



UNIT 4 - SITKA AREA GUIDE

HUNTING & TRAPPING OPPORTUNITIES ON THE “ABC” ISLANDS



ALASKA DEPT. OF FISH AND GAME 2021

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Mount
Edgecombe in
Sitka, Alaska.

ADOBE
STOCK IMAGE

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 4

Game Management Unit 4 consists of about 5,800 square miles on Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof, Kruzof, and adjacent small islands (see map at right). Subject to the warming influence of the Japan Current, the area has a mild climate with high precipitation. Sitka, on the western edge of Unit 4, annually receives an average of 100 inches of precipitation. But the annual average rainfall totals vary widely throughout the Unit; between 40 inches in Angoon to more than 200 inches in Little Port Walter.

Often called the “ABC’s” after Admiralty, Baranof and Chichagof, its largest islands, the area has more than 5,000 miles of shoreline which includes numerous bays, inlets, straits, and coves that provide good boat access to the islands. These islands support an abundance of wildlife, with approximately 90 percent of Unit 4 uplands comprised of Tongass National Forest land. Topography



MAP OF ADF&G GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 4

is often steep. In many places, land rises from sea level to 3,000 feet in just a few miles. The highest point, on Baranof Island, reaches 5,390 feet. Lower slopes are spruce-hemlock rain forests. Devil’s club, blueberry, huckleberry and salmonberry bushes dominate the understory.

SITKA BLACK-TAILED DEER



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

A buck and doe pair of Sitka black-tailed deer pause while feeding at low tide on Admiralty Island in 2017.

UNIT 4 DEER POPULATION

The deer population in Unit 4 is estimated at 80,000 to 125,000 animals. Winter weather is a major influence on deer numbers; deep snow in winter, especially snow that persists late into spring, can lead to high winter mortality. Logging old-growth forests creates problems for deer by reducing wintering habitat. The effect is less noticeable when winters are mild. During severe winters the problem is pronounced as deer move into small areas of standing trees, where many die when forced to compete for food. Terrain and habitat quality are additional factors in deer survival; uneven-aged mature forest is ideal habitat in Southeast Alaska. Clear-cuts provide an abundance of summer forage, but the benefits are limited. Winter deer die-offs can be severe in one place and light in another location a few miles away. When herds decline, deer have a tremendous ability to repopulate the habitat, unless there are repeated severe winters or excessive predation. Unit 4 deer aren't exposed to heavy predation. Brown bears don't often prey on deer. Although wolves and black bears are significant deer predators in other parts of Southeast Alaska, black bears and wolf packs are not established on the islands of Unit 4.

DEER HUNTING THE ABC ISLANDS

To some, the term "Alaska Big Game" may evoke images of trophy brown bears and full-curl Dall sheep. Lesser known Sitka black-tailed deer may be overlooked by nonresidents, but they are an important food source for residents in Southeast. The quality of meat is excellent, and venison is a mainstay in the diet of many coastal Alaskans. Deer are found in Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, and the Kodiak Archipelago. They are seldom far from the ocean and can be found in abundance on Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof islands.

ABC deer don't typically grow large antlers like deer found on Prince of Wales or Kodiak islands. This is likely due to differences in population density, genetic potential and higher quality forage associated with limestone geology. Furthermore, Sitka black-tails don't produce the impressive antlers sported by mule deer and rarely achieve the antler growth of trophy Columbia black-tails. To give Sitka black-tail hunters a fair chance to have their trophies recognized, the Boone and Crockett Club, Safari Club International, and Pope and Young all place the Sitka subspecies in a different category than Columbia black-tails.

Deer hunting regulations should be carefully read in Unit 4 since there are two separate agencies which manage deer hunting (this also applies to mountain goat and brown bear); state (ADF&G) and federal (U.S. Forest Service). Because of this, there are two separate regulation summaries available for hunters to reference. The Sitka ADF&G office has a "Frequently Asked Questions" handout to help clarify how these two sets of regulations affect deer hunting in Unit 4.

Hunters need a state-issued hunting license and harvest tickets prior to going afield.

Nonresidents also need a locking-tag for each deer they plan to take. Use harvest tickets in sequential order and carry all unused tickets while deer hunting, even if plans are to harvest a single deer. As soon as a deer is harvested, hunters should immediately cut out the day and month on the harvest ticket, and carry it until the deer is to the location where it will be processed. Lastly, make sure to turn in hunt reports within 15 days after taking the bag limit, or 15 days after the season ends, whichever comes first. Even if no deer were harvested, or if a hunt didn't happen, hunters are still required to report. All deer hunters may report online or use the hunt report they received with the harvest tickets.

ALPINE DEER HUNTING

The Unit 4 deer season opens August 1 for bucks only. Beginning September 15, does are legal to harvest for the remainder of the state season, which ends December 31. Check the current regulations or with an ADF&G office for any changes. In August, deer can be found from the seashore to the alpine, but hunting is best at the higher elevations. Deer are an exception to the same day airborne rule; if hunters do a fly-in hunt, they may fly and harvest a deer the same day, provided they are 300 feet or more from the airplane.

White and light gray deer sometimes show up on the ABC's, but they don't often have the classic pink eyes and nose of true albino deer. This is likely caused by a genetic variation-mutation affecting the genes that control hair pigmentation. Deer with this pigmentation are often called "glacier deer."

It is not unusual to see more bucks in the alpine than does and fawns. Bucks are in velvet during August, but antler growth has usually slowed or stopped. Bucks rarely respond to a deer call this early, but there are enough exceptions which make it worth trying. Most of the hunting during this time is "spot-and-stalk."



TONY BIRD/IMAGE USED WITH PERMISSION
Bridger Bird harvested his first deer at age 11, near Sitka, opening day in 2015, with his dad, Tony Bird.

Hunters who try alpine hunting either love it or hate it. Bike riding, hiking, and high intensity workouts will all help prepare anyone for the physical challenge of getting into the high country, plus being in good physical condition leads to a more enjoyable hunt for all. In many areas, deer share the range with mountain goats, and hunters need a little of a goat's sure-footedness to climb to the hunting grounds.

Experienced alpine hunters do not carry or drag an entire deer down the mountain. Many alpine hunters quarter a small deer, or completely bone larger ones and carry the quarters or boned meat down the mountain in a pack. Trimming fat and removing the bones substantially reduces the weight. Regulations require hunters to salvage all edible meat, including the meat of the ribs and neck. All salvageable meat must be brought out of the field prior to retrieving antlers; antlers may be brought out with the last load of meat, however. If flagging was used to mark a route, make sure to remove it on the way down. Flagging leads other hunters astray (or to a favorite hunting spot!) and litters the scenery.



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

Three deer are silhouetted during an alpine deer survey, including a glacier deer (center), on a ridge line in 2012.



©ADF&G/STEVE BETHUNE

Autumn Bethune (age 9) on her first deer hunt on Baranof Island in 2018. Her dad, Steve Bethune, killed the buck, but Autumn did everything else except pull the trigger.

Although bucks may be numerous, resist the temptation to take more than one during a trek to the high country. If multiple trips are required to pack the meat out of the field, make sure to protect the meat from bears. Move salvageable meat away from the gut pile and put it in a spot with clear views in all directions whenever possible. Bears often come to investigate a kill site and will cover a cache with soil or debris. Disturbed soil or vegetation may mean your meat has been discovered by a bear. If hunters find themselves in this situation, they should approach cautiously (but not quietly) from upwind; the bear may be resting nearby guarding its cache.

If a bear has claimed the deer meat or carcass, do not try to drive the bear away — this is likely to provoke an attack. It is not safe for a hunter to stand their ground at an occupied kill site. In most cases, killing a bear to defend game meat is not legal.

FALL AND WINTER DEER HUNTING

The rut is the most popular time to hunt in Unit 4, which typically begins around the end of October and lasts through November. Bucks are active and can be susceptible to calling during this time, but there is a chance of calling in a bear. Call where visibility is good, so bears can be seen approaching and there is time for members of the hunting party to identify themselves as human. Be alert while field dressing; the odor of deer blood and organs may draw in a bear. When hunting deer in brown bear country, it is smart to have a rifle of at least 30.06 caliber. Keep it close by while field dressing and consider an additional deterrent, such as a backup sidearm or bear spray.

