

Utah Wildlife News
August 7, 2008

Mark Hadley, Editor
(801) 538-4737

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Apply for a Swan Hunting Permit

Applications accepted until Aug. 18

Tundra swans don't arrive in Utah until October. But applications to hunt those swans are already arriving at the Division of Wildlife Resources Web site.

You can apply for a swan hunting permit at www.wildlife.utah.gov. Applications are accepted until 11 p.m. on Aug. 18.

If you need help with your online application, call (801) 538-4700 no later than 5 p.m. on Aug. 18.

Must complete swan course first

If you haven't completed Utah's one-time swan hunting orientation course, you must complete the course **before** you apply for a permit.

The course is available at wildlife.utah.gov. It takes about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

The course must be taken only one time, so if you've already completed the course, you don't need to take it again.

Permit numbers

When the Utah Wildlife Board meets on Aug. 28, the DWR will probably recommend a total of 2,000 permits for the hunt.

Last year, 4,085 hunters applied for the 2,000 available permits.

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

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Contact: Mark Hadley, DWR Public Information Specialist (801) 538-4737

Special Upland Game Hunts

Hunters who are 15 years of age and younger can participate in special chukar and pheasant hunts this fall.

These special youth hunts have been held in Utah for years. They're a great way to introduce young people to upland game hunting.

"Kids really enjoy these hunts," says Dave Olsen, upland game coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "They don't have to compete with older hunters for a bird."

Getting qualified for one of the hunts is easy. If you're 15 years of age or younger, and you've completed Utah's Hunter Education course, all you have to do is complete an application and write a one-paragraph essay. The subject of your essay can be "I want to continue the Utah upland game hunting tradition because..." or, "I would like to start my own upland game hunting tradition because..."

Applications due soon

To be considered for one of the youth chukar hunts, the DWR must receive your application and essay no later than Aug. 22. Applications and essays for the youth pheasant hunts are due by Sept. 5.

Applying at www.wildlife.utah.gov/uplandgame is the best and easiest way to apply, but you can also apply with a paper application. Paper applications are available at DWR offices and hunter education centers, and on page 10 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook.

Hunt dates

The youth chukar hunts will be held Sept. 6 on five state wildlife management areas (WMAs). The youth pheasant hunts will be held Nov. 8 on four state WMAs and one Walk-In Access area.

"We're holding these hunts across Utah," Olsen says. "A hunt should be happening not more than about two hours away from your home."

The WMAs and the Walk-In Access area will be closed to all other hunters on the day the youth hunts are held.

Getting youth excited about upland game hunting

"The number of young people who hunt in Utah has been declining for years," Olsen says. "We're hoping these youth hunts will help reverse that trend by getting young people into the field and letting them experience what it's like to take an upland game bird."

"The hunts also give us a chance to teach young people how to be responsible and ethical hunters."

For more information about the hunts, call the nearest DWR office or see pages 8 and 9 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook.

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Cougar Hunting Permits Approved

Salt Lake City -- Hunters will probably take about 300 cougars during Utah's 2008 – 2009 hunting season.

That number would be similar to the past four seasons in Utah. Hunters took an average of 306 cougars during each of those seasons.

Limited entry unit permit numbers and the total number of cougars to be taken on Utah's harvest objective units are almost identical to last season.

Members of the Utah Wildlife Board took the action at their Aug. 7 meeting in Salt Lake City.

Balancing cougars and their prey

"From the mid-1990s through the early 2000s, an effort was underway to reduce the number of cougars in certain parts of Utah," says Kevin Bunnell, mammals program coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "The goal was to bring better balance between cougars and the deer, bighorn sheep and other animals that cougars prey on."

Bunnell says it appears the effort worked.

"Over the past couple of years, the number of cougars in Utah has started to stabilize," he says. "Now we're working to find the proper balance between cougars and their prey. We think the recommendations the board approved are another step in that direction."

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

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DWR Proposes Spring Light Goose Hunt

Get ready, Utah goose hunters. If a Division of Wildlife Resources proposal is approved, you can hunt light geese this spring.

Utah's first-ever spring light goose hunt would provide hunters with a unique opportunity. It would also help light goose populations (snow, blue and Ross' geese) and reduce damage to grain and alfalfa crops in Utah.

The DWR and Utah's Regional Advisory Councils would like to know your thoughts about the proposal.

Learn more, share your ideas

All of the DWR's waterfowl hunting proposals are available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings. Once you've read the proposals, you can share your thoughts and ideas one of two ways:

RAC meetings

Five Regional Advisory Council meetings will be held across Utah. Citizens representing the RACs will take the input received at the meetings to the Utah Wildlife Board. Board members will use the input to set rules for Utah's 2008 – 2009 waterfowl hunting season.

You can participate and provide your input at any of the following meetings:

Southern Region

Aug. 12
7 p.m.
Millard High School
200 W. Eagle Ave.
Fillmore

Central Region

Aug. 19
6:30 p.m.
Springville Junior High School
165 S. 700 E.
Springville

Southeastern Region

Aug. 13
6:30 p.m.
John Wesley Powell Museum
1765 E. Main St.
Green River

Northern Region

Aug. 20
6 p.m.
Brigham City Community Center
24 N. 300 W.
Brigham City

Northeastern Region

Aug. 14
6:30 p.m.
Uintah Interagency Fire Center
355 N. Vernal Ave.
Vernal

(more)

E-mail

You can also provide your comments to your RAC via e-mail. E-mail addresses for your RAC members are available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings.

The group each RAC member represents (sportsman, non-consumptive, etc.) is listed under each person's e-mail address. You should direct your e-mail to the people on the RAC who represent your interest.

Season dates

If approved by the Utah Wildlife Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the light goose hunt would run from Oct. 16 to Jan. 17, and from March 2 to March 10, across most of Utah.

One exception would be the North Goose Zone. In the zone, the hunt would run from Oct. 25 to Jan. 17, and Feb. 18 to March 10.

50,000 geese

"We don't see many light geese in the fall, but in the spring, more than 50,000 light geese—most of them snow and Ross' geese—stop over in Utah," says Tom Aldrich, migratory game bird coordinator for the DWR.

"In addition to providing hunters with a unique opportunity, hunting light geese in the spring would reduce the agricultural damage the geese are doing," he says. "Most of the damage is happening in Box Elder and Millard counties, where the geese are eating grain and alfalfa that's just starting to grow."

In addition to allowing light goose hunting in the early spring, the DWR is proposing an increase in the light goose bag and possession limits. Hunters could take up to 10 light geese a day. The number of light geese you could have in your possession at home would be limited to 20.

Currently, you can't take more than four light geese a day. And you can't have more than eight light geese in your possession.

Mostly private land

Very few light geese use state waterfowl management areas or federal refuges in Utah. Some light geese do visit the Salt Creek, Public Shooting Grounds and Clear Lake waterfowl management areas in the spring, and those areas would be open to light goose hunting in February and March.

The remaining waterfowl management areas in Utah—Brown's Park, Desert Lake, Farmington Bay, Harold Crane, Howard Slough, Locomotive Springs and Ogden Bay—would be closed to light goose hunting in February and March.

(more)

It's likely that the three federal refuges in Utah—Bear River, Fish Springs and Ouray—would also be closed to light goose hunting in February and March.

"Most of the light geese are on the private land where the agricultural damage is occurring," Aldrich says. "That's where they feed and rest.

"We have a Walk-In Access program in northern Utah that provides hunters access to private land. We'll continue to work with landowners in Box Elder County to see if we can get more of them enrolled in the program. If we can, that will allow hunters access to their lands," Aldrich says.

Helping the geese

In addition to helping Utah's farmers, the light goose hunt would also help the geese.

In the central part of North America, light goose populations have gotten so large that they're damaging the areas in Canada where they nest and raise their young.

"The population in the western part of North America hasn't become overabundant yet, but it's growing," Aldrich says. "In December 2007, for example, the population exceeded 1 million birds.

"We want to help stabilize the population before it becomes overabundant. Once the geese become overabundant, it's hard to bring them back."

Wouldn't affect Canada goose season

Aldrich says the dark goose season in Utah would not be affected by the light goose season extensions. "The dark goose season dates would remain the same," he says.

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

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More Turkey Permits

DWR proposes big increase for 2009

You might have a good chance at drawing a wild turkey hunting permit for this spring's hunts.

The Division of Wildlife Resources is proposing 13,761 public hunting permits for Utah's 2009 hunts. That's an 81 percent increase over the 7,706 public permits that were available in 2008.

"Sportsmen have told us that they'd like more opportunities to hunt wild turkeys," says Dave Olsen, upland game coordinator for the DWR. "Because of the way we manage turkeys in Utah, we believe we can allow more hunters into the field and not affect the turkey populations in a negative way."

Learn more, share your ideas

All of the DWR's turkey hunting proposals are available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings. Once you've read the proposals, you can share your thoughts and ideas one of two ways:

RAC meetings

Five Regional Advisory Council meetings will be held across Utah. Citizens representing the RACs will take the input received at the meetings to the Utah Wildlife Board. Board members will use the input to set rules for Utah's 2009 wild turkey hunts.

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Turkey hunter survey

After last spring's hunts, the DWR surveyed 2,330 of the 7,856 public and private hunters who hunted turkeys in Utah in 2008.

"There were more turkey hunters in the field this past spring than there's ever been. But most of hunters we surveyed said they were satisfied with their experience," Olsen says. "Raising the number of permits will allow even more sportsmen to enjoy hunting turkeys this spring."

Turkey hunters in Utah can take only male turkeys. That rule, and the fact that female turkeys are very productive, means putting additional hunters in the field shouldn't have a negative effect on Utah's turkey populations.

"Turkeys and other upland game reproduce at a high rate," Olsen says. "It's not unusual for a single male turkey to breed as many as 10 females. And female turkeys are very productive. They usually lay a clutch of between 10 to 12 eggs."

"Because one male will breed several females, and because female turkeys are so productive, taking some extra males out of the population shouldn't affect the overall number of turkeys in Utah."

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