



Frequently Asked Questions

From Montana Hunters



2023

Preface

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff answer thousands of questions every year from both new and experienced hunters. This FAQ document provides an introduction and quick reference on topics that FWP staff commonly address with hunters. It is not a comprehensive guide to understanding how to hunt in Montana. Hunters should thoroughly read and understand the current hunting regulations, which contain a more complete list of rules, restrictions, season structures, definitions and updates. It is the hunter's responsibility to know and abide by all hunting regulations.

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Welcome to Montana!

Who is FWP?

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is an executive-branch state government agency that administers hunting, fishing, and trapping seasons in the state and works to conserve wildlife and habitat. FWP also manages state parks, fishing access sites, and wildlife management areas. FWP is primarily funded through revenue generated from the sale of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and federal excise taxes of hunting and fishing equipment.

Our mission: Steward the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.

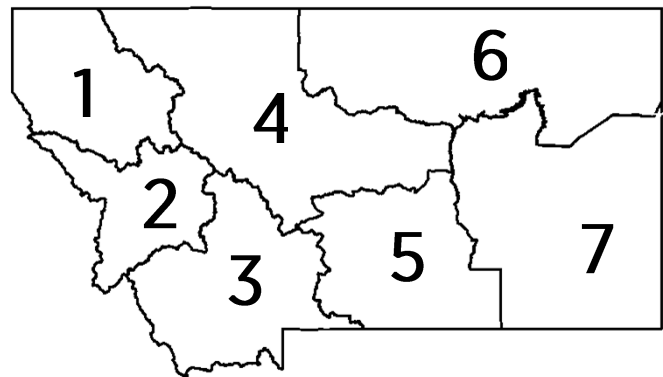
Who makes the rules?

Hunting regulations are initially proposed by FWP staff using a combination of scientific data and local public input. Proposed regulations are then vetted within FWP at regional and statewide scales. Those proposals approved at all levels within FWP are presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission, which is a citizen board appointed by the governor. Following a public comment period, the commission approves or denies the proposal through a majority vote. Some hunting rules and frameworks are also set by the Montana Legislature and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Where are FWP offices?

FWP is headquartered in Helena and divided into seven administrative regions, with regional offices in:

- Region 1: Kalispell
- Region 2: Missoula
- Region 3: Bozeman
- Region 4: Great Falls
- Region 5: Billings
- Region 6: Glasgow
- Region 7: Miles City



Regions of FWP

FWP also has smaller area-resource offices in:

- Libby
- Thompson Falls
- Helena
- Butte
- Lewistown
- Havre

Montana's hunting license structure

Montana's hunting license structure can be challenging to understand, especially for new hunters. While these rules and season structures may be complex, they add significant hunting opportunity, season length, and local flexibility.

As FWP periodically makes changes to hunting regulations and license quotas, it's always a good practice to read the hunting regulations each year, especially as you prepare to purchase hunting licenses and go hunting. FWP staff are here to help as you navigate the process. More information on Montana's hunting license structure can be found at fwp.mt.gov/hunt/licensingbasics.

Here are some important factors to consider as you get started.

What is a hunting license?

A **hunting license** is an electronic or hard-copy document that grants an opportunity for an eligible person to harvest a specific species of wild animal. Once a hunting license is obtained, hunting regulations establish the conditions by which an animal may be legally hunted and harvested, such as:

- Species
- Sex
- Horn/antler class
- Who may harvest the animal
- Number of animals that may be harvested
- Dates when the animal may be hunted and harvested
- Where the animal may be hunted and harvested (known as **hunting districts**)
- Method of harvest

Hunting licenses are sold annually and are valid for only one person during one season. Montana's license year runs from March 1 to the last day of February. Some hunting licenses are limited in quantity and are allocated through an application and lottery process known as the **drawing**. Other licenses are unlimited and can be purchased over the counter at certain times of the year.

A person's Montana residency status (resident or nonresident) largely determines what licenses are available to them. Montana residents generally have more license opportunities at a lower cost than nonresidents.

How are animals classified in Montana?

A **game animal**, as defined by state statute, includes deer, elk, moose, antelope (pronghorn), mountain sheep (bighorn sheep), mountain goat, mountain lion, bear, and wild bison.

