

THE PLATTE VALLEY HUNTING GUIDE

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Saratoga Sun file photo
From left, Elk Mountain Game Warden Ryan Kennada and Biff Burton listen to Saratoga resident Tony Seahorn.

Good habits for a safer hunt

By Max Miller

Although participants use guns, knives, bows and arrows, hunting is actually one of the safer ways to enjoy the outdoors according to Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton. Even so, the wild and remote landscape of southern Wyoming features perils as well as beauty, and Burton had some advice to offer hunters as shooting seasons start.

"They say that there are no accidents—there's preventable accidents, or negligence," Burton said. The warden said that most injuries in the field could have been avoided by being more attentive and following some simple guidelines. "Knife wounds, twisted joints and broken legs ... hypothermia is a common one," Burton said as he ticked off some of the injuries he regularly encounters.

"I don't know a hunter that hasn't cut himself when they're field-dressing or skinning or dragging an animal back (to camp)," Burton said. According to a website run by Buck Knives, abiding by a few best practices can prevent most common knife injuries. Sharp knives are safer than dull ones, and knife owners should keep their blades clean, paying particular attention to locking mechanisms that are critical to safe use. The site also reminds knife users to always cut away from themselves, and not to use blades for prying, which can cause them to break-creating dangerous shrapnel.

Because most people in Carbon County grew up around guns and gun culture, Burton said gun accidents are a comparative rarity. "Firearms are our way of life here, and they're just tools like a hammer or a screwdriver to us," Burton said.

"I don't know a hunter that hasn't cut himself when they're field-dressing or skinning or dragging an animal back ..."

Biff Burton
Game Warden
Wyoming Game and Fish

Even so, Burton said it's too common for hunters to "make a stupid mistake shooting at something they shouldn't be shooting at." Taking time to positively identify your target and paying attention to what lies beyond it are critical to preventing dangerous mistakes.

Other gun errors, like cleaning a gun without unloading a chambered round, or pulling the trigger while unloading a gun can be ascribed to simple thoughtlessness. "It's just stu-

pidity—and the guys will tell you (afterwards), 'I was just stupid,'" Burton said.

Burton reminded hunters to always wear blaze orange in the field during the season, and that horses can also wear blaze to prevent accidental shootings.

Driving recklessly and speeding on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) can also be a hazard for hunters, especially if alcohol is added to the mix. "Slow down out there, stick to the roads and follow the rules so you're not putting yourself in danger," Burton advised.

Hunters should also go out prepared for fickle weather and big temperature swings. A soaking rain and high winds can accelerate hypothermia rapidly, and make roads nearly impassible in the same amount of time, and hunters should be prepared for both possibilities.

A common thread among many of these mistakes is over-familiarity. "The idea is, you get complacent," Burton said. Many hunters are so used to the routine use of their tools that they fall into bad habits or carelessness and put themselves or those around them at risk.

That being said, Burton made it clear he wouldn't want to dissuade anyone from hunting. "Small accidents happen almost routinely, but hunting is really the safest sport. It's safer than horse-back riding or bowling," he stated. Go and get your deer or elk, Burton counseled—just don't get hurt doing it.

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Tips for trophies

Field preparation aids in proper taxidermy

By Fred Broschart

This year will most certainly be the year that some lucky hunters in the Valley get the once-in-a-lifetime game animal. For the sportsmen so fortunate, it is an understandable desire to have the animal sent to a taxidermist and have it preserved forever for, well, bragging rights.

But there are special considerations that need to be taken into account if you want to have that trophy buck, elk, moose or even bird or fish stuffed and mounted to hang above the mantelpiece for years to come.

Warden Patzer, at Trophy Room Taxidermy and Koyote Sports in Saratoga, said it was important that hunters who want their animals to be preserved by taxidermy to pay particular attention to their field care of the animal.

"Field care is essential," Patzer said. "The better the field care, the better your product will be in the end."

"It's a must."

For bigger game such as deer, Patzer said that hunters should take care of the carcass to make sure no post mortem damage that may affect the quality of the end product occurs. Patzer said that animals should not be dragged, since that will cause the animal's hair to be pulled out, and can result in bald spots on the hide.

Getting the animal to the taxidermist quickly is very important as well. Patzer said that getting the animal to the meat processor where the animal can be caped—have its hide and head removed—and cooled down quickly is essential to a good trophy.

