

Montana 2024 Elk Counts

Elk are counted in winter or spring by aircraft. It is not possible to count all elk in a management unit and elk plan objectives are based on "Observed Elk", which may be elk observed on trend areas in some cases. Counting elk is an inexact exercise subject to a multitude of weather and timing variables and elk movements between hunting districts. Therefore, counts in some years may not accurately reflect elk numbers and better counts from previous years are reported. Listed Hunting District(s) are the current regulatory districts and may differ from the original districts referenced in the elk plan. Changes from the previous year will be described in the footnotes.

Hunting District(s)	Elk Management Unit (EMU)	Most Recent Elk Count (as of 2024)	Year of Count	Average Count ¹	Population Goal Range	Status ²
100	PURCELL	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
101	EUREKA	Surveys not conducted due to urban low altitude flying constraints.				
103	SALISH	Population count surveys not conducted due to variable and inconsistent elk counts.				
104	CABINET	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
110	WHITEFISH	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
120	SALISH	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
121	LOWER CLARK FORK	1,688	2024	1,593	1,350-1,890	At
122	SALISH	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
123	LOWER CLARK FORK	330	2024	339	360-510	Below
124	LOWER CLARK FORK	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
130	BOB MARSHALL	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
140	BOB MARSHALL	176	2024	122	250-350	Below
141	BOB MARSHALL	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover.				
150	BOB MARSHALL	108	2024	157	450-630	Below
170	FLATHEAD RIVER	Surveys not conducted due to difficulty observing elk in forested cover and urban flying constraints.				
Region 1 Total³		2,302		2,210	2,388-3,712 ³	Below ³
200	LOWER CLARK FORK	265	2021	265 ⁴	240-360	At
201	MISSOULA/NINEMILE	2,109	2024	2,190	1,600-2,400	At
202	LOWER CLARK FORK	536	2022	536	400-600	At
204, 261, 262 Skalkaho/Willow	NORTH SAPPHIRE	341	2024	341	300-500	At
204, 261, 262 Willow/Eight Mile		449	2024	414	360-540	At
204, 261, 262 Eight Mile/North		732	2024	676	400-600	Above
210, 211, 212, 216	ROCK CREEK & FLINT CREEK	2,875	2024	2,603	1,440-2,160	Above
213	FLINT CREEK	1,833	2024	2,043	920-1,380	Above
214	FLINT CREEK	198	2024	167	160-240	At
215	DEER LODGE	1,451	2024	1,706	1,360-2,040	At
217	FLINT CREEK	800	2024	714	480-720	At
240	BITTERROOT	727	2024	709	600-900	At
250	WEST FORK BITTERROOT	1,034	2024	892	800-1,200	At
260	BITTERROOT/CLARK FORK	223	2024	223 ⁵	0-100	Above
270	EAST FORK BITTERROOT	4,167	2024	4,369	3,600-4,400	At
280	BOB MARSHALL	No Wintering Elk.				
281	BOB MARSHALL	569	2024	516	500-700	At
282	BOB MARSHALL	561	2024	561	900-1,100	Below
284, 293, 339, 343	GRANITE BUTTE	2,734	2023	2,796	1,800-3,500	At
285 (Gold-Belmont)	BOB MARSHALL	206	2022	206	240-360	Below
290, 298	GARNET	912	2024	959	480-720	Above
291	GARNET	962	2024	750	480-720	Above
292	GARNET	396	2024	468	640-960	Below
Region 2 Total		24,080		24,104	17,700-26,200	At

Hunting District(s)	Elk Management Unit (EMU)	Most Recent Elk Count (as of 2024)	Year of Count	Average Count ¹	Population Goal Range	Status ²
301, 309	BOZEMAN	846	2024	841	400-800	Above
302	TENDOY	2,201	2024	2,265	1,100-2,100	Above
303	TENDOY	908	2024	905	650-1,100	At
304	LOWER MADISON	1,845	2024	1,985	1,500-3,000	At
310	GALLATIN/MADISON	693	2024	592	600-1,000	Below
311 North Tobacco Herd	LOWER MADISON	801	2024	642	200-1,000	At
311 Red Mountain Herd		954	2024	800	200-1,000	At
312	BRIDGER	1,316	2024	1,267	1,000-2,000	At
313, 314 S ⁶	NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE	4,789	2024	5,135	3,000-5,000	Above
314 N ⁶	UPPER YELLOWSTONE	3,814	2024	3,911	2,900-4,200	At
315	CRAZY MOUNTAINS	2,918	2024	2,646	1,200-2,000	Above
316	NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE	No Wintering Elk.				
317	ABSAROKA	1,721	2024	1,767	900-1,700	Above
318	DEER LODGE	698	2024	682	400-800	At
319 S	FLEECER	1,310	2024	1,128	850-1,100	Above
319 NE	FLEECER	520	2024	494	450-600	At
320	TOBACCO ROOT	1,504	2024	1,417	500-1,500	At
321 S	WEST BIG HOLE	948	2024	838	800-1,000	At
321 N	WEST BIG HOLE	1,187	2024	1,200	800-1,000	Above
322	GRAVELLY	9,084	2024	9,455	6,000-10,000	At
329	PIONEER	1,520	2024	1,146	700-1,300	A
331	PIONEER	1,906	2024	1,476	1,250-1,950	At
335	DEER LODGE	1,442	2024	1,194	500-1,400	At
339	GRANITE BUTTE	Counted with 284 and 293 - see above				
343						
340	HIGHLAND	1,140	2024	925	800-1,200	At
350	WHITETAIL-BULL MTN	356	2023	342	300-400	At
360	GALLATIN-MADISON	5,473	2024	5,444	3,300-4,700	At
361	GALLATIN-MADISON	Few wintering elk. No stated objective.				
370	WHITETAIL-BULL MTN	425	2024	354	350-450	At
380	ELKHORN	1,601	2023	1,698	1,700-2,300	Below
388	GRANITE BUTTE	Survey not conducted. No stated objective.				
390	BRIDGER	2,165	2024	1,777	1,200-1,800	At
391	SW BIG BELT	2,005	2024	1,730	1,000-1,500	Above
392	NW BIG BELT	212	2023	269	480-720	Below
393	BRIDGER	3,947	2023	3,947	2,700-4,000	At
Region 3 Total		60,249		58,272	37,530-61,620	At