Upland game birds are birds huntable with an upland game bird license, including mountain grouse, partridge, ring-necked pheasant, sage-grouse, and sharp-tailed grouse.

Migratory game birds are birds huntable with a migratory bird license (and Federal Migratory Bird Stamp for hunters 16 and older), including wild ducks, wild geese, brant, and swans; little brown and sandhill cranes; coots; Wilson's snipes or jacksnipes; and mourning doves.

Furbearers or fur-bearing animals include marten or sable, otter, muskrat, fisher, mink, bobcat, lynx, wolverine, northern swift fox, and beaver.

Wolves are classified in Montana as a **species in need of management**.

Nongame wildlife are any wild mammal, bird, amphibian, reptile, fish, mollusk, crustacean, or other animal not otherwise lawfully classified by statute or rule.

What are the most common types of hunting licenses?

There are two prerequisite licenses that enable a person to purchase other hunting licenses. They are the **Conservation License** and the **Base Hunting License**. These prerequisites provide funding for wildlife conservation and ensure the prospective hunter is eligible to hunt.

The **General Deer License** and **General Elk License** provide opportunities to harvest those animals in many hunting districts. However, the conditions of that opportunity vary by district. For example, one district may allow a hunter with a General Elk License to harvest an elk of either sex, while another district may only allow antlerless elk harvest with a

General Elk License. Check the current hunting regulations to learn the rules that apply to general license holders in each district.

Resident hunters can purchase a general license over the counter. Nonresidents must apply and be drawn to purchase a general license. A few exceptions apply that create additional opportunities for nonresident hunters (see FWP’s Licensing Basics web page at fwp.mt.gov/hunt/licensingbasics). Hunters may only purchase one General Deer License and one General Elk License within a license year, and each license is valid for only one animal harvest.

B licenses for deer and elk allow a hunter to harvest an antlerless animal of that species. Doe/fawn licenses for pronghorn (antelope) allow a hunter to harvest a doe or fawn of that species. Ewe licenses for bighorn sheep allow a hunter to harvest a ewe of that species. Each license under these categories has a number that identifies where it is valid. Some licenses are valid in only one hunting district, while others are valid in multiple hunting districts (see “*What do license/permit type numbers mean?*” on p. 12). In some cases, hunters may purchase more than one B license.

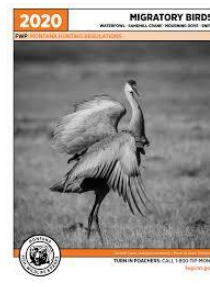
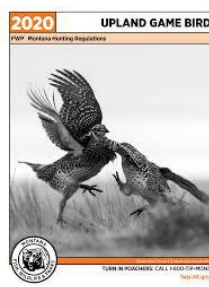
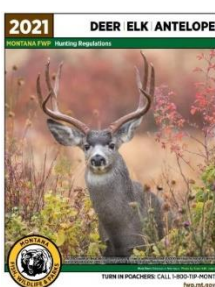
Deer, elk, upland game bird, bear, and fishing licenses are often sold in combinations, such as the **Sportsman’s License** for residents or the **Big Game Combination License** for nonresidents.

An **Upland Game Bird License** allows a hunter to harvest a limited number of upland game birds. This license is also a prerequisite for resident hunters before they can purchase a **Turkey License**. Nonresidents can purchase a Turkey License without an Upland Game Bird license. A Turkey License is valid for harvesting only one animal in most districts. However, some districts allow hunters to purchase additional turkey licenses.

A **Montana Migratory Bird License** allows a hunter to harvest a limited number of birds under this category, including ducks, geese, and coots. A federal **Waterfowl Stamp** (also known as a duck stamp) is also required for hunters ages 16 and older. Waterfowl hunting regulations, season structures, and other rules vary by location.

A **Bow and Arrow License**, plus the proper hunting license, is required during an archery-only season or to hunt in an area or hunting district where only archery equipment can be used.

To see a complete list of hunting license opportunities and application deadlines, see the current hunting regulations. To download these regulations, visit fwp.mt.gov/hunt/regulations.