Look for areas with abundant deer sign, such as “rub-trees” where bucks rub their antlers. Deer often frequent beaches at low tides and use grassy meadows at the heads of bays where streams empty into the ocean. There they browse on shrubs and any remaining forbes. Deer move down to lower elevations

and are often seen on beaches when it snows. On Kodiak and Afognak islands, deer may form huge herds on the beach during periods of heavy snow, but this behavior has not been observed on the ABC's. Tracking deer in the snow adds an element of excitement to the hunt. As snow deepens, deer avoid muskegs, clear-cuts, and other openings and are found in the large trees.

Deep snow interferes with feeding, and hungry deer are less wary and easier to harvest. Some hunters say meat is poor later in the season, while others praise its quality. Harvested deer meat should always be kept clean and cool to ensure the best flavor. Although a buck may be rutting and smelly in the field, careful handling of the meat and hide eliminates much of the problem. Be careful where the hide of a rutting buck is touched and how it is handled, and make sure to minimize touching the meat after the hide.

Winter storms often prevent boat and air travel so be prepared to stay a couple extra days in the field. A compass, lightweight tarp, sleeping bag, and pack with fire starter materials are essential items to stow in the boat regardless of the season. Communications equipment, such as a Garmin inReach® or VHF radio, are good to have in an emergency but may not be used to help take game.

Most hunters in Unit 4 use boats to get to their favorite hunting ground. Even a small inflatable raft will add a lot of mobility and enjoyment to a hunt in the ABC's. Deer can often be spotted from the water before a successful stalk. Per state regulations, hunters may not shoot big game from a boat in Southeast Alaska unless they have a valid permit to hunt from a boat, which requires a physical disability of at least 70 percent. The permit to hunt from a boat is valid for the duration of the state deer season. Applications for this permit are available online, or at ADF&G offices.



MAX RUSSELL/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Payton Russell harvest this doe in September 2018 in Unit 4.



KRIS PEARSON/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Clay Pearson, 7, harvested this buck in November 2011 — his second of the day — while hunting with his dad, Kris Pearson.



KRIS PEARSON/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Craig Loomis poses with his grandson, 8-year-old Clay Pearson. Clay shot this buck in 2012 with handloaded bullets he helped load.

PROXY HUNTING

There are two different permits which allow an Alaska resident to assign a hunter to harvest their deer for them; 1) a state proxy authorization offered through ADF&G, and 2) a federal designated hunter permit offered through the USDA Forest Service. Hunters should first see which they qualify for. If qualifications are met for both, then decide which one is the better fit. The Sitka ADF&G office has a comparison chart which illustrates the differences between the state and federal permits.

ADF&G's proxy is for Alaska residents who are blind, 70 percent physically disabled, 65 years or older, or developmentally disabled. Contact an ADF&G office for an application. The federal designated hunter permit is for rural Alaska residents who are federally qualified to hunt under federal subsistence regulations. Contact a USDA Forest Service office for more information about the federal designated hunter permit.

MOUNTAIN GOAT

BARANOF ISLAND MOUNTAIN GOATS; HOW DID THEY GET HERE?

Mountain goats were transplanted to Baranof Island in 1923, when 18 goats were captured from Tracy Arm on the Southeast mainland and released in Silver Bay, near Sitka. The herd grew rapidly, and 41 goats were observed in 1937. The first hunting season was held in 1949, with a bag limit of two goats. In the mid-1950s, a goat transplant was also initiated on Chichagof Island, but proved unsuccessful. The Baranof Island goat registration permit hunt began in 1976, with yearly harvest varying since then from 18 to 75 goats. The Baranof Island mountain goat population estimate is generally around 1,500 animals.

Recent results from mountain goat DNA tissue samples have shown that there are two separate mountain goat genotypes on the island. This questions the theory that all Baranof goats originated solely from the 1923 transplant. The DNA results suggest some goats may have descended from a remnant population which survived the last glacial period on Baranof.

MOUNTAIN GOAT MANAGEMENT

The winters of 2006 through 2008 resulted in record snowfall followed by several late cold springs. These winters, in addition to a historically high female (nanny) harvest, contributed to a noted decline in the goat population. Surveys during 2009-2010 confirmed an estimate of less than 1,000 goats. In response, the department published a "Mountain Goat Identification Guide" as part of a focused effort to help educate hunters about the importance of harvesting males (billies).

Next, hunt zones were created with harvest quotas to track in-season harvest. The nanny quota is minimal for each zone, which tightly



CRAIG MONACO | PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
A Baranof Island nanny and kid photographed on October 8, 2018.

restricts the nanny harvest. Hunt zones close by emergency order when the billy or nanny quota is met. Keeping nanny harvest low is not only good for the productivity of the herd, but also provides more hunting opportunity in a zone if the nanny quota isn't quickly met. If in-season surveys show there are additional goats available for harvest, hunt managers may increase the harvest quota for individual hunt zones after the season has started.

The goat population started to stabilize and then grow after repeated years with the hunt zone strategy in effect, several mild winters, and hunters selecting billies over nannies. The 2019 population estimate of 1,925 goats is the current record high.



©ADF&G/KEVIN WHITE
Former ADF&G Area Biologist Phil Mooney works with biologist Kevin White in 2013 to collar and sample mountain goats as part of a study on Baranof Island.

RESEARCH ON BARANOF ISLAND

In response to the City and Borough of Sitka conducting hydroelectric development activities on central Baranof Island, the City and ADF&G initiated a joint effort to collar goats on Baranof Island to monitor effects of development activity on goats in the Blue Lake area. In 2010, goats were captured using helicopter darting techniques and fitted with orange GPS and VHF radio-collars.

Research efforts continued through 2020. Over that decade, biologists collared 86 goats. The information learned through the study includes home range sizes, winter habitat use, survival and reproduction rates and aerial survey sightability. The things learned from this research has helped shape and guide current management practices.



JON MARTIN/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
During 14-year-old Andrew Martin's first goat hunt, he harvested this Baranof Island Billy in 2015.



JOHN PEARCE/PHOTOGRAPH USED WITH PERMISSION
Emily Pearce harvested this billy on Baranof Island in November 2017.

MOUNTAIN GOAT HUNTING ON BARANOF ISLAND

The Baranof Island goat herd is currently doing well, but hunters never find the sure-footed animals easy to hunt. The precipitous habitat on Baranof Island attracts goat hunters who anchor in a secure cove to tackle the rugged terrain. There are a few lakes where aircraft can land, and these areas produce well early in the season. If a fly-in hunt happens, make sure to be prepared to be weathered in. Keep in mind, goats may not be hunted until 3 a.m. a full day after flying, unless the flight was on a regularly scheduled commercial or commuter plane.

Generally, one in four hunters who go afield is successful in getting a goat. Most goats are taken in August and September, as the weather is usually more cooperative. As the season progresses, the chance of snow, fog, and rain increases. Storm fronts from the southeast or the north can bring tent-shredding winds later in the year. If camping, it may help to choose a campsite that is sheltered from the southeast.

Take basic overnight survival gear on a mountain goat hunt. If hauling a sleeping bag and tent up a mountain is not an option, then take two or three space blankets and extra clothing. Mountain storms develop quickly; always take rain gear. Hypothermia is even more of a danger to the goat hunter than the risk of falling. Even if it doesn't snow, Southeast Alaska rain is always cold. Choose synthetic fabrics, dress in layers and avoid wearing cotton.

The best hunting is typically in the least accessible places, but safety is the first consideration when goat hunting. Hunters are often tempted to follow goats into areas where pursuit is dangerous and ill-advised. Hunters clinging for life to a steep slope should never shoot a goat that is on

steeper terrain. In that situation, recovering a harvested animal may pose an even greater danger to hunters. Life isn't worth risking for a mountain goat.

It's essential mountain goat hunters are in good physical condition — be prepared for a challenging workout! Much of the work happens after harvesting a goat, including stumbling down a mountainside in the dark carrying a pack of boned goat meat weighing more than 80 pounds. Hunters should always plan to take the same route down the mountain that was used to climb up. Many goat hunters think they have discovered a short-cut down after they have reached the top. Unfortunately, most short-cuts end in impassable cliffs and the hunter must climb laboriously back to the original starting point. Routes are always better judged from the bottom of the mountain than from the top.

Some hunters hike from the Sitka road system into alpine goat country, but chances of seeing a goat increases as the distance from roads increases. Popular goat hunting areas near lakes on Baranof Island include Blue Lake, Lake Diana, Cold Storage Lake, Rosenburg Lake, and Goat Lake. Some of these lakes are accessible by float plane. There are some U.S. Forest Service cabins, such as the Lake Eva cabin, that can be used as a base for goat hunting. Good hunting is also found above Kelp Bay on the eastern side of Baranof Island and at the head of the Nakwasina and Katlian drainages.

Hunters will need a hunting license and goat registration permit before going afield. Nonresidents also need a locking-tag and a guide — either an Alaska-licensed guide, or a resident relative guide within second-degree of kindred.

Once a goat is harvested, cut out the day and month on the permit immediately. Within



EMILY PEARCE/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Jonathan Pearce harvested this bill on Baranof Island in August 2018.

five days of the kill, bring a completed hunt report (successful hunters may not report online) and goat horns to an ADF&G office for measuring and aging.

If a hunt was not successful in harvesting a goat, or the hunt didn't happen, hunters are still required to return their hunt report within 15 days after the season ends. In this case, hunt reports may be filed online.

SELECTING A BILLY

While either-sex goat is legal to harvest on Baranof Island, hunters are strongly encouraged to select billies. Goats have a matriarchal society, and nannies are very important to the well-being of the herd. Removing older nannies from the herd may result in high winter loss. It is illegal to harvest a nanny with kids (young offspring).

It is difficult to distinguish billies from nannies without practice. Horn characteristics are challenging to distinguish from afar so prepare for a long stalk. The Mountain Goat Identification Guide, released by ADF&G in

2008, can help teach how to tell billies from nannies. Hunters are required to read this guide and complete an online quiz before obtaining a goat registration permit.

Scan this QR code to link to the online **“Mountain Goat Identification Quiz”** which is required by all those wishing to hunt mountain goat in Region 1.



©ADF&G/KEVIN WHITE

Billies and nannies can be challenging to tell apart in the field. However, there are things to look for — like how this billy stretches while urinating — that will help distinguish one sex from the other.

or three. Select a lone goat to increase the chance of harvesting a billy.

- Billies often have stained hind-quarters because of their habit of digging pits or “scrapes” and laying in them. Nannies may have a uniform yellowish appearance, but in billies, staining will be heaviest around the hips.

- Billy horn bases are larger and closer together, the horns curve more gradually, and there may be enlarged glands at the bases. Nanny horn bases are thinner and further apart, and the horns typically have a sharper curve near the tips.

- Billies stretch while urinating, but nannies squat. If uncertain of the sex, wait until the goat urinates.



MOUNTAIN GOAT
ID GUIDE

Look for this booklet in a local ADF&G area office for information on how to identify nannies and billies in the field.

ADDITIONAL IDENTIFICATION TIPS:

- Nannies and kids are normally found in larger herds. Avoid groups of goats containing kids. There may be young billies in the bunch, but chances are high you’ll shoot a nanny.

- Trophy billies are often solitary, or in groups of two

Check out the **video “Identifying Billies & Nannies - An Educational Film from the Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance”** for additional tips on identifying nannies and billies in the field.

Find it online:
<https://youtu.be/J8gUaMx8G7l>.

BROWN BEAR



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

This male brown bear, photographed in 2007 in Unit 4, pops its jaws as a warning.

UNIT 4 BROWN BEAR POPULATION

Admiralty Island is believed to be the brown bear hunting Mecca of Southeast Alaska, but the other islands of Unit 4 also have excellent brown bear populations. The ABC bears are generally darker than brown bears elsewhere in Alaska, and Unit 4 has a unique prize in the near black or “Shiras” color phase. For hunters seeking record trophies, ABC brown bears rarely have the minimum skull measurements necessary to be in the record book, but they are still an impressive trophy. Hunter harvest is divided among the islands, with 40 percent coming from Admiralty, 40 percent from Chichagof, and the remainder from Baranof and Kruzof islands. Populations are currently excellent, and harvests since 1988 usually average more than 120 bears a year. Most of the harvest occurs in the spring, which typically produces two-thirds of the total harvest for the year. In the spring, about 80 percent of the bears taken are males (boars). Although the total number of females (sows) harvested in the fall is lower than it is in the spring, the female harvest percentage increases to roughly 40 percent in the fall.

BROWN BEAR HUNTING THE ABC ISLANDS

Unit 4 brown bear hunters are limited to harvesting one brown bear every four regulatory years. A regulatory year is different than a calendar year; a regulatory year spans July 1 – June 30, which is the same period the hunting regulations are valid. If a bear is wounded but not recovered, that counts toward the bag limit for that regulatory year. Some people are surprised to hear there is a maximum number of brown bears allowed to be harvested annually in Unit 4. They ask, “Why limit hunters, when there are bears all over?” The reason for this is explained in depth in the Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS).

The BBMS uses an annual maximum mortality guideline of 172 brown bears over a three-year average for the ABC’s. This strategy was developed with the purpose to allow all user groups (hunting and nonhunting) access to a healthy brown bear population for years to come. Voices that came together on the BBMS included hunters, hunting and nonhunting guides, tourism agencies, Native Corporations, environmental agencies, U.S. Forest Service, Board of Game, Advisory Committees, and ADF&G.



PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Kris Pearson shot this brown bear on Baranof Island, spring of 2018.



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

A female brown bear and her two cubs feed in Nakwasina on Baranof Island in 2008. It is illegal to harvest female brown bears with cubs.

Brown bear hunting in Unit 4 is popular. About 700 permits are issued every year. Not all hunters who get a bear permit go afield, but the more popular bays and inlets may have several parties present at the same time. In these situations, hunting courtesy is essential between groups or competition and conflict may adversely impact the hunting experience. Every hunter should be aware that thoughtless actions can result in an older, larger bear modifying its behavior to avoid hunters.

Hunters need a hunting license, brown bear permit (registration or draw), and locking-tag before going afield. Although Alaska residents comprise the bulk of the permittees, nonresidents harvest approximately 70 percent of Unit 4 bears in any given year. Nonresidents must be accompanied by an Alaska-licensed guide or an Alaska resident relative within the second-degree of kindred. Nonresidents who wish

to use an Alaska resident relative instead of hiring an Alaska-licensed guide must apply for a draw permit during the November-December draw period.

Keep in mind, a hunter may not hunt brown bears until 3 a.m. the day following the day they were airborne, unless the flight was on a regularly scheduled commercial/commuter plane.

As with any hunt, the hunter needs to prepare before the hunt to be both efficient and humane in the field. Get in shape for hiking, pack for cold, wet weather, and practice with any firearms being packed. The age-old debate periodically arises about which is the “best” bear gun. A minimum of 30-06 caliber is recommended. Calibers such as .338, .375, .416 and .458 are preferred and hunters should be certain they can accurately handle these higher recoiling rifles. Bears are large bodied animals with heavy bone

structure so quality bullets that hold together and penetrate are best. Bullet placement is critical; hunters must be proficient with the firearm they are using to avoid poor shot placement.

Before harvesting a bear, talk to a taxidermist about the best way to prepare the hide for the type of trophy desired. Proper hide care is imperative and begins right after harvesting a brown bear. Liberally salt the hide to prevent hair from slipping and protect the hide from the rain. This is especially important in Southeast Alaska's wet climate.

DETERMINING SEX AND SIZE

Brown bears reproduce slowly so it is wise management to limit the take of sows. Hunters can help populations stay sustainable by selecting a boar, which is usually a larger and more impressive trophy.

Look bears over carefully before taking a shot. It is illegal to shoot a cub, or a sow accompanied by cubs. A brown bear "cub" means it's within the first two years of life. Make sure the bear is alone, since cubs often lag behind the sow. If a bear looks back often, or gazes at one spot repeatedly, wait for awhile to be sure there are no cubs nearby.



BROWN BEAR ID GUIDE
Look for this booklet in a local ADF&G area office for information on male and female brown bears in the field.

Take time to carefully observe groups of two or more bears. Bears are usually quite solitary unless they are siblings, breeding, or in an area with a concentrated food source. Chances are good that two or three bears



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

Male brown bears, like this one photographed at Freshwater Bay in 2010 on Chichagof Island, can be identified by their body shape and size. Always take extra time to watch the animal before taking the shot.

together may be a group of young bears or a sow with older cubs.