If a hunter needs to cap an animal in the field, Patzer said to cut to the animal's sternum and no farther. After stopping at the sternum, pull the cape over the animal's shoulder and cut the neck at its upper end.

Temperature control is also important in preserving the animal's hide for a trophy, Patzer said.

"A plastic bag is the worst enemy," Pater said. "A lot of guys will put it in a plastic

bag and throw it in the freezer and think it's good; it's not, because all that heat (from the hide) is in that bag and it takes two or three days for it to freeze and in the meantime you've got bacteria in there."

The best thing to do, Patzer said, is to fold the leather sides—the inside part of the hide—together and lay it out overnight to let it cool. By folding the cape leather-to-leather, you help ensure that the hide does not dry out, he said.

"Field care is essential—the better the field care, the better your product will be in the end"

Warden Patzer
Proprietor, Koyoty Sports

Once it is cool, then the hide can be placed in a plastic bag and put in the freezer before being taken the taxidermist.

Patzer said one pitfall he has seen in the past is the desire to show off a prized kill to friends. Some, he said, have left the cape out for several days so they can show it off to their friends. This, he said, can spoil the cape and make the end product a lower quality than hoped.

Instead, Patzer suggests getting the cape to the taxidermist right away. From there, the antlers can be taken away and showed off while the taxidermist works on the rest of the trophy, he said.

For archery hunters who hunt earlier in the season, when antlers may still be in velvet, have to take special care to make sure the very delicate velvet is not damaged since that cannot be fixed in the shop by the taxidermist.

For birds and fish—which Patzer no longer works with—the rules are different. With large game, plastic bags are

the worst enemy, but for birds they're just what you need, Patzer said. After successfully hunting a bird you would like to have made into a trophy, the best thing to do is gently lay the bird complete in the bag, taking special care to not bend or break feathers. It's important that the feathers lay flat in the bag, he said. Then, once the entire bird is in the bag, freeze it and bring it to the taxidermist.

In most cases, fish are a replica, Patzer said. Because of that, it's not necessary to take a dead fish to the taxidermist. Instead, a fisherman can take a picture, then measure their fish, including the length and girth, and return it to the water. That information will tell the taxidermist how to recreate the model.

If an angler decides to have that particular fish mounted, he or she should wrap the fish in cellophane and freeze it right away. Patzer says the fish should not be gutted, cleaned or cut in any way. Care should also be taken to make sure that there is nothing on the fish that will pierce the skin, such as pine needles.

Because scales have a tendency to fall off, most fish taxidermists do not use the fish's natural skin, Patzer said. Instead, they use artificial skin and paint it to match.

Regardless of whether a hunter wants to have big game, fowl, fish or small game mounted as a trophy, the key to getting a quality trophy besides proper field care is communication with the taxidermist, Patzer said.

"Communication between the client and the taxidermist is key," Patzer said. "It's important to take lots of notes and inspect your hide when it comes in."

Taking proper care of your prized animal or fish, and taking proper care of the relationship between client and taxidermist can help ensure successful hunters have a trophy to be proud of for years to come.

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Apps for hunting

By Fred Broschart

These days, it seems there is an app for everything. Even something as rugged as hunting is not exempt from the fact that technology is changing it.

According to Biff Burton, Game Warden for the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish, there are numerous phone apps that hunters are using to increase hunt satisfaction and be safer.

Several basic apps out there are recommended for hunters. Apps like Accu-weather, WUnderground and others help sportsmen keep an eye on the weather conditions they will likely be facing out in the field.

Mapping apps are also useful for hunters, Burton said. On the Game and Fish website, members of the

public are able to download mapping apps that work with a phone's GPS system and allow hunters to see up-to-date hunt area maps that are maintained by Game and Fish. Apps like these allow hunters to be sure they are in the proper hunt zone, Burton said.

"It is so cool, it's unique in the world," Burton said. "I wish I was better at computers; I'd be using it."

Other generalized mapping applications available for phones, such as Google Earth, give hunters far off the beaten track a good idea of the terrain ahead and the locations of landmarks such as bodies of water and even buildings.

See "Apps" on page 8 of the hunting guide

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Enforce, gather, educate ...

Game wardens wear many different hats

By Max Miller

Biff Burton has been Saratoga's Game Warden since 1989, and in those 27 years, he's done a lot more than just issue citations.

As Burton describes it, besides the important work of game law enforcement, wardens are also called on to educate the public, act as arbiters in hunting disputes and gather field data in order to better understand and manage wild game populations.