What are Montana's hunter- and bowhunter-education requirements?

If you were born after Jan. 1, 1985, you are required to show proof of completing a Montana Hunter Education course or a hunter education course from any other state or province prior to applying for or purchasing any Montana hunting license. Students must be at least 10 years old to take a Montana Hunter Education class.

To purchase a Montana Bow and Arrow License, a hunter must show proof of completing a Montana Bowhunter Education course or a bowhunter education course from any other state or province. The hunter may also provide any prior year's bowhunting or archery stamp, tag, permit, or license from any state or province. Students must be at least 12 years old by Jan. 16 of the following year to take a Bowhunter Education class.

Need a replacement copy of your Montana Hunter or Bowhunter Education certificate? Visit myfwp.mt.gov/fwpPub/hunterEdCert.

What are Montana's residency requirements?

To be a lawful **Montana resident** and eligible to purchase any Montana resident hunting and fishing licenses, you must:

- Have been physically living in Montana for at least 180 consecutive days immediately prior to purchasing a resident license;
- Register any vehicles you own and use in Montana through your local county treasurer's office;
- Be registered to vote in Montana if you're registered to vote at all;
- Not possess (or have applied for any) current resident hunting, fishing or trapping privileges in another state or country (certain exceptions may apply for military service members);
- File Montana state income tax returns as a resident if you are required to file; and
- Have a valid Montana driver's license or Montana identification card.

Once you have established your residency, you must continue to meet all these requirements and physically reside in Montana as your principal or primary residence for no fewer than 120 days per year (days need not be consecutive).

A person is not considered a resident for the purposes of this section if the person:

- Claims residence in any other state or country for any purpose, or
- Is an absentee property owner paying property tax on property in Montana.

What documentation do I need to bring when I purchase a resident hunting license for the first time?

To purchase an annual resident Conservation License, you will be required to show a valid Montana driver's license (MDL), a valid Montana identification card (MIC), or a valid Tribal identification card. An out-of-state driver's license is not an acceptable form of identification for resident license purchases. If your MDL or MIC was issued less than six months ago, you will be required to complete a residency affidavit to confirm Montana residency. If your MDL was issued more than six months ago, you can also purchase your resident hunting license for the first time online at fwp.mt.gov.

If you were born after Jan. 1, 1985, you will also be required to show proof of having completed a Montana Hunter Education course or hunter education course from another state or province. To purchase a Montana Bow and Arrow License, a hunter must provide a certificate of completing Montana's Bowhunter Education course or provide any prior year's bowhunting/archery stamp, tag, permit or license from any state or province.

What's the difference between licenses and permits?

A hunting license is an electronic or hard-copy document that grants an opportunity for an eligible person to harvest a specific species of wild animal. With many hunting licenses, the hunter is required to validate the harvest either electronically via the Montana MyFWP app (see "*Can I store my hunting licenses on my phone?*" on p. 10) or by cutting out the date of the kill from the appropriate hard-copy license. This must be done before the carcass is removed from the harvest site and before the hunter leaves the site. This process is called license validation or tagging, hence the license that is attached to the animal is often referred to as a **carcass tag**.

A **permit** is an electronic or hard copy document used in conjunction with the proper hunting license to expand and/or limit hunting opportunity. A permit used in conjunction with a General Deer or General Elk license allows a hunter to hunt in a specified area or time period where harvest restrictions exist. This combination of opportunities is unavailable to hunters without the permit. Most permits are allocated through the drawing, and each comes with unique restrictions. See "*Where can I hunt with a deer or elk permit?*" on p. 12.

Can I store my hunting licenses on my phone?

Montana hunters have the option to store their hunting licenses and permits on their mobile device through the Montana MyFWP app. This app provides a simple way to store

and display licenses, permits, and digital carcass tags, known as E-Tags, which can be used in the field without cellular service.

Hunters can choose whether to carry the traditional paper tags or E-Tags for each license, but they can't choose both options for the same license. An E-Tag is a digital carcass tag that can be stored and validated using the Montana MyFWP app. Remember, your decision between an E-Tag or paper license is final for the remainder of the license year for that license.