Hunting District(s)	Elk Management Unit (EMU)	Most Recent Elk Count (as of 2024)	Year of Count	Average Count ¹	Population Goal Range	Status ²
400, 403, 404, 405, 406, 419, 444, 471	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	Survey not conducted. No stated objective.				
401	SWEETGRASS HILLS	703	2024	670	450-650	Above
410	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	2,323	2024	2,388 ⁷	2,600-3,200	Below
411, 535	SNOWY	5,655	2024	8,457 ⁷	6,000-12,000	At
412	SNOWY	1,282	2024	1,154	600-1,500	At
413	NW LITTLE BELT	1,131	2024	1,090	700-1,000	Above
415	BOB MARSHALL	118	2024	147	150-250	Below
416	SW LITTLE BELT	1,312	2024	1,276	1,000-1,500	At
417	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	2,038	2024	2,342 ⁷	1,500-2,500	At
418	NE LITTLE BELT	362	2023	358	200-300	Above
420, 448	NE LITTLE BELT	1,160	2023	1,148	1,000-1,500	At
421	BIRDTAIL HILLS	924	2023	833	400-600	Above
422	BOB MARSHALL	1,339	2023	1,191	600-800	Above
424, 425, 442	BOB MARSHALL	2,316	2024	2,282 ⁵	2,250-2,750	At
426	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	452	2023	383	150-350	Above
441	BOB MARSHALL	740	2023	684	500-700	At
445, 455	DEVIL'S KITCHEN	5,989	2023	5,366	2,500-3,500	Above
446	EAST BIG BELT	2,322	2023	2,965	1,500-2,000	Above
447	HIGHWOOD	1,558	2024	1,570	800-1,200	Above
450	TETON RIVER	531	2024	566	300-400	Above
451	BRIDGER	961	2023	405 ⁴	200-800	Above
452	CASTLE MOUNTAINS	1,683	2023	1,346	800-1,200	Above
Region 4 Total		34,899		36,621	24,200-38,700	At
502	ABSAROKA	202	2023	192	150-250	At
515	MID-YELLOWSTONE	1045	2022	1,124 ⁷	900-1,500	At
525	ABSAROKA	3161	2022 & 2023	3,008	2,200-3,300	At
535	SNOWY	Counted with 411 - see above				
540	SE LITTLE BELT	1,391	2023	1,526	1,500-2,000	At
555	ABSAROKA	166	2022	128	150-250	Below
565	ABSAROKA	351	2023	277	225-375	At
575	ABSAROKA	1,138	2024	1,073	650-1,050	Above
580	CRAZY MOUNTAINS	5141	2023	4,678 ⁷	2,500-4,000	Above
590	BULL MOUNTAINS	3717	2023	3,717 ⁷	2,400-3,600	Above
Region 5 Total		16,312		15,723	10,675-16,325	At
600, 640, 650, 652, 670	PRAIRIE-AGRICULTURE	Survey not conducted. No stated objective.				
620, 621, 622	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	974	2024	1,133 ⁷	1,600-2,400	Below
630	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	209	2024	232 ⁷	400-600	Below
690	BEARS PAW	696	2023	861 ⁷	800-1,200	At
Region 6 Total		1,879		2,226	2,800-4,200	Below
700	MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS	1,608	2024	1,494 ⁷	1,600-2,400	Below
701	PRAIRIE BADLANDS	Survey not conducted. No stated objective.				
702, 704, 705	SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA	3,721	2024 & 2025	2,726 ⁷	3,240-4,860	At
703	PRAIRIE BADLANDS	Survey not conducted. No stated objective.				
Region 7 Total		5,329		4,220	4,840-7,260	At
STATE TOTAL		145,050		143,376	100,080-157,580	At

¹Average counts are for the past three years unless otherwise noted

²Status is classified as At, Below or Over the population goal using the count average specified in the Elk Management Plan

³Only includes HDs where elk are countable

⁴Average count is for the last five years

⁵Average count is the most recent count

⁶As of 2023, new boundary of HD 314 includes part of the old HD 313.

⁷Average count is for the last four years