"We (game wardens) like being different, and that's part of our culture and tradition," Burton said, calling Wyoming Game and Fish (WGF) "warmer and friendlier law enforcement." Charged with managing a district that encompasses over 2,000 square miles, Burton needs plenty of help from his neighbors in order to do his job effectively.

"We like people to think that there's a game warden in every airplane that flies over, but there's not," Burton said. Instead, wardens like him rely largely on help from residents, other hunters, meat processors and taxidermists, among others.

"When people understand why we make decisions about wildlife, they become allies instead of complainers," Burton explained of his approach. To this end, he said on any given day "You'd find me taking calls, working at my desk, going to the schools—a lot of running around town." Burton also teaches hunting safety classes and grants interviews to media outlets as part of his community outreach.

Reports of violations

or suspicious activity can come from a meat processor who gets a questionable carcass or a rancher who hears shots after dark when hunting is prohibited, Burton said. "Either someone sees (a violation) happen or they see the end result, which can be a blood spot on the road, shooting where there should not be any shooting or someone sees their neighbor with an animal that doesn't seem right to them," Burton offered as examples.

WGF also does extensive record checking and document review to catch people trying to game the system. Burton said out-of-state hunters and fishers will sometimes get caught trying to apply for cheaper, in-state licenses—a misdemeanor which current U.S. Congressional candidate Liz Cheney paid a \$220 fine for in 2013. Landowner coupons, meat processing and taxidermy receipts also leave a paper trail that investigators can follow back to rule-breakers, Burton said.

In the field, "We rely on collection of evidence and old-fashioned police work to figure out who did what," Burton said. These techniques have gotten even more effective in recent years as advances in technology and greater cellphone reception have let people report things sooner. "If we can get to the scene of a crime quickly there's more evidence there, or if an animal is hurt maybe we can help it," Burton said.

Advances in technology have also allowed Burton and other wardens to use remote-monitoring from trail-cams to catch suspects. Other times, that

work is done the old-fashioned way, with a warden surveilling a suspicious area on foot or from his or her pickup truck. "We'll use all the technology available to us—and I don't want to tell everybody everything we do," Burton concluded.

As the popularity of social media sites has grown, pictures on Facebook and incriminating tweets have also become a valuable source of evidence for Burton. "We encourage people to send pictures of everything, because then there's a record of it," Burton said.

Despite all these sophisticated new detection methods, Burton said success at his job "still boils down to hard work, dealing with people, treating people with respect—how they would want to be treated." In this empty country, no technology is more valuable than the observant rancher who picks up the phone to call Burton when he sees something amiss, and an unfriendly or short-tempered warden won't get that tip.

"Our whole system of wildlife management works better when people are talking," Burton said. "The risk of getting caught is still pretty low, so we rely on these good ethics that we try to teach people," he went on.

If you see evidence of wildlife crime, it can be reported by calling (877) WGFD-TIP (877-943-3847), or online at wgfd.wyo.gov/law-enforcement/stop-poaching. Officers like Burton are working hard to keep Wyoming's wildlife populations healthy for generations to come—but they can't do it without your support.

Leave the drones home

Aircraft use not considered fair game

By Fred Broschart

In the wake of recent regulations handed down the Federal Aviation Administration regarding the use of drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs) for commercial and recreational use, the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish has said the remote-controlled aircraft are not legal for use as hunting aids.

Wyoming joined several other states in banning the use of UASs in hunting. Alaska was the first to recognize the use of drones in hunting and act to prevent the use of the devices in hunting by extending the definition of "aircraft" to include UASs, thereby holding the devices to the same standards as other aircraft. In Alaska, it is illegal to hunt the same day you fly an aircraft.

Wyoming's regulation is similar, according to Biff Burton, a game warden for Wyoming Department of Game and Fish.

"We consider them (UASs) aircraft," Burton said. "You can't use them for the purposes of hunting."

Burton said that the question has already come up in the Valley. Last year, he had a hunter ask if it was permissible to use a UAS equipped with a camera to go up and take pictures of the land on which he planned to hunt.

"I had to explain the law," Burton said. "That is an aircraft, and you can't use an aircraft."

"And you can't hunt within 24 hours of using an aircraft."

Burton said a good rule of thumb for hunters is that they cannot fly an aircraft over a hunting ground—including unmanned ones like UASs—then hunt that land within 24 hours of the flight. Nor can there be any radio communication from the aircraft to hunters on the ground, he said.