Even if you opt for paper licenses, you can still use the Montana MyFWP app to view your licenses and permits for the current year and one prior year. Make sure you're logged into the app and that your E-Tags have been downloaded before going afield to ensure access out of cell service. Validating an E-Tag is the same as notching your paper tag. Do not validate an E-Tag until after you've harvested an animal. There are three prompts before the validation process is finalized. Once it's validated, it's final.

The Montana MyFWP app is free and available for download for Apple and Android devices. By Montana law, no GPS location data will be shared with FWP through the app.

What's the difference between preference points and bonus points?

Preference points are used for drawing Nonresident Combination licenses. Preference points essentially move you ahead in line for the drawing. Hunters with the most preference points are usually drawn before hunters with fewer preference points. However, 25 percent of Nonresident Combination licenses are issued through a random drawing to applicants who have no preference points. Any accumulated preference points are lost when the hunter draws a Nonresident Combination License or if they do not apply in consecutive years.

Bonus points are used in other drawings. They offer you additional chances of being drawn for a first-choice license or permit for a given species. Bonus points are not used in second- or third-choice drawings. Unlike preference points, bonus points do not guarantee a license or permit to the applicants with the most bonus points.

Bonus points are squared at the time of the drawing. For example, if you have six bonus points, you are entered into the drawing 36 times. You can earn one bonus point per license year per species. This point can be purchased when you apply for a license or permit, or between July 1 and Sept. 30 if you did not apply for a license or permit. Every year you are unsuccessful in the drawing and you participate in the bonus point system, you will be awarded a point. Bonus points for a given species accumulate until you successfully draw a first-choice license for that species. A hunter's bonus points cannot be transferred between drawings for other species or to other hunters.

Where can I hunt with a deer or elk permit?

Hunters who receive a deer permit valid for taking an antlered buck mule deer with their General Deer License are restricted to harvesting an antlered buck mule deer only in the area specified on the permit. They may not use their General Deer License to hunt antlered buck mule deer anywhere else in the state during that season.

Permits for either-sex elk or brow-tined bull/antlerless elk limit the holder to hunting antlered elk only within the designated hunting district(s) for the period identified on the permit. Hunting antlerless elk elsewhere is not limited by the permit. A General Elk License may be used to hunt in any open district during dates outside of those identified on the permit.

Consult the current hunting regulations for more information on rules that apply to deer and elk permits. Hunters should learn about the district they wish to hunt before applying for a permit. Some permit areas are difficult to access due to geography or private land.

Are hunting district boundaries different for each species?

Hunting districts for deer and elk are the same. Hunting districts for other game animals vary by species. Consult the respective hunting regulation book for each species or other mapping tools for hunting district maps. Hunters should be familiar with the legal boundaries of hunting districts where they wish to hunt. Hunting district legal descriptions are available in a separate publication from the regular hunting regulations booklets.

What do license/permit numbers mean?

Hunting permits and many hunting licenses (not general licenses) have an identifying number. Knowing the number of the license or permit that is valid in the place you wish to hunt is essential as you apply for and purchase licenses and permits.

In many cases, the license or permit number corresponds with a particular hunting district and FWP region. For example, Deer B License 331-01 is valid only in Hunting District 331, which is in Region 3.

Other license numbers may not match any hunting district number, but they denote other opportunities. For example, Elk Permit 799-20 allows a hunter to hunt with their General Elk License in hunting districts 702, 704, and 705 (there is no Hunting District 799), which are in Region 7. Antelope License 900-20 is valid in many hunting districts across multiple FWP regions.

Laws and rules by hunting district and a list of licenses that are valid in multiple districts can be found in the hunting regulations.

When planning your hunt, it is usually easiest to decide first where you want to hunt. Then consult the hunting regulations or other mapping tools (see *Tools for planning your hunt* on p. 24) to determine what hunting district covers your desired area and what license opportunities are available there.

What are surplus licenses?

Hunting licenses that are allocated through the drawing are usually limited in quantity. In some cases, FWP receives fewer applications than the number of available licenses.

Surplus licenses are hunting licenses left over after the drawing. Hunters can begin signing up online for the Surplus List during the summer for these leftover licenses. The quantity of surplus licenses varies from year to year.