Check the bear for size. Large bears appear blocky with short stout legs, and their ears look small in relation to their heads. Small bears look rangy and long-legged, and the ears appear relatively large in relation to their heads. Younger bears are more curious and less wary than older ones, so look closely before shooting a bear that doesn't seem cautious about the presence of a hunter.

In 2014, ADF&G produced a brown bear identification guide to assist hunters in learning how to identify male and female bears. This identification guide uses photos of Southeast Alaska brown bears which typically appear darker than brown bears in interior Alaska. Pick up a copy of this free identification guide at the Sitka ADF&G office or view the PDF online.

In addition, a brown bear identification video called "Take a Closer Look" is viewable online

at <https://vimeo.com/30511231> or for loan on DVD from an area office. This 1-hour and 9-minute video was produced by the Yukon Government, with assistance from ADF&G. It explains how to judge trophy bears and identify the age and sex of brown bears while using bears of known age and sex at the McNeil River viewing area.

“Take a Closer Look” is required viewing prior to receiving a Unit 4 brown bear permit. When bear hunters visit an ADF&G office to obtain their brown bear registration permit, they must also sign a statement at that time affirming they have watched the video. If permits are obtained online, instead of at an ADF&G office, hunters will be prompted to check a box certifying they have seen this video before the permit is issued.

SPRING BROWN BEAR HUNTING

Although the Unit 4 spring brown bear season begins March 15, the first bears aren’t generally harvested until early April. Still, most hunters wait until the end of April or May. Since males usually leave their dens first, early bears are more apt to be large males. As the season progresses into May, females and young males make their appearance. Later in



BRAD DENNISON/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Jeff Johnson shot this brown bear on Chichagof Island, guided by Brad Dennison in 2017.

the season there are more bears available, but many have started to shed their winter coat and rubbed hides are common. View a bear from every angle to see if there are rubbed areas that would damage its trophy value.

Springs with early green-up are strongly influenced by the preceding winter. Hunting during an early green-up can be less successful because bears are able to find suitable forage away from beaches. During late springs, hunting success is enhanced because the newly available vegetation focuses the bear’s feeding activities to the intertidal grass flats areas where they are more easily seen. Bears are more likely to feed on grass flats in early morning or late evening. The most effective hunting method is spotting the bear from a distance and initiating a stalk.

FALL BROWN BEAR HUNTING

Fall brown bear hunting, which encompasses all of Unit 4, is best around salmon streams. Years with good salmon escapements tend to produce higher bear harvests. Best hunting opportunities are found near streams with late salmon runs. Larger streams with more salmon tend to have more bears. Large boars are generally found upstream away from salt water while younger bears and family groups occur on lower stretches. By mid-October, few streams have spawning salmon, and it becomes more difficult to locate a bear. Bears taken early in the fall are more apt to have rubbed hides that haven’t grown in from their summer shedding. By late fall new hair growth occurs, and most bears are well furred. In the fall, many deer hunters are prepared with a permit to take a brown bear if they see one, or if they run across a bear that attempts to take a deer from them.

AFTER HARVESTING A BROWN BEAR

Immediately upon harvesting a brown bear, cut the day and month out on the permit.

Attach the locking-tag to the hide before leaving the site. Bear hides must retain evidence of sex (penis sheath or vaginal orifice) and the claws must be naturally attached to the hide until it's sealed. Attaching the locking-tag through the evidence of sex is helpful for a few reasons; it clearly flags the evidence of sex, reminds the hunter to not cut this part off, and another hole isn't needed in the hide for the locking-tag.



©ADFG/HOLLEY DENNISON

A brown bear skull is sealed at the Sitka office in 2011. Hunters have 10 days to report a harvest to ADF&G, and 30 days to seal the bear.

Hunters have 10 days to report their harvest to the Sitka or Douglas ADF&G offices, and 30 days to have the bear hide and skull sealed by ADF&G or an authorized representative. The skull must be skinned from the hide, and both must be unfrozen. It's best to seal the bear sooner than later; it becomes a chore to deal with a hide that has been frozen and thawed. If you bring in a frozen bear hide or skull, sealers may not be able to extract the tooth or access the evidence of sex without damaging the hide. During sealing, harvest details are recorded, a premolar tooth is pulled for aging, and seals are locked on the hide and skull.



©ADFG/PHIL MOONEY

A brown bear tooth is extracted during the sealing process by Holley Dennison.

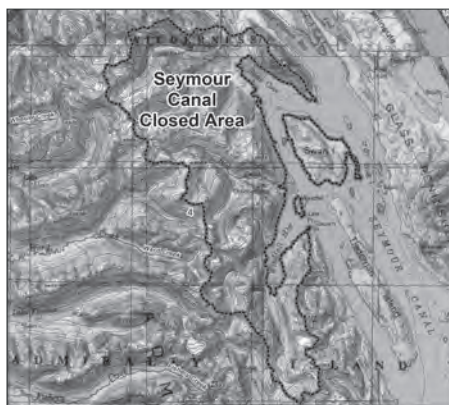
All hunters with a brown bear permit must complete and return a hunt report, even if they did not hunt. Hunt reports for unsuccessful hunters, and those who did not hunt are due 15 days after the season ends. In this case, online reporting is allowed, instead of using a paper report. Failure to report may result in ineligibility to apply for permit hunts the next regulatory year and a possible citation.

STATE RESTRICTED AREAS IN UNIT 4

State restricted areas are summarized on the Unit 4 map in the current Alaska Hunting Regulations. There are eight state restricted hunting areas in Unit 4, which are either closed to the taking of big game, brown bears or the use of motorized vehicles. For the most up-to-date state restricted hunting areas, always refer to the most recent Alaska Hunting regulations.



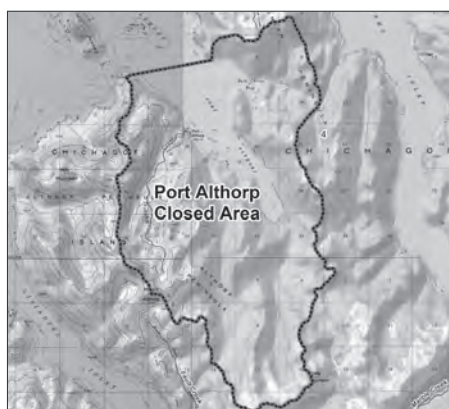
1. Sitka Road System Closed Area: A strip of 1/4 mile wide on each side of all state highways is closed to taking big game.



2. Seymour Canal Closed Area: All drainages into northwestern Seymour Canal between Staunch Point and the southernmost tip of the unnamed peninsula separating Swan Cove and King Salmon Bay, and Swan and Windfall islands; area closed to taking brown bears.



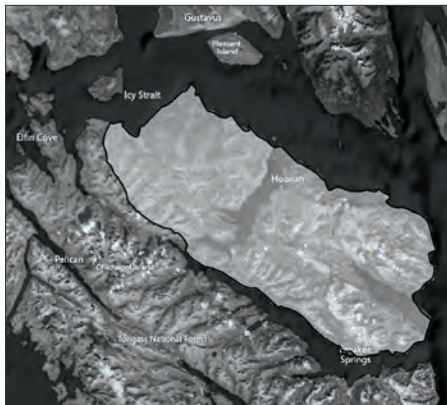
3. Salt Lake Closed Area: All lands within 1/4 mile of Salt Lake above Klutchman Rock at the head of Mitchell Bay; area closed to taking brown bears.



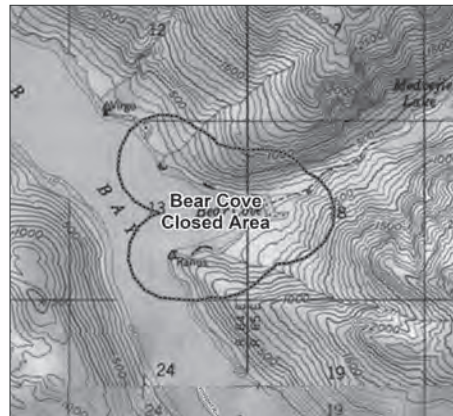
4. Port Althorp Closed Area: The Port Althorp Watershed south of a line from Point Lucan to Salt Chuck Pt. (Trap Rock); area closed to taking brown bears.



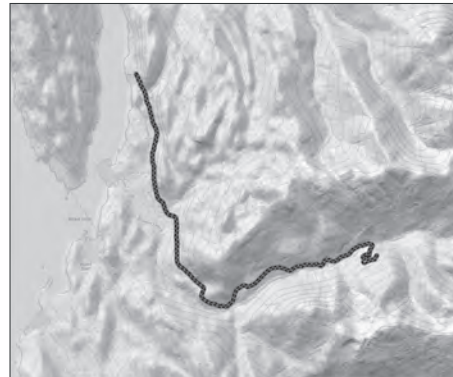
5. Mitchell Bay Closed Area: Kootznahoo Inlet, Kanalku Bay, Favorite Bay and all land with 660 feet of mean high tide within that area; **area closed to taking brown bears.**



7. Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area: Chichagof Island north of Tenakee Inlet and east of the drainage divide from the northwest point of Gull Cove to Port Frederick Portage, including tall drainages into Port Frederick and Mud Bay area; **closed to the use of any motorized land vehicle for brown bear hunting**, including transportation of brown bear hunters, their hunting gear, and/or parts of brown bears unless provided for under terms of a permit; see permit hunt conditions.



6. Bear Cove Closed Area: Eight miles east south-east of the City of Sitka in the vicinity of Medveje Salmon Hatchery, including all of Bear Cove in Silver Bay, from the mouth of the unnamed creek exiting Bear Lake (approximately 1/2 mile southeast of BM 'Virgo') along the coast to the point of land a BM "Ranus," including the entire shoreline of Bear Cove; **area closed to taking brown bears.** This area encompasses approximately one mile of beach and extends 1/4 mile upland from the beach.



8. Greens Creek Mine Closed Area: The road system and associated mine infrastructure extending from the Greens Creek Hawk Inlet facilities to the Greens Creek Mine (including the B Road) **is closed to the use of wheeled vehicles (including bicycles) for hunting.**

SMALL GAME HUNTING



KYLE FERGUSON/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Silas Ferguson, 10, shows off a sooty grouse harvested from the ABC islands in 2018.

Willow ptarmigan, rock ptarmigan, and sooty grouse are present on the ABC's, but hunting opportunity is dispersed. Grouse and ptarmigan hunting in Unit 4 tends to involve a lot of hiking with a small amount of shooting. Depending on the terrain, hunting grouse and ptarmigan can be quite physically demanding. Much like alpine deer hunting, bird hunting the ABC's is a love-it-or-leave-it affair.

Sooty grouse (formerly known as blue grouse) are also called "hooters" because of their deep, hooting call. They move seasonally between subalpine areas in the summer to stands of timber during other times of the year. Sooty grouse aren't very plentiful on Baranof and smaller surrounding islands, which may be due to the prevalence of marten on the island. Admiralty Island, on the other hand, has better populations of sooty grouse.

Young hunters can get a great start to their hunting career by pursuing sooty grouse in the spring. Once a bird is located, they generally are not bothered by the presence of humans and there's often time to find a solid rest and make an unhurried shot.

Spring sooty hunting is conducted by listening for the male's distinctive hooting calls. These birds have an uncanny ability to select a location which allows them to effectively broadcast their call over a wide area to attract hens and keep other males away. Hunters follow these calls and hike up to the birds. It takes some practice and experience to determine the exact location of a hooting sooty. Once a likely tree or two is located, use binoculars to locate the bird. Be patient — it may take some time to find it. Early season sooty grouse can be flushed from subalpine meadows and high muskeg edges. They tend to hold tight and flush close which makes for some excitement after a long hike to the high grounds.

Ptarmigan are widely dispersed throughout the alpine habitat and can be difficult to find. As the season progresses, they may gather in groups of 15-20, but remain dispersed. Ptarmigan can be located by listening for



©ADF&G/PHIL MOONEY

Rock ptarmigan are one upland game bird worth pursuing in Unit 4.

their unique guttural calls in the alpine and keeping an eye out for droppings in open alpine areas. After locating sign, hunters try to flush birds from nearby areas of dwarf hemlock or other cover.

Most shotguns are suitable for hunting sooty grouse in the alpine. A modified choke usually works well. Shot size of 6 or 7 ½ works well for ptarmigan, while size 4, 5, or 6 works better for sooty grouse. Some sooty hunters use a rifle in the spring, due to the range involved and need for a precise shot at a stationary target. Rimfires or centerfire chamberings and bullets suitable for a three to four-pound bird are preferred. Much like big game hunting, hunters should be familiar with vital zones of their quarry and plan for heart or lung shots if they intend to hunt with rifles. Hunters using .22 long rifle ammunition should limit their shots to no further than 50 yards. These efforts will greatly help to decrease wounding loss.

Birds should be gutted or cleaned soon after the take to cool the meat and prevent spoilage. Hunters are required by law to salvage the breast meat of small game birds. Ptarmigan are excellent table fare as are early season grouse. Winter and spring sooty grouse are less highly regarded due to their seasonal diet of spruce needles that time of year. Nonetheless, they can also make good eating with proper care and preparation.

Small game bird hunters should pack the same general gear items they take when hunting big game, such as a change of dry clothes, first aid kit, fire starter, food, and communication devices. Bringing along a well-trained bird dog can be a great help to retrieve game birds.

For detailed small game license requirements and season dates, refer to the current Alaska Hunting Regulations.

WATERFOWL HUNTING



MIKE VAUGHN/PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Mike Vaughn with a fall Unit 4 waterfowl harvest. The season opens in September, and hunters have the opportunity to harvest green-winged teal, American wigeon and northern shoveler.

The waterfowl season in the Sitka area provides an opportunity to harvest puddle ducks and sea ducks. When the season begins in September, hunters might see green-winged teal, northern pintail, American wigeon and the northern shoveler. By October, mallard, common and barrow's goldeneye, bufflehead, and Canada geese make their appearance. White-winged and surf scoters, harlequin, and long-tailed ducks arrive in November and December as the season ends. Waterfowl hunters identify birds in the field using their overall shape, coloring, and flight pattern. Bird identification books and online birding sites are good tools to use to improve identification skills.

Waterfowl hunters commonly use a 12-gauge shotgun. By law, the shotgun may hold a maximum of three shells; one in the chamber, and the magazine plugged to hold two shells. Lead shot and shot sizes larger than T (.20" diameter) are prohibited.

Additionally, the shot shells must be federally-approved nontoxic shot. These include; steel (most common), bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, tungsten-bronze, tungsten polymer, tungsten matrix and tin. Refer to the current Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations summary for federally-approved nontoxic shot details.

Ducks are harvested by jump shooting and hunting over decoys. Decoys are set afloat to draw in birds, whereas jump shooting involves quietly walking the flats to get within range and shooting as the ducks take flight. Puddle ducks are hunted along tidal flats, while sea ducks are harvested from rock islands or prominent points along the shoreline. Either way, a dependable boat and a well-trained retrieving dog will go a long way to ensure successful recovery of harvested birds.

After birds are retrieved, keep them cool, clean and dry until processed. If birds are processed in the field, leave the head or a fully feathered wing attached to the carcass for species identification during transport.

Items to take on a waterfowl hunt:

- Tide book
- PFD (personal floatation device)
- VHF radio
- Extra food and water
- Flares
- Dry clothes in a waterproof bag
- Hunting license and current Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations summary. Refer to this regulation summary for shooting hours, bag limits, season dates, and salvage requirements.

The Harvest Information Program (HIP) is required for most waterfowl hunters in Alaska. The HIP provides state and federal agencies with waterfowl harvest information needed to manage populations. Depending on age and residency status, waterfowl

hunters are also required to purchase a hunting license and duck stamps.

A hunter's rural residency status determines if they need to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp. The Federal Duck Stamp is available at the post office in Sitka. The same stamp can be used in all 50 states. Money generated from Federal Duck Stamp sales is used to protect wetland habitat in national wildlife refuges, which provides foraging and resting habitat across the country. Of every \$1.00 spent, \$0.98 is used directly to protect habitat. A current stamp also offers a free pass into national wildlife refuges. Some birders and photographers buy stamps specifically to support this program.

The Alaska waterfowl stamp is available at some vendors, or online at ADF&G's website. Money generated from state duck stamp sales is used to improve habitat and public access sites in Alaska, purchase educational materials, develop interpretive facilities at major viewing sites and support the ADF&G waterfowl program.

ADF&G Website: hunt.alaska.gov

- Licenses
- Permits
- Hunting regulations & handbook
- Species information
- Emergency orders/announcements
- Local office contact information

TRAPPING OPPORTUNITIES

The trapping season provides trappers a reason to get out and enjoy the outdoors during the cold winter months. Some trappers head out periodically on weekends to enjoy a snowy walk in the woods, while others hit it hard and routinely run the beachline to maximize their catch. Trapping is also a great winter activity to include younger children in; it gets them outside, provides moderate exercise and a basic introduction to ethical harvest methods. In addition, it is a great way to take advantage of the tail-end of deer season while checking a trapline.

Although marten were originally transplanted to Baranof and Chichagof islands, they are well established now and the most commonly trapped species in the unit. Marten are relatively easy to trap, less time-consuming to flesh, and generally fetch a higher price at the fur auction. Though mink isn't as sought after in the unit, it offers young or beginning trappers a reliable species to learn with. Other species trapped in the unit include river otter, beaver (also transplanted), and ermine.

Mink, marten, river otter, and beaver are trapped using either footholds or conibears. Marten and mink trappers sometimes use boxes to allow for an easier set. River otter are also harvested with snares or by ground shooting. A trapping license is required to shoot river otters or beaver during the trapping season. In addition to bait, strongly-scented lures can be used to attract animals to the site. Beavers are particularly attracted to castor, an aromatic oil produced by beaver castor glands which they use to scent-mark territory.

Check traps often to prevent the hides from spoiling or birds from finding an easy meal. A good rule of thumb is to check traps every couple of days if it's warm, and



PHOTOGRAPH USED WITH PERMISSION
Cousins Silas Ferguson, 7, and Dalton Voron, 10,
hold up Silas' first otter they harvested one winter
in Unit 4.

at least weekly if it starts to drop into colder temperatures. Seasoned trappers watch the weather forecast closely to avoid leaving sets out too long.

Furs should be processed right away after harvesting. If unable to do so, then freeze the animals whole immediately and process later. The "Alaska Guide to Fur Handling" is a great video (available online or at ADF&G offices), which provides step-by-step instructions on how to take care of furs.

Trappers should use discretion in setting traps near other trapper's lines, as well as near recreational and residential areas where people and pets travel. Likewise, pet owners should learn how to recognize and avoid traplines. During trapping season, pets running off-leash unsupervised risk getting

caught in legally set traps. Pet owners should keep pets leashed where needed and be prepared to act quickly if a pet is caught in a trap. The publication “Trap Safety for Pet Owners” was produced by ADF&G and the Alaska Trappers Association to illustrate how to remove pets from traps and snares. There are also videos available on ADF&G’s website that show how to release a pet from a trap.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS AND FUR SEALING

Most trappers need to obtain a trapping license. Alaska residents under 18 do not need one, and Alaska residents age 60 and older may use a permanent identification card in place of one. Marten, river otter, and beaver must be sealed within 30 days after the close of the season by an authorized ADF&G representative. During sealing the hides are counted, sex confirmed (as needed), harvest information recorded, and a seal is attached to the hide. A removable plastic string is used for marten, and a locking seal is used for otter and beaver. After hides are sealed, they may be sold for auction or tanned.

For detailed trapping regulations, refer to the current Alaska Trapping Regulations.



©ADF&G/STEVE BETHUNE

Autumn Bethune, 9, on her first alpine deer hunt on Baranof Island in 2018.

LICENSE AND GUIDE INFORMATION:

YOUTH: Youth under age 10 may trap their own furs and harvest small game, but they do not get their own big game bag limit, harvest tickets, or permits until they turn 10 years old. Adult supervision is not required for hunters with their own harvest tickets or permits.

Can youth under age 10 still get out and harvest a big game animal? Yes! Hunters under age 10 can hunt “on behalf” of an adult, meaning any animal the youth harvests is counted towards the adult’s bag limit. The youth must be under the direct, immediate supervision of the adult in the field. Also, the adult must be at least 18 years old, hold a valid hunting license, and obtain required harvest tickets or permits. The adult is responsible for ensuring legal requirements are fulfilled.

ALASKA RESIDENTS: “Alaska resident” means a person who is physically present in Alaska with the intent to remain indefinitely and make a home here, has maintained their domicile in Alaska for the 12 consecutive months prior to applying for a resident license, and is not claiming residency or obtaining benefits from another state. In addition, military personnel (and their

dependents) stationed in Alaska for 12 consecutive months prior to applying for a resident license also qualify to hunt and trap as an Alaska resident.

Alaska residents age 10-17 do not need to buy a hunting or trapping license. Alaska residents ages 18-59 must obtain a license before hunting or trapping. Alaska residents age 60 or older may apply online for a free permanent identification card in lieu of a license which covers the annual hunting, trapping, sport fishing licenses, king salmon stamp, and state duck stamp. Disabled veterans who are Alaska residents may qualify for a free license which covers the annual hunting and sport fishing license, king salmon stamp, and state duck stamp. In Unit 4, brown bear is the only species for which a resident is required to obtain a locking-tag.

NONRESIDENT MILITARY PERSONNEL:

Nonresident military personnel who have been stationed in Alaska less than 12 consecutive months prior to applying for a license must adhere to nonresident seasons and bag limits until the 12-month minimum requirement is met. However, permanently-stationed, nonresident military personnel do get a discount on their license and locking-tag fees; the hunting license and brown bear locking-tag are priced at resident rates, the mountain goat locking-tag is free, and deer locking-tags are not required.

NONRESIDENTS: Regardless of age, all nonresidents (including nonresident aliens) must have a valid hunting license to hunt game, or a trapping and hunting license if they plan on trapping. Besides the exemptions for nonresident military personnel listed above, nonresidents need a locking-tag for all big game species, including deer, brown bear, and mountain goat.



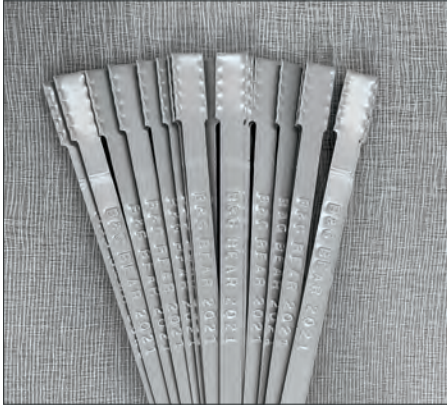
PHOTO USED WITH PERMISSION
Oscar Boetticher (left) shot this brown bear on Chichagof Island, while guided by Brad Dennison in 2016.

GUIDE REQUIREMENTS

All nonresidents (including nonresident military personnel) who plan to hunt brown bear or mountain goat in Unit 4 must be accompanied by an Alaska-licensed guide or an Alaska resident 19 years or older within the second-degree of kindred holding a current Alaska hunting license. “Second-degree of kindred” means a father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, spouse, grandparent, grandchild, brother/sister-in-law, son/daughter-in-law, and father/mother-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, stepsister, stepson, or stepdaughter. Note that uncle/aunt and nephew/niece is NOT included as an eligible resident relative within the second-degree of kindred.

Nonresident aliens (citizens of a foreign country) must hire an Alaska-licensed guide to hunt any big game.

TAGS, TICKETS AND PERMITS ... WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?



BIG GAME METAL LOCKING-TAGS

- Available at some vendors, or online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>. Pictured above are numbered metal locking-tags. The hunter affixes one to the part of the animal required to be salvaged prior to leaving the kill site. Locking-tags are valid for the duration of the calendar year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) recorded on the locking-tag. In addition to permits or harvest tickets, it is a hunter's responsibility to check if a locking-tag is also needed.



HARVEST TICKETS

- Available (free) at some vendors, ADF&G offices, or online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>. These are for general season hunts only. Deer is the only general season hunt in Unit 4. Harvest tickets are valid for seasons within

the regulatory year (July 1 - June 30) recorded on the harvest ticket. If hunting Unit 4 deer, harvest tickets must be used in sequential order, and any unused harvest tickets must be carried whenever hunting. The first thing that should be cut should after harvesting an animal is the permit or harvest ticket.

REGISTRATION & DRAW PERMITS

- Registration permits available (free) at ADF&G offices, or online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>.
- Draw permits must be applied for during Nov.-Dec. and are awarded by random lottery. Each hunt applied for is \$5.
- Permit hunts have very specific hunt boundaries, hunt conditions, and a unique hunt number, e.g., RG150, RB077. Permits are valid for seasons within the regulatory year (July 1 - June 30) recorded on the permit.

UNIT 4 BIG GAME HUNTING SEASONS & REQUIREMENTS

Prices and hunting requirements are subject to change – Always check the current Alaska Hunting Regulations for up-to-date prices and specific hunt conditions or call the ADF&G office near your hunt. For additional license and locking-tag information, contact the Licensing Section at 907-465-2376 or email dfg.das.licensehelp@alaska.gov.

	BROWN BEAR WATCH "TAKE A CLOSER LOOK"	DEER	MOUNTAIN GOAT READ "MOUNTAIN GOAT ID GUIDE"
SEASON	March 15-May 31 (Outside drainages) March 15-May 20 (Inside drainages) Sept. 15-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Sept. 14 Bucks only Sept. 15-Dec. 31 Any deer	Aug. 1-Dec. 31
HUNT #S	REGISTRATION PERMITS RB077, RB088, RB089 Alaska Residents, & Nonresidents hiring an Alaska-licensed guide Spring: RB088 (Outside); RB089 (Inside) Fall: RB077 all of Unit 4 DRAW PERMITS DB077, DB088, DB089 Nonresidents using a relative resident guide Spring: DB088 (Outside); DB089 (Inside) Fall: DB077 all of Unit 4	HARVEST TICKETS GD000 Deer harvest tickets GD000 are valid for any general season black-tailed deer hunt in Alaska.	REGISTRATION PERMIT RG150 The Baranof Island mountain goat hunt RG150 is valid for any of the open zones on Baranof Island. Check with the ADF&G in Sitka to see which zones are opened or closed to mountain goat hunting.
RESIDENT	• Hunting License \$45 • Locking-tag \$25 • Registration Permit	• Hunting License \$45 • Harvest Tickets	• Hunting License \$45 • Registration Permit
NONRES	• Hunting License \$160 • Locking-tag \$1,000 • Registration Permit (AK-licensed guide req.) • Draw Permit (Resident relative guide req.)	• Hunting License \$160 • Locking-tag \$300 • Harvest Tickets	• Hunting License \$160 • Locking-tag \$600 • Guide (Alaska-licensed or relative) • Registration Permit
NONRES MILITARY	• Hunting License \$45 • Locking-tag \$25 • Registration Permit (AK-licensed guide req.) • Draw Permit (Resident relative guide req.)	• Hunting License \$45 • Harvest Tickets	• Hunting License \$45 • Locking-tag (free) • Guide (Alaska-licensed or resident relative) • Registration Permit
NONRES ALIEN	• Hunting License \$630 • Locking-tag \$1,300 • Registration Permit (AK-licensed guide req.)	• Hunting License \$630 • Locking-tag \$300 • Harvest Tickets • AK-licensed guide	• Hunting License \$630 • Locking-tag \$800 • Registration Permit • AK-licensed guide

HUNTER EDUCATION AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

HUNTER EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

A Basic Hunter Education course is a great way to introduce young or new hunters to firearms safety, wildlife conservation, and ethical hunting. Hunter education is required in most states, but in Alaska it is required only in the specific locations, which are listed in the hunting regulations. Although hunter education is not required in Unit 4, it is still a good idea to complete a course and get certified.

Courses are taught by volunteer instructors and are periodically offered in Sitka. Contact the ADF&G in Sitka for course information.

Hunter Education Courses:

Find schedules online at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntered.main>

- Find courses scheduled for Sitka, or any classes offered in Alaska.

There are no weapons restricted hunts in Unit 4, meaning hunters may choose to use a crossbow or archery equipment, for example, to harvest big game. All hunters using a crossbow in any hunt must have successfully completed an ADF&G-approved crossbow certification course. All bowhunters born on or after January 1, 1986 must have successfully completed an ADF&G-approved bowhunter certification course before bowhunting in Unit 4. In addition to being certified, bowhunters (except those born before Jan. 1, 1986) must also carry the certification card in the field while hunting big game.

TRANSPORT THROUGH CANADA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

If plans include travel outside the U.S. with trophy game, contact the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service Import/Export Office in Anchorage at 907-271-6198 well in advance to get necessary forms and current regulations.

Under the terms of an international agreement, hunters are required to have a CITES (Council on International Trade of Endangered Species) permit when any part of a brown bear is taken, including prepared trophies, through or to a foreign country, including Canada. For CITES permit information call (819) 997-2800.

Canada has very strict firearms regulations. Anyone transporting firearms may receive an "Authorization to Transport" permit to transport a handgun through Canada. Be aware that this permit must be authorized before arriving at the border. Contact Canadian customs or the Canadian embassy for the most recent policy.

ADDITIONAL HUNTING REGULATION INFORMATION

State hunting regulations, seasons, and bag limits are in the current Alaska Hunting Regulations, available on ADF&G's website at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>, or ADF&G area offices. All Division of Wildlife area office phone numbers are listed in the Alaska Hunting Regulations. The ADF&G Wildlife Division office in Sitka is located at 304 Lake Street, Room 103, Sitka, or by phone at 907-747-5449.

Federal subsistence hunting regulations are in the Federal Subsistence Management Regulations for the Harvest of Wildlife on Federal Public Lands in Alaska. Rural Alaska residents are advised to contact the U.S. Forest Service regarding subsistence hunting regulations. The U.S. Forest Service office in Sitka is located at 2108 Halibut Point Road, Sitka, or by phone at 907-747-6671.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE CABIN RENTALS IN UNIT 4

Cabin rentals provide an alternative to camping. Many cabins were built to provide fishing access and hunting opportunities away from cities and towns. Cabins available for public use have oil or wood stoves, so research the kind of fuel needed. Take a small single burner stove as a backup cooking source in case problems arise with the stove. There will be bunks but no mattresses, and remember to bring cooking utensils and water. Bring a lantern or candles as a light source. Many of the cabins are dark in the summertime, too.

The U.S. Forest Service is the rental agency for most of the cabins in the area. Exceptions are: Oliver Inlet cabin rented by Alaska State Parks, and the Tom Young cabin rented by the City of Sitka, Public Works Office. **Reserve U.S. Forest Service cabins online at <https://recreation.gov>.** There is a map at this link which shows USFS cabin locations on the ABC's. This link also has information about what each cabin has to offer, things to be aware of in that area, and check cabin availability. Some cabins get booked quickly, so make plans and reservations in advance.

ADMIRALTY ISLAND CABINS

Admiralty Cove Cabin
Big Shaheen Cabin
Church Bight Cabin
Florence Lake (East) Cabin
Hasselborg Creek Cabin
Jims Lake Cabin
Kathleen Lake Cabin
Lake Alexander Cabin
Little Shaheen Cabin
Pybus Bay Cabin
Young Lake (North) Cabin
Young Lake (South) Cabin

BARANOF/KRUZOF ISLAND CABINS

Allan Point Cabin



©ADF&G/ABBY MCALLISTER

Cabin rentals can provide a great base camp — heated interior, bunks, food prep area and general protection from the elements.

Appleton Cove Cabin
Avoss Lake Cabin
Baranof Lake Cabin
Brents Beach Cabin
Davidof Lake Cabin
Freds Creek Cabin
Kanga Bay Cabin
Lake Eva Cabin
North Beach Cabin
Piper Island Cabin
Plotnikof Lake Cabin
Salmon Lake Cabin
Samsing Cove Cabin
Sawmill Creek Campground
Sevenfathom Bay Cabin
Shelikof Cabin
Starrigavan Creek Cabin

CHICHAGOF ISLAND CABINS

Eight Fathom Cabin
Goulding Lake Cabin
Greentop Cabin
Kennel Creek Cabin
Kook Lake Cabin
Moser Island Cabin
Sitkoh Lake (East) Cabin
Sitkoh Lake (West) Cabin
Suloia Lake Cabin
White Sulphur Springs Cabin

BEAR PRECAUTIONS

Always be “Bear-Aware!” In Unit 4, bears are a common sighting. Hunters should be mentally prepared to respond appropriately.

CAMPING CONSIDERATIONS

Avoid camping near well-used bear trails or where there are fresh tracks, diggings, or bear scat. Select campsites away from salmon streams, or if partially eaten salmon carcasses are nearby. Hunting parties with multiple tents should be pitched in a straight line. This way, if a bear tries to enter one of the tents, the risks of shooting at or spraying bear pepper spray towards a neighboring tent is minimized.

Keep odiferous items that could attract bears away from tents. This includes cooking utensils, garbage, grey water, and game meat. Suspend garbage in bags from a tree away from camp. Also, the odor of petroleum-based plastics and other products can attract bears. Be aware that kayaks, 4-wheelers, and inflatable rafts are all items a bear may decide to investigate while hunters are away.

BEAR SPRAY AND FIREARMS – PRACTICE AND BE PROFICIENT!

Keep bear spray and/or an appropriate firearm in camp and have it easily accessible. Be prepared to respond to a bear in poor light conditions or at night. If a bear approaches, try to discourage it with bear spray or warning shots. Firing a rifle sometimes scares a bear, but not always. Dogs should not be considered bear protection. In fact, dogs often provoke a bear to respond with an aggression.

Practice using bear spray before it is needed, if choosing to carry it as a deterrent. Expired cans may be used to practice, or purchase and practice with inert bear spray. Be familiar with the spray pattern using targets at 10, 15, and 20 feet. It is important to be able to



©ADF&G/ABBY MCALLISTER

Bear spray works, but it is important to know how to use it prior to actually needing it in the event of a wildlife safety situation.

remove the canister from the holster, flip the trigger release lock, and deploy it without looking at the can. Use one hand to hold the can for better aim, and the other to depress the trigger. Spray straight ahead, aiming slightly downward to ensure the full force and concentration of the spray reaches the bear's nose and eyes. Be mindful of wind direction, if possible, as bear spray can affect the eyes and respiratory system of humans, too.

Carrying a sidearm is another option that can be effective, but only if the user is proficient with the weapon. Regardless of what bear deterrent is chosen — pepper spray or a firearm — be proficient before using it in a bear encounter.

HUNTING IN BEAR COUNTRY

Be on full alert while hunting — watch for fresh bear tracks and droppings. Avoid hunting alone if possible. Unless hunting for bears specifically, avoid obvious bear feeding trails and resting areas, such as near streams and lakes when spawning fish are abundant. Hunters who encounter a bear that hasn't detected them, should ready their deterrent and quietly leave the area.

When stalking game, be very alert to the possibility of surprising a bear. If a bear is accidentally surprised, or if a bear begins a deliberate approach, ready any deterrent and talk to it calmly; raise hands only if it doesn't interfere with use of deterrent. Group up with hunting partners to appear larger. Never turn away from a bear and run, as this may elicit a charge. Instead, back away from the bear with an expressed sense of determination.

The "Know Your Bear Facts" brochure is a great reference, which is available at ADF&G area offices. More bear safety information is available online on the ADF&G website with sections on traveling in bear country, safety for hunters, electric fences, bear resistant containers, and more. **Check out the Living With Bears section on ADF&G's website at alaskabears.alaska.gov.**

STAYING SAFE IN THE FIELD - PREPARE FOR THE WORST!

Rain, wind, and snow are the dominant weather forces in Southeast Alaska. Tent camping can still be enjoyable if preparations are made all possible weather conditions.

TIPS FOR CAMPING & SITE SELECTION:

- Avoid sites with lots of blown-down trees. Camp in areas protected from the wind. The most violent storms usually come from the southeast in Unit 4. Winter storms can also arrive from the north and be accompanied by snow.
- Pick a well-drained spot. Skunk cabbage indicates a boggy area. Devil's club may mean that water flows through the area periodically. Muskegs are enticingly open, but boggy.
- Camp above the high tide line. Consult a tide book to see if exceptionally high tides are expected.
- Take plenty of rope or cord. Create a dry cooking area with tarps strung between trees as a roof.

- A tarp stretched above the door of the tent will help keep it dry inside.
- Keep sleeping bags in plastic bags when away from camp.
- Take a small stove for cooking; don't depend on having dry wood for a fire.
- Dress in layers and avoid wearing cotton clothing. Bring extra clothes for unexpected weather.
- Check the weather forecast for the length of the entire hunt.

TIPS FOR SAFETY IN THE FIELD:

- Hunt with a partner or a group.
- File a float or trip plan with a friend or family member so they know where the hunting party plans to be, when they plan to return, what gear they plan to utilize, and what to do if the party is overdue.
- Carry a portable VHF radio, satellite phone, or inReach® device to contact help in case of emergency. VHF-FM radio channel 16 is the international calling and distress channel.
- Use a backcountry electric fence to protect camp sites and harvested meat.
- Take a GPS to help ensure safe return to the cabin, boat, etc., or to help rescue personnel locate you in case of emergency.
- Take a personal emergency position indicating radio beacon when hunting to alert rescue personnel to your specific location in case of emergency.
- If traveling by skiff, make sure it is anchored securely away from rocks while hunting or camping. Remove emergency equipment and valuables and keep them on shore and accessible.
- Wear a proper sized life jacket/exposure suit while traveling by boat and follow boating regulations.
- Bring a small emergency kit including fire-starting tools, first aid supplies, and a whistle.
- Follow hunting regulations and gun safety guidelines.
- Take extra food and water.
- Avoid the use of alcohol.

COMMON VIOLATIONS IN UNIT 4 – AVOID THESE MISTAKES

• **Failure to immediately validate harvest tickets** — Harvest tickets (and registration permits) must be validated immediately after taking game by cutting out the month and day of kill. This must be done before leaving the kill site. Hunters often validate their harvest ticket right when they take out their knife to start processing the animal.

• **Preserving evidence of sex** — When the bag limit is restricted to one sex, keep enough of the sex organs (penis sheath or vaginal orifice) naturally attached to show the sex of the animal. Deer antlers alone do not constitute proof of sex, unless they are naturally attached to the entire carcass (with or without viscera). Proof of sex must remain naturally attached to the hides of all Unit 4 bears until sealed.

• **Shooting from the road** — Hunters may not take game by shooting on, from, or across the driveable surface of any constructed road or highway. A highway is defined as the driveable surface of any constructed road. In addition, hunters may not take big game within 1/4 mile of the Sitka road system.

• **Shooting from a boat** — State regulations are explicit: “You may not shoot big game from a boat in Units 1-5 or black bear in Unit 6D, unless you have obtained a Permit to Hunt from a Boat.” To qualify, applicants must be at least 70 percent physically disabled. Permit applications are available at ADF&G.

• **Highway littering** — Leaving any part of a harvested animal on a public road or right-of-way is littering and is illegal. Leave entrails, hides, etc., in the field out of sight of roads or trails. Take litter home for disposal. Besides being the law, it is common courtesy.

• **Killing a bear to defend a harvested deer** — Although state law allows killing a bear to defend life or property (under some circumstances), hunters may not kill a bear to protect game meat unless it is critical for survival. Even in this situation, hunters must do everything possible to protect meat by storing the meat properly and scaring off scavengers, to name a few.

• **Using an artificial light, or “spotlighting”** — Game may not be taken with the aid of a light. This includes vehicle headlights. This does not include “red dot” style scopes — these scopes project an aim point back into the shooter’s eye, but projects nothing downrange onto the target.

• **Selling or bartering of deer antlers** — Unless naturally shed or permanently removed from the skull, no game antlers may be sold or traded. This prohibition includes prepared big game trophies unless the antlers are not attached to any part of the skull.

• **Failure to complete and return hunt reports** — For successful hunters, goat hunt reports are due within five days of kill, brown bear hunt reports are due within 10 days of kill, and deer hunt reports are due within 15 days of filling the bag limit. Otherwise, all other reports are due within 15 days after the end of the season, even if a hunter did not hunt. Record unsuccessful hunts too so the hunt effort is captured.



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Morning can be a great time to spot wildlife. David Lowell scans a muskeg meadow on Chichagof Island for deer during a fall hunt in 2016.

Information in this publication is not quoted verbatim from state hunting regulations; it is simplified for convenience. For additional information, please refer to the current Alaska Hunting Regulations.

Hunters are important founders of the modern wildlife conservation movement. They, along with trappers and sport shooters, provided funding for this publication through payment of federal taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and through state hunting license and tag fees.

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NOTES

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Fall on Chichagof Island.

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