The issue, Burton said, was ethical in nature.

Burton added that while Wyoming Game and Fish is on board with hunters using new technology to make their hunt more productive, comfortable and safer, he said the department draws the

line when a technology may give a hunter an unfair advantage over animals or other hunters.

"It comes down to fair chase," Burton said. "Fair chase comes down to giving an animal a fair chance to escape a hunter."

"Drones seem to cross that line to most people," he said.

Even though UAS technology cannot be used legally to assist hunters in the course of their hunt, that does not mean the technology will not ultimately be of benefit to Wyoming hunters.

In other countries, drones have been used to crack down on poachers, notably in South Africa where game wardens have used the aircraft to monitor endangered rhinoceros populations and locate poachers who kill them for their ivory, the BBC reported.

In other instances, the aircraft have been used to conduct studies of animal populations and migration, data that give biologists information to make better population estimates of game animals.

"We look forward to the day when we (Wyoming Game and Fish) can use unmanned aircraft to gather data about animals," Burton said. "What a great tool for wildlife managers, and to keep biologists, like me, safe and out of the air."

There's a fair amount of resistance to government organizations like Game and Fish using UAS technology, Burton said. He believes that comes from the use of drones by the military as a weapon overseas. He has had several landowners tell him they do not want drones flying over their property.

The Fish and Game Department already does that, Burton said. The only difference is that right now they are sitting in the aircraft. Perhaps in the future, when the technology evolves, they may be able to do their aerial studies from the ground with UASs.

For now, however, the Game and Fish Department is merely looking forward to the day when a UAS might help its biologists become better game managers. And hunters are looking forward to this year's hunt, as long as they leave the drones at home.

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Knowing regulations a necessity

Consequences can be dire for even unintended violations

By Max Miller

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton takes his lunches when he can this time of year. As hunting season opens up for big game and trophy animals, wardens across the state are kept busy enforcing laws that promote hunter safety and protect game populations from over-harvesting.

"If hunting's a big part of your life, make it a point to know and understand game laws and make it a point to follow them. Don't take chances," Burton said. "You could go to jail for a long time—that's how important it is," he continued.

Though the easy going Wyoming Game and Fish (WGF) warden prefers a friendly approach, he warns that violations are common at this time of year, and the consequences for such violations can be serious.

Hunting violations largely fall into three categories in Wyoming, Burton explained: low misdemeanors, high misdemeanors and, in the most serious cases, felonies. Low misdemeanors can carry a fine of up to \$1,000 and six months in jail. High misdemeanors can carry fines of up to \$10,000 and one year in jail. Other penalties, such as the confiscation of game meat and loss of the privilege to hunt may also be assessed, and because Wyoming is a signatory to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, those penalties can follow a hunter to 44 other states, Burton said.

By the warden's reckoning, one of the most common violations he encounters is the failure to properly tag an ani-

mal with a "carcass coupon,"—a low misdemeanor carrying a fine of \$220. Failing to sign and date a kill is fairly common—and it's serious, Burton said. "If you don't tag it you have a fresh license you can use again and that's just plain poaching," Burton said.

Hunting more than 30 minutes before sunrise or after sunset is also prohibited, and it's dangerous to boot, Burton warned. So is not wearing blaze orange, a \$120 offense, which happens all too often as aspen ally lights up and shots ring out across Carbon County's rolling sage desert and pine forests.

Trespassing was one of Burton's biggest concerns in the past, but he said hunters are getting more and more conscientious about staying off private land every year. "With GPS, people are better at knowing their location," he explained.

Wasting game meat remains a problem, however. Law dictates that meat from game animals cannot be wasted, so hunters are required to harvest all edible portions of their takes. "I always try to remind people to remove the tenderloins from game animals because that's a fairly new law," Burton said.

The warden also reminded hunters that firing a gun within 30 feet of an established roadway is illegal, though he admitted the law is tough to enforce.

Retaining evidence of the sex of animal taken is another requirement that occasionally gets overlooked by hunters, Burton said. Keeping the head or sex organs of an animal that's been killed is required because it allows war-

dens like Burton to establish that the hunter followed age and sex guidelines stipulated by his or her license.

"Sometimes hunters mistake a young buck antelope for a doe antelope—we have a few of those every year," Burton said. Other errors of identification include mistaking an elk for a deer, or a moose for an elk, both of which can result in hefty citations. The warden even recalled an incident two years ago where a horse was shot by accident in Savage Run Wilderness. Though Burton related the story with a chuckle, he described it as a serious safety concern and an instance of reckless negligence on the part of the hunter.

In Burton's view, these dangerous miscues can be largely avoided by sticking to a couple guidelines. He suggested avoiding hunting next to private lands, or shooting at running animals. "Taking that long shot," going out too early or staying out too late can also result in serious mistakes, Burton said.

For the hunter that does step outside the bounds of the law, Burton said "The honesty of people always goes in their favor, and every Fish and Wildlife Agency I know of rewards honesty." Self-reporting a violation could result in lower fines, being able to keep improperly harvested meat or retaining hunting privileges, Burton said. "Game wardens know that hunting is not an exact sport or science."

At WGF, "We don't want to scare people, but we want them to know that there are consequences if you break game laws," Burton concluded.

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THE PLATTE VALLEY HUNTING GUIDE

A special section of the
Saratoga Sun
October 5, 2016

PAGE 6

All about the Pronghorn

The pronghorn is a Wyoming icon. Its image appears on business signs, public art, and even agency emblems. We love that over half of the worldwide pronghorn population is found within the state of Wyoming. But how much do we actually know about pronghorn? Surprisingly, pronghorn population numbers no longer

exceed the population of people within the state. In fact, population numbers have decreased significantly over the last couple of decades, and the population total is somewhere close to 410,000 today. There are, in fact, a third more people in the state of Wyoming than pronghorn.

What people do know about pronghorn, and what has not

changed over the last decade is how fast they are and how well they can see, but to what degree is astounding. Pronghorn can detect movement up to four miles away. The human equivalent to a pronghorn's amazing eyesight is looking through an 8x power pair of binoculars! There are not a lot of places to hide on the wide-open prairie, and

many pairs of eyes are better than one, which is one of the many benefits of strong herding instincts.

Pronghorn, although still considered ungulates, vary greatly from other ungulates in how they use and store energy. Most animals fall into two different categories of energy storage and breeding strategy. There are capital

On the Range



By Abby Perry
University of Wyoming
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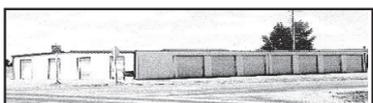
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THE PLATTE VALLEY HUNTING GUIDE

A special section of the
Saratoga Sun
October 5, 2016

PAGE 7

(use energy as they acquire it). Pronghorn are in-between capital and income breeders, but likely fall more on the income breeder side of the spectrum. They have very few fat stores, which is interesting considering some of their reproductive characteristics.

Pronghorn invest more highly in reproduction than any other ungulate. For instance, the gestational period for pronghorn is longer than other ungulates of similar size at approximately 250 days. The pronghorn twinning rate is nearly 100%, and those twins account for almost 16% of the adult female pronghorn's body weight. That is like an average size woman giving birth to 12 pound twins.

Because pronghorn invest so much energy in reproduction and do not have much in terms of energy storage,

having available forage is crucial, which makes pronghorn very susceptible to negative outcomes from drought conditions. In order to contend with drought conditions, pronghorn sometimes change their diet to include more shrubs than forbs. If they cannot get suitable forage, their body condition deteriorates, which can result in mortality or a significant decrease in fawning rates.

Pronghorn manage the forage availability problem by moving. Some pronghorn in Wyoming migrate approximately 170 miles from the Upper Green River Basin to Grand Teton National Park. The migration route is the longest in the lower 48 by any land animal. The route crosses four major rivers, private property, public land, and developed areas with lots of cars. The migration route

also became the first federally designated migration corridor, which helps protect the pronghorn and other animals that also use this route to migrate.

Because pronghorn are a truly unique Wyoming icon, they continue to be the subject of many on-going research projects. These projects aim to help pronghorn populations to thrive. Ensuring the continued success of pronghorn in Wyoming is important because so much of the overall population is found within the state. Most Wyomingites can identify with their unique characteristics and want to ensure the pronghorn's abundance for generations to come.

Keep an eye out for the winter edition of *Barnyards and Backyards: Rural Living in Wyoming* for the extended version of this article.

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Area numbering explained

By Fred Broschart

A look at maps of Wyoming hunt areas might lead some to question why deer are included in one hunt area, whereas other species in the same geographic location are part of another hunt area.