What are “shoulder seasons”?

Early and late seasons, also known as shoulder seasons, are elk hunting seasons designed to reduce elk populations in areas that are over population objective as outlined in Montana’s Elk Management Plan or to address problematic distribution of elk. These seasons typically occur outside the archery-only and general hunting seasons. Most early and late seasons focus on harvesting antlerless elk on private land.

Pay close attention to the dates and specific hunting district for which an early or late season license is valid before purchasing one. Some may be valid only on private land in a small portion of a hunting district or during winter months when access is difficult. Information for each early- and late-season opportunity can be found in the hunting regulations and at fwp.mt.gov.

Hunter access

Montana hunters are fortunate to enjoy millions of acres of public land. Even so, access can be challenging for many hunters depending on the location, weather, time of year, and species they’re hunting. Lands that offer easy public access or have dense concentrations of animals usually attract more hunters, while places where access is more difficult or where animals are more dispersed will usually attract fewer hunters.

Hunters should learn about the district where they wish to hunt before applying for a permit. Some permit areas are difficult to access due to geography or private land.

Whether you hunt on public or private land, respecting the rules of the landowner or land management agency and being an ethical hunter will help ensure continued access to the places you enjoy.

For a more detailed reference of Montana's access laws, consult a copy of the [Montana Access Guide to Federal and State Lands](#), a booklet published through the Montana Interagency Access Council that is available at various land management agency offices.

A more comprehensive list of hunter access opportunities in Montana can be found online at fwp.mt.gov/hunt/access.

Where am I allowed to hunt?

Once you have determined the hunting districts or portions of hunting districts where your license and/or permit are valid, you can begin a more detailed analysis of access opportunities. An early step in this process is determining who owns the land where you wish to hunt.

A lot of hunting in Montana happens on public land (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state, etc.), but not all public land is accessible or open to hunting. For example, hunting is not allowed in Glacier or Yellowstone national parks, and seasonal closures may apply for wildlife management areas and other lands. Hunting is allowed in some of Montana's state parks (see p. 21). Some parcels of public land have restrictions on the types of weapons hunters can use. If you're unfamiliar with an area or aren't sure whether hunting is allowed, contact the landowner or applicable land management agency. For help in determining land ownership, see "*Tools for planning your hunt*" on p. 24. If you have questions about where your hunting license is valid, check the current hunting regulations.

FWP also works to facilitate public hunting access to private lands and other places, where possible (see "*Block Management*" on p. 21). Hunting on private property requires permission from the landowner, lessee or agent, regardless of whether the land is posted.

If you're not driving on a public road, you must have permission from the landowner before crossing private land to access public land.

Where can I drive, park and camp?

Motorized travel on public roads, such as county, Bureau of Land Management or U.S. Forest Service roads, is generally allowed, but travel restrictions or seasonal closures may apply. Pay attention to gates, signs, and maps that may indicate appropriate seasons and methods of travel in these areas. Do not block gates, roads, or trails when parking. If you're not driving on a public road, you must have permission from the landowner before crossing private land to access public land.

Similar principles apply for camping on public lands. Be aware of seasonal closures, site reservations, food storage orders, fire restrictions, and other regulations that might determine where certain types of camping are allowed.

If you have questions about whether an area is open for motorized travel or camping, contact the landowner or applicable land management agency (i.e. if you have a question about a Forest Service road, cabin, or campground, contact the Forest Service). For help in determining land ownership, see *"Tools for planning your hunt"* on p. 24.

What are the registration/validation requirements for off-highway vehicles?

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) include motorcycles, four-wheelers (ATVs), side-by-sides, dune buggies, amphibious vehicles, and air-cushion vehicles. If you wish to ride your OHV on public land or trails (off-highway), it must be registered. You will be issued a decal for off-road use that must be displayed in a conspicuous location on your OHV. If you wish to ride your OHV on paved highways, it must be street legal and have a license plate attached to the rear of the vehicle. Title and registration work is performed at county treasurer's offices throughout the state and online.

In 2019 the Montana Legislature created a resident trail pass for OHVs. Recreationists using summer motorized recreation trails must purchase the resident trail pass, which costs \$20. This pass is valid for two years and expires on Dec. 31 of the second calendar year. All decals must be affixed in a conspicuous place on the OHV.

OHVs owned by a nonresident may not be operated by a person anywhere in Montana unless a nonresident temporary-use OHV permit is obtained. Permits are good for one calendar year and cost \$35. They can be purchased from local vendors, at FWP offices, or online at ols.fwp.mt.gov.



Montana nonresident temporary-use OHV permit

For more information about operating OHVs in Montana, visit fwp.mt.gov/activities/off-highway-vehicles.

What are the registration/validation requirements for snow machines?

Snowmobiles operating on public land must be registered and display decals in a conspicuous space on the left side of the cowling. Registration requirements are different for Montana residents and nonresidents.

Montana residents must register their snowmobiles at their county treasurer's office. Residents must purchase a resident trail permit to legally ride on any of the groomed snowmobile trails in Montana. Trail permits are valid for two seasons and are \$20. Trail permits apply to all "mechanized equipment," including snowmobiles, motorized snow bikes, and fat-tire pedal bikes.



Resident groomed trail permit

Nonresidents who plan to ride their snowmobiles and motorized snow bikes in Montana must purchase a snowmobile nonresident temporary use permit, which costs \$35 per machine. Nonresidents who plan to ride mechanized equipment that is exempt from registration in Montana, such as fat-tire bikes or e-bikes, on groomed trails must purchase a nonresident groomed trail pass for \$35 per bike. Passes are valid for one season for nonresidents and two seasons for residents.

Trail passes are available seasonally from October to April. These passes can be purchased online at ols.fwp.mt.gov.

For more information about operating snow machines in Montana, visit fwp.mt.gov/activities/snowmobiling.

What are the registration/validation requirements for boats?

All watercraft with an attached motor and sailboats at least 12 feet long must be registered at the local county treasurer’s office. The registration must be carried on board the boat and be available for inspection whenever the boat is in operation. The boat owner will receive one permanent registration decal that must be displayed on the left (port) bow behind the Montana boat number.



Permanent registration decal

Nonresidents who own boats that are properly registered in another state or country may operate them in Montana for up to 90 consecutive days.

All motorboats, sailboats, and personal watercraft that are numbered must display two validation decals – one on each side of the boat’s bow behind the Montana boat number. Validation decals may be obtained for free at any FWP regional or area-resource office.



Boat validation decal

For more information about operating boats in Montana and regulations on using boats for hunting, visit fwp.mt.gov/activities/boating/rules-regulations.

What does land ownership look like on a map?

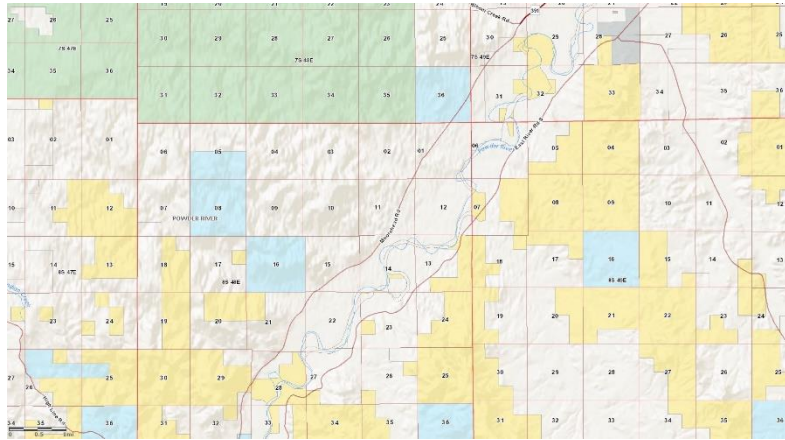
Maps usually include a legend that explains what various features represent. However, most maps that display land ownership follow a similar pattern. Below is a land ownership color scheme you are likely to find on most maps:

White: private

Yellow: Bureau of Land Management

Green: National Forest (U.S. Forest Service)

Blue: State lands (may be purple on Forest Service maps)



Areas shown on these maps are divided into grids called townships and sections. Sections — the smallest squares on the grid — represent one square mile, or 640 acres. Land ownership boundaries can change on a small scale within a section. A township is comprised of 36 sections. Individual sections are identified by township, range and section — terms in the U.S. Public Land Survey System.

Knowing the township, range, and section (TRS) or latitude/longitude coordinates where you harvested an animal may be important, especially for chronic wasting disease testing or if your harvest is subject to mandatory reporting requirements.

Land ownership changes over time. Ensure the maps you use are up to date. See *“Tools for planning your hunt”* on p. 24 for more information.

Can I access public land by “corner crossing”?

Corner crossing, such as at section corners, in checkerboard land patterns (mix of public and private land) is illegal without permission from the adjacent landowner(s).

What hunting activities are allowed under Montana’s Stream Access Law?

Montana’s Stream Access Law does not allow for hunting game animals (deer, elk, moose, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, mountain lion, bear and wild bison) between the ordinary high-water marks of streams and rivers without landowner permission. All other hunting, including upland game birds and migratory waterfowl, is allowed within the high-water mark. Retrieval of upland game birds and waterfowl above the ordinary high-water mark on private property requires the landowner’s permission.

Floating to a land-locked public-land parcel to hunt is allowed under Stream Access Law. Fishing on foot to a land-locked public-land parcel to hunt is not allowed.

Can I pursue wounded game onto private property?

Hunters must have permission from the landowner or the landowner's agent to pursue wounded game on private property, regardless of posting.

What hunting access opportunities exist on federal public lands?

National forest lands

Most national forest lands that are legally accessible via a public road, navigable waterway, or adjacent state or federal land are open to hunting. Some exceptions are noted in FWP's hunting regulations under "Restricted Area Descriptions." Land-use restrictions apply in some areas, so it's always a good idea to check with the local ranger district office of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). For more information, visit fs.usda.gov.

BLM lands

Most Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that are legally accessible via a public road, navigable waterway, or adjacent state or federal land are open to hunting. Land-use restrictions apply in some areas, so check with the local BLM field office. For more information, visit blm.gov.

National refuges and waterfowl production areas

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages 10 national wildlife refuges in Montana, most of which allow hunting during some portion of the season. The USFWS also oversees many waterfowl production areas that provide waterfowl, upland bird, and limited big game hunting opportunities. Hunting opportunities on wildlife refuges are generally restrictive and, in some cases, prohibited altogether. For general information on the National Wildlife Refuge System in Montana, contact the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Lewistown at 406-538-8706.

For more information, visit fws.gov.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation lands

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) administers roughly 200,000 acres of land and 100,000 surface acres of water in Montana. Where there is legal public access, BOR-

managed land is open to hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities. Motorized travel is restricted to existing roads. For more information, visit usbr.gov.

What hunting access opportunities exist on state public lands?

State Trust lands

These lands are owned by the State of Montana and managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Access to these lands for hunting, fishing, and trapping requires the possession of a state lands hunting/fishing/trapping (H/F/T) license, which is included with the purchase of a Conservation License. Trapping on state trust lands also requires a trapping license issued by DNRC. Other recreational activities that occur on state trust lands, such as recreational shooting, bird watching, and others, require a State Land Recreational Use License, which is available online and from anywhere hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

State trust lands also have location-specific restrictions on firearms, camping, and travel that differ from those on federal lands. Revenue collected from the use of state trust lands is used to support Montana schools and other endowed institutions. Some parcels are leased for agricultural use to generate a large part of this revenue. There may be location-specific use restrictions based on the current lease status of a specific parcel of state trust land. Consult the DNRC and any signage present for location-specific restrictions on state trust lands.

For more information, visit dnrc.mt.gov.

Wildlife management areas

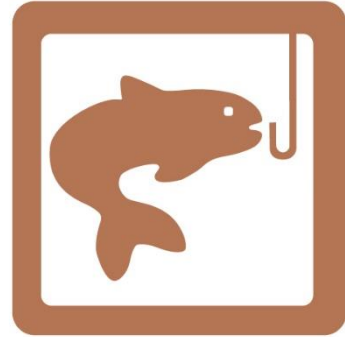
Montana wildlife management areas (WMAs) are managed by FWP and provide public hunting opportunities in many places. Some areas allow camping, and motorized use is restricted to designated routes. Weapons restrictions and certain license requirements may apply on some WMAs.

Many WMAs have seasonal closures to all public access from Dec. 1 to May 15 to reduce stress on wintering wildlife. These dates and closures may vary.

For more information on rules that apply to a specific WMA, visit fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management-areas or contact the applicable regional FWP office.

Fishing access sites

FWP manages fishing access sites (FAS) statewide. Generally, these sites provide stream or lake access only, but some sites also allow hunting. Be aware that many fishing access sites have weapons restrictions. Be sure to check FWP's printed FAS guide, available at regional offices, that lists what rules and opportunities apply to each site. For an interactive map of Montana's fishing access sites, visit myfwp.mt.gov/fishMT/explore.



State parks

FWP manages Montana's state parks. Some state parks are open to hunting, but site-specific restrictions may apply. To find out if a state park allows hunting, visit fwp.mt.gov/stateparks or contact the applicable FWP regional office.

What hunting access opportunities exist on **private** lands and adjacent public lands?

Block Management

The Block Management Program is a cooperative effort between FWP, private landowners, and public land management agencies to help landowners manage hunting activities and to provide free public hunting access to private and isolated public lands.

Block management area (BMA) cooperators receive benefits for providing free public hunting under certain terms. FWP publishes an annual BMA tabloid by Aug. 15 that explains current BMA opportunities, including BMA general locations, opportunities offered, and access information. Detailed maps and rules for each BMA can be obtained online at fwp.mt.gov or at regional FWP offices starting Aug. 15.

Each BMA is unique. They can range in size from 50 to more than 100,000 acres. Some BMAs offer a wide variety of hunting opportunities, while others offer limited hunting opportunities for specific game species. Some BMAs intensely manage hunting activities while others have few hunter management restrictions. Each BMA has its own rules, and hunters should know these rules, including how to acquire permission, prior to hunting.

For more information about FWP's Block Management Program, visit fwp.mt.gov/hunt/access/blockmanagement.

Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program

The purpose of this program is to enhance upland game bird populations on lands open to free public hunting. FWP partners with private landowners and public land managers, groups, and organizations to improve habitat on private and public lands to benefit various upland game bird species.

A printed access guide for the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program is available in August every year at regional FWP offices. For more information on FWP's Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, visit fwp.mt.gov/ugbep.

Public Access Lands Agreements

The Public Access Land Agreement Program is a creative way for private landowners to provide public access to public lands for hunting and/or fishing in exchange for a payment and other negotiated improvements to facilitate public access to public lands. For more information, visit fwp.mt.gov/pala.

Unlocking Public Lands Program

The objective of this program is to allow members of the public to cross parcels of enrolled private land to gain access to otherwise inaccessible parcels of state or federal land for the purpose of fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, bird watching, and other forms of outdoor recreation compatible with the use of public lands. For more information, visit fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/access/unlocking-public-lands.

Does FWP provide hunters with a list of landowners who allow hunting?

Outside of Block Management, the Upland Game Bird Enhancement program, and game damage hunts, FWP does not give out contact information for private landowners. It is the hunter's responsibility to seek and acquire permission to hunt on private land.

Tips for acquiring permission to hunt on private land:

- FWP offices provide free booklets containing "Montana Hunter/Landowner Access Courtesy Cards"

- Show courtesy and respect to the landowner and make hunting arrangements by calling or visiting at times convenient to the landowner, well in advance of the hunting date.
- Explain what type of hunting you wish to do and be sure to ask any questions that can help clarify the conditions of access.
- Provide complete information about yourself and your hunting companions, including vehicle descriptions.
- Follow the landowner's instructions and bring only the companions for whom you obtained permission.
- Ensure you have landowner permission if you plan to leave part of the animal carcass on the property.
- Ask landowners if there is anything they would like you to watch for while on their property.
- Only harvest game for which you were given permission to harvest.
- Be sure to thank the landowner after your hunt.
- Offer to return to the property outside of the hunting season to help them with projects as needed. Follow through if help is requested.

Top reasons why landowners stop allowing public hunting access:

- **Unethical and unsafe shooting behavior:** bