plateau Controlled Use Area**- The Macomb Plateau Controlled Use Area (MPCUA) was established in 1974 to help regulate harvest of the Macomb caribou herd and to protect important habitat on the herd's Macomb Plateau calving grounds from ORV traffic. The Macomb Plateau is the primary calving and rutting area for the Macomb caribou herd and is a relatively small area that would be susceptible to habitat degradation by heavy ORV traffic. Most calving occurring within the MPCUA boundaries is either walk-in hunting or use of horses. A low level of ORV access along the Alaska Highway, primarily by people hunting from the road or walking a short distance into the area, is the result of those regulations. Most ORV use is not in effect during spring, and a few bear hunters hunt the area during that time.

**Fortymile Caribou Herd (FCCH)**- During the 1900's, Fortymile Caribou Herd size and distribution fluctuated dramatically. During 1930 it was estimated to be 508,000 caribou and was known to range between Whitehorse, Yukon and the White Mountains, north of Fairbanks. The herd began to decline in the late 1950's and by 1976 the herd was known to range between central Yukon and the White Mountains. The herd's population low point occurred during 1979 when about 6,000 caribou remained. Since the decline in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Fortymile herd has been slowly increasing. The Steese Highway and rarely travels into Yukon using < 25% its traditional range. Herd numbers increased more rapidly during 1980 at annual rates of 7% - 10% reaching about 23,000 caribou by 1989. Between 1990 and 1995 the herd remained stable due to adverse weather conditions and high predation. The herd increased by 4% in 1996, 10% in 1997, 20% in 1998, and 7% in 1999. Both optimal environmental conditions and herd recruitment contributed to the herd increase. Range size remains < 30% of its traditional size. Harvest has increased from 48 to 151 in the last 10 years to help manage the herd. Recruitment is generally low, other interior herds to decline.

**Moose**- Moose are distributed throughout Unit 20D with an estimated harvest of 2000 in 1999. Approximately 60% of the moose are south of the Tanana River and 40% are north. Southern Unit 20D has an estimated overall winter density of 2.7 moose per square mile and moose calf survival is generally good. An abundance of good habitat has been created in the last 15 years from land clearing and several large wildfires. Access for moose hunters is low in the 1975 census and roads and trails. During the 1998 general hunting season, 474 hunters reported killing 159 moose. The 1998 moose harvest of Chisana caribou in Alaska and the Porcupine caribou harvest of Chisana caribou in Alaska and the Porcupine Herd (PCH) decreased to 1,300 moose.

**Central Arctic Caribou Herd (CACHE)**- The Central Arctic Caribou herd numbers about 19,500 and ranges primarily in GMU 20B. Herd size has fluctuated dramatically since 1995. Annual harvest is estimated at between 450 to 550 caribou. Most of the harvest is by non-local Alaskan residents. The most substantial increase occurred in the northwestern portion of the unit during that time. The herd's population range increased from 1,400 in 1989 to 2,000 in 1998. Habitat quality is generally good. The 20E. Since 1992 the number of hunters has increased by 67%. Harvest increased substantially in 1995 and the 1995-1999 average is 85% higher compared to the previous 5 years.

**Porcupine Herd (PCH)**- The Porcupine Caribou numbers about 129,000 in 1999. The highest population recorded was 178,000 during 1989. The most likely cause for the decline in numbers is that the 1999 census is the most recent to date. Total harvest in Canada and Alaska is approximately 2,500 animals, with most being taken by local hunters.

**Central Arctic Herd**- This herd declined dramatically in the early 1990's prompt closure of a popular hunting season and forced a moratorium on wolf control program. The herd is currently fluctuating near its recent low levels (about 3500 to 4000 moose/mi2). Recruitment is generally good and yearling bull to cow ratios in 1996, 1997, and 1998. This years heavy snows will exacerbate these declines. In subunit 21A, moose populations are relatively stable at moderate densities, as are populations in subunits 21B and 21C.

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MOBILE SPORTS SHOOTING TRAILER TRAVELS SOUTHEAST

Juneau

With the assistance of cooperative ferry personnel, the crew managed to unload the Mobile system without a hitch. After living through the experience of maneuvering the trailer on and off the ferry, the Mobile Shooting Sports trailer arrived in Ketchikan to present a series of clinics including nontoxic shot and waterfowl shooting skills, bear hunting, and a centerfire rifle reloading clinic. Lee Rogers, south-central regional hunter education coordinator joined Matt Moran, area biologist Boyd Porter, hunter education instructor Michael Lord, and Jon Hayes in presenting will begin to help in organizing and conducting the Ketchikan clinics. Lee and Matt praised the members of the Ketchikan Rod and Gun Club for their invaluable assistance and hospitality in promoting and hosting the nontoxic shot and waterfowl shooting skills clinics. The bear hunting clinic was held at the request of biologist Porter who hopes that the information presented will begin to help in decreasing the wounding loss on black bears in Game Management Units 1 and 2.

Wrangell

According to wildlife technician Matt Moran, it seemed like most of the community of Wrangell came out to experience the laser DART system during the festivities of the day. Those who attended the nontoxic shot clinic especially enjoyed the opportunity to improving their wing shooting skills. According to Kirk Lingofelt, mobile program coordinator, the mobile system's Autosporter automatic clay target thrower aids throwing a high volume of clay targets needed for such clinics. Sitka

On the trip to Sitka, engine problems on the ferry Aurora resulted in having to backtrack to Juneau for repairs. However, the delay was short-lived and did not stop the Mobile Shooting trailer from delivering their scheduled courses in Sitka. During their week long visit to an unexpected sunny Sitka, Kirk Lingofelt and Matt Moran worked to deliver reloading, nontoxic shot, and muzzleloader certification clinics. "We couldn't have pulled this off without the support from the community and the Sitka Sportsman's Association," remarked Lingofelt. "I really appreciated Lynn Shipley's help in spreading the word and allowing Fish and Game to use the Sitka's Sportsman's Association facilities," said Lingofelt. The Mobile Shooting Sports program also set up the interactive DART system in town at the Bicentennial Hall for public participation.

Haines

The Mobile Shooting Sports trailer rolled into Haines to conduct a nontoxic shot and waterfowl shooting skills clinic and to display the laser DART system for public use. Kirk Lingofelt and Matt Moran made arrangements with Charles Devitt to use the facilities at the Haines Sportsman Association. Kirk and Matt commended Charles for his enthusiasm for the program and his efforts to "get the word out."

During the Shotgun clinic held in Haines at the Sportman's Association, participants watch as Kirk Lingofelt and Matt Moran instruct on proper shotgun techniques.

Alaska Hunting Bulletin
WHERE ARE YOU HUNTING THIS YEAR?
FROM PAGE 13

compared to other areas in Interior Alaska, ranging from 1 moose per 5 to 10 square miles in most areas. There is widespread local concern regarding apparent declines in Units 25B and 25D, which include the best habitat. Survey data indicate moose numbers on the eastern Yukon Flats have declined during the last several years, while those in the western part of Unit 25D have been fairly stable. Surveys in 25D, the most heavily hunted subunit, have generally found modest calf/cow and high bull/cow ratios. There are an estimated 3000 to 4000 moose in Unit 25D.

In Unit 26 B and C, moose numbers declined dramatically between 1992 and 1995, when low calf survival and high mortality of adult reduced numbers by about 60%. The population has remained at a low level, and the total number of moose is probably less than 500. Calf survival has improved in the last two years, but total numbers are still low compared to the last 3 decades. (UNITS: A, B, C, E, F, 19C, 25C, Fairbanks) Moose numbers appear to have stabilized in Unit 20A and in the MFMA in Unit 20B. Hunting opportunity and harvests have correspondingly stabilized at high levels in those areas, as well as, in the Fairbanks Management Area. Approximately 5000 hunters annually hunt in Unit 20B and success rates are low. However, effort, harvest, and success rates have improved modestly in the last few years, suggesting an improving trend in herd status. Moose population levels in most of 20C, 20F, and 25C are low and no trends in population parameters are apparent from harvest data or incidental observations.

Sheep—There are three distinct sheep areas in Units 12 and 20E: 1) northern Wrangell, Men­tagotna and Nutzotin Mountains (WMN); 2) Tok Management Area (TMA); and 3) Tanana Hills (TH). The sheep population in WMN traditionally exists at relatively high densities in typically rugged, glaciated habitats. This area produces rams with horns below average size, compared with other sheep populations in Alaska. This population grew throughout the 1980s, declined in the early 1990s, and since 1994, appears to be stable or growing slowly. This area received the highest harvest in the state, 170-270 rams per year.

Sheep within the TMA exist at low to moderate densities but produce large-horned rams. This population grew during the 1980s until 1992. Due to adverse weather, the sheep population declined during 1992 and 1993. Weather conditions were mild to average between 1993 to 1998 and based on lamb and yearling survival, the population increased slowly. The 1999/2000 winter was mild in terms of temperature but snow depths were greater than average.

The Tanana Hills sheep pop­ulation occurs at low density and is disjoint due to the physical geography of the Tanana Hills which is arctic sheep habitat. Most of this area is very difficult to access and due to sheep distri­bution, very difficult to hunt. The portion of the area accessible from the Taylor Highway was designated a controlled use area, and the most accessible fly-in area is managed under permit.

Dall sheep populations appear to be relatively stable in the Alaska Range west of Denali Park in Units 9, 16, and 19. The Alaska Range West provides habitat for 4,000 to 4,500 Dall sheep. Lamb: ewe ratios in the population average about 30% to 50% rams, and legal ram to ewe ratios average about 15-18 to 100. Hunter harvest is relatively stable, as has success rate and size of harvested rams.

Sheep are widespread in the eastern Brooks Range, with the highest densities occurring in the northern ranges. An estimated 13,000 sheep occupied the area in 1985, but reports indicate num­bers declined by approximately 40% during the late 1980s and early 1990s due, in part, to severe weather and poor lamb survival. Sheep harvest has declined from over 250 annually in the late 1980s to less than 150 each year, but the area is still popular among sheep hunters. A small number of sheep are taken in a winter registration hunt in 25A and 26G.

Sheep numbers in the Alaska Range, Unit 20A declined in the early 1990's from 5000 to about 2000 sheep, estimated in an extensive survey in 1994.

PUTTING THE "M" IN MOBILE
FROM PAGE 14

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Division of Wildlife Conservation/Hunter Information & Training
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599

http://www.state.ak.us/afdfg/
If you hope to win a permit for any of the drawing permit sheep hunts statewide OR Koyukuk moose for the 2001 season, you MUST apply in the winter drawing. For many years, the traditional application period for all drawing permit hunts has been the month of May. The Department of Fish and Game has now established a winter application period for specific drawing hunts. The application period will be Nov. 1-Dec. 6 and winners will be notified in January. The same rules will apply as in the regular May application period.

There will continue to be a May application period for all other species and for other moose drawing permits, but you will not be able to apply for the Koyukuk moose hunts or any sheep hunts during the May 2001 application period. Hunters who fail to apply for those permits in November-December will have no chance of getting a sheep permit for the fall 2001 season.

The change resulted from two main reasons. First, for many years hunters have wondered why they cannot find out sooner if they have won a drawing permit for the upcoming season. That was especially true for sheep hunters. With the season beginning Aug. 10, the traditional mid-July notification date leaves them little time to arrange the logistics essential for a good sheep hunt.

Second, due to the increasing popularity of the moose hunts in the Koyukuk area, a working group was formed to draft proposals to address the problems. (See Lower Koyukuk Moose Hunt article on page 1) These proposals were submitted at the March 2000 Board of Game meeting and the Board established new moose drawing permit hunts for the Koyukuk Controlled Use Area in Unit 21(D) and 24.

One of the recommendations from the group was for a drawing permit hunt with a winter drawing so hunters would know well in advance whether they would have a permit the coming year. Like most sheep hunts, a Koyukuk moose hunt entails significant logistical challenges. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the Alaska Board of Game agreed to the winter drawing for the Koyukuk hunts. ADF&G saw it as an opportunity to also address the needs of sheep hunters.

Notification letters will be mailed at the end of January and the drawing results will be posted on the Alaska Department of Fish & Game website as soon as they are available.