The answer has to do with the way Wyoming Game and Fish tries to manage animal populations across the state, according to Biff Burton, a game warden with Wyoming Game and Fish.

The business of the Game and Fish department is to manage populations of animals, Burton said. A population of game animals is a group of animals that has very few individuals moving in or out of the group, Burton said.

Such populations have ranges that they stay within, Burton said. There is a population of Elk that live in the Snowy Range and they stay in that area. Deer, however, do not tend to cross over the Snowy Range, instead moving around the range's periphery.

Those deer are also considered a snowy range population, but the deer have a different boundary than elk, even though their ranges do overlap, Burton said.

Because of the way

Game and Fish decided to number population groups' ranges, the numbering system for each species evolved independently of the other species' hunt areas, Burton explained.

"In Colorado, their deer and elk are in the same hunt areas," Burton said. "But that does not mean they are managing those populations in the same way."

The numbering system is part of the department's management system for big game animals, Burton said. Hunt areas are intended to distribute hunters in a way to achieve a desired harvest in particular areas, Burton said.

"Hunt areas are designed to spread out people," he said. "People tend to concentrate closer to home or population centers, so we needed a way to get people to go to different areas and harvest animals there."

A certain number of licenses are granted for each hunt area depending on Game and Fish's plans for managing the population of animals. A hunt area with a larger population that needs to be culled will have more hunters assigned to it than will an area that is not as overpopulated, Burton said.

Maps courtesy of Wyoming Game and Fish Department
MAPS ARE FOR GENERAL REFERENCE ONLY. Please use the written boundaries printed in regulations for detailed boundary information.

Note:  Wilderness area, nonresidents must have guides

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Apps

continued from page 3 of the Hunting Guide

Burton said there are also apps that can help make people better, safer hunters. There are apps for sighting in rifles and bows, he said, as well as apps that help hunters make ballistics calculations to decide how and whether to take a shot.

There are also apps to help hunters track animals, and to help shooters sight in their rifles.

"We encourage hunters to use all of those things," Burton said. "The technology that makes hunters more successful are also making them more accurate shots, better trackers and are making you safer by giving you an edge over the weather and that sort of thing."

According to one hunting blog, there are numerous apps that hunters can find useful. Some help hunters understand animal behavior and even help mimic animal calls more accurately. There are also journaling apps that allow hunters to keep notes of animal activ-

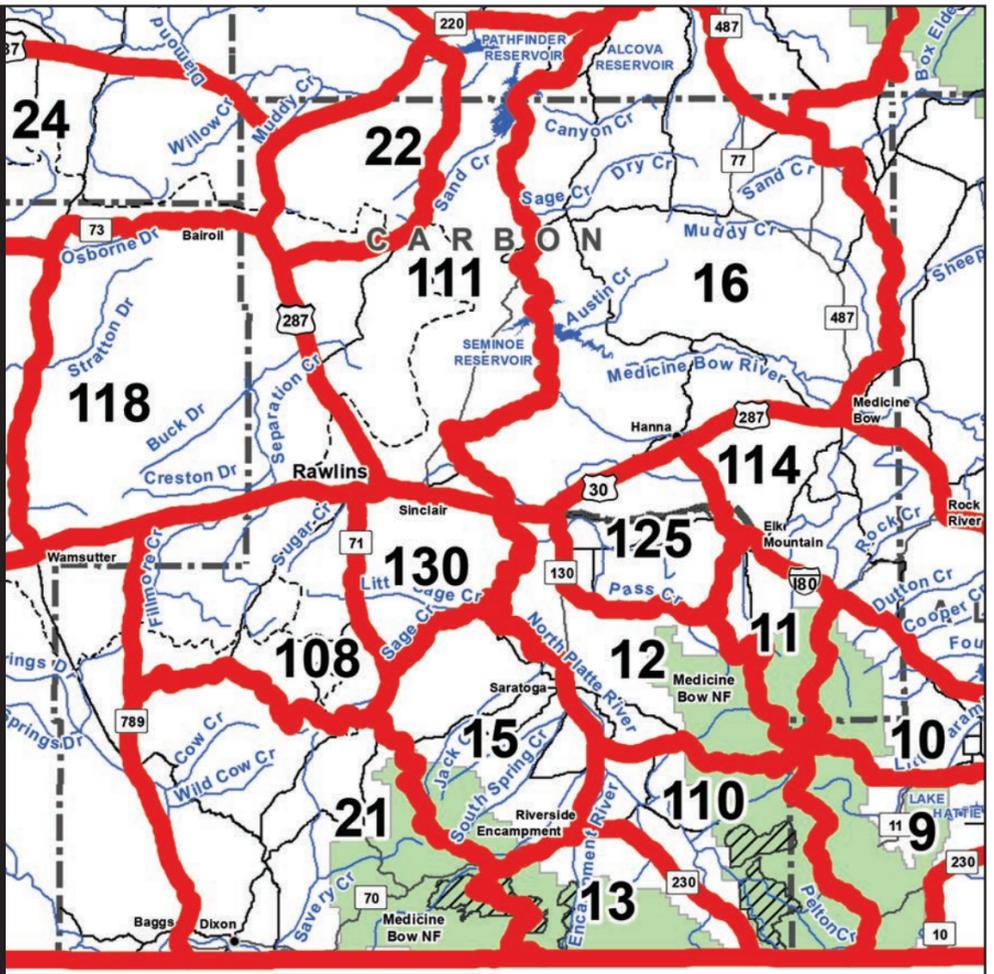
ity and other data that can be studied later to improve chances of a fruitful hunt.

There are also apps that teach hunters survival skills on the off chance a hunter is stranded and needs to spend unexpected time in the wilderness.

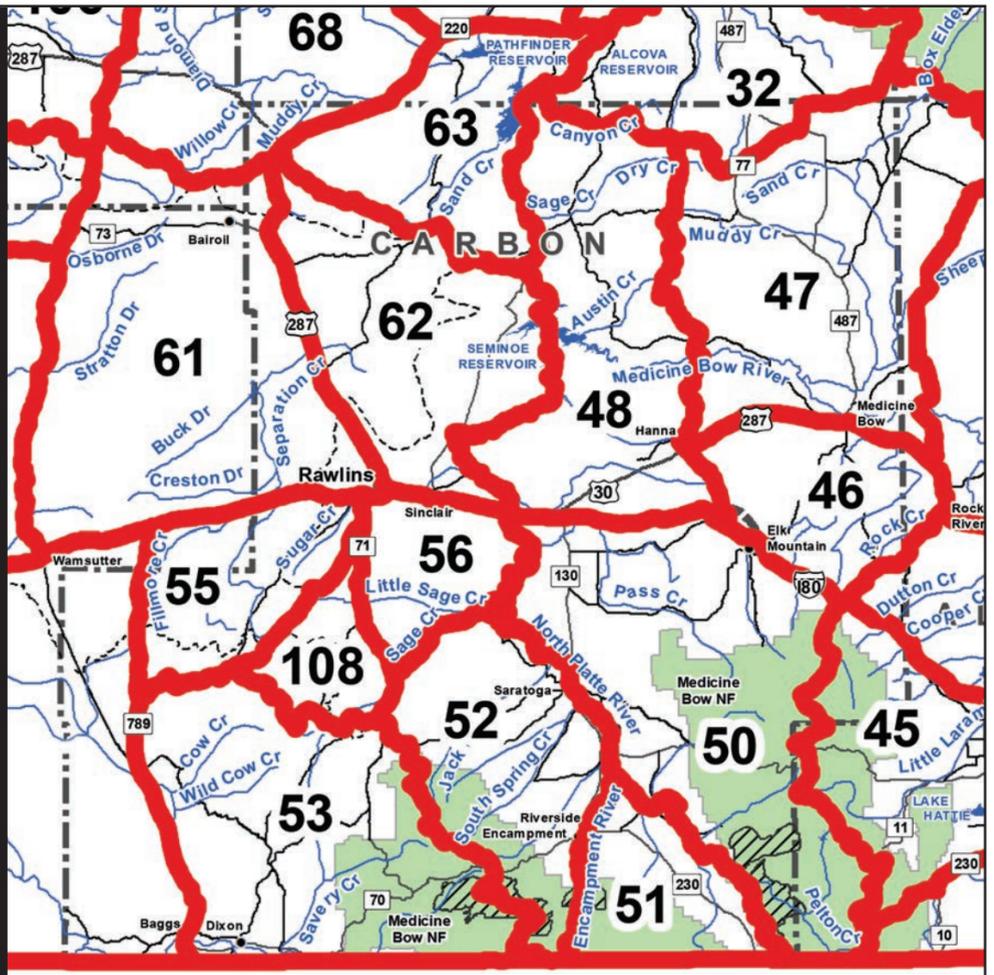
Burton said that the simple act of being able to call out on a mobile phone is a tremendous advantage for hunters. Not only can hunters call or text other nearby hunters to help track wounded game, but simply having a means of reaching out can prevent a hunter being stranded in the wilderness in the event of an emergency.

Burton said that technology can mean more successful hunts for hunters, and it has helped make hunting a safer endeavor for everyone. Burton said he encourages hunters to look at the wide variety of smartphone apps available—some on Game and Fish's own website—that might make the hunting better for all comers, regardless of skill level.

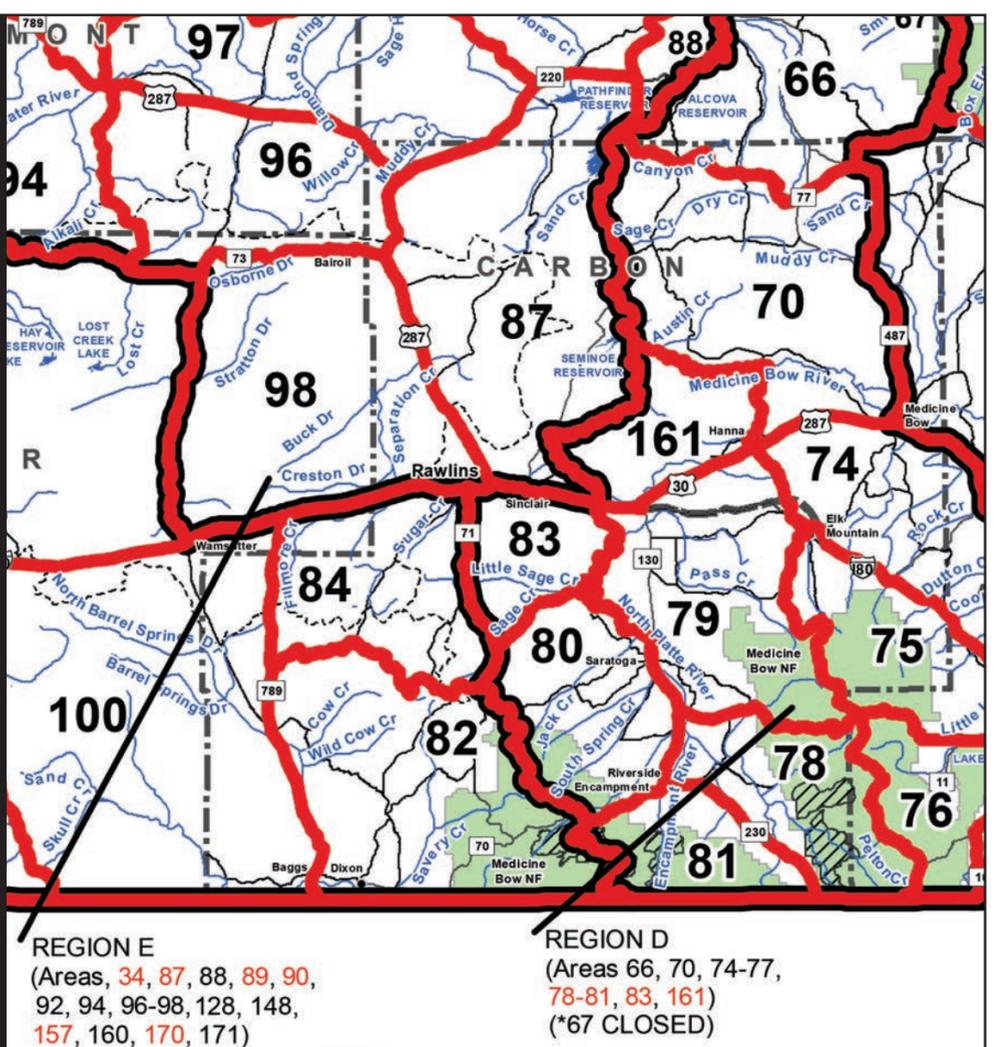
CARBON COUNTY ELK AREA MAP



CARBON COUNTY ANTELOPE AREA MAP



CARBON COUNTY DEER AREA MAP



REGION E
(Areas, 34, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94, 96-98, 128, 148, 157, 160, 170, 171)

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(Areas 66, 70, 74-77, 78-81, 83, 161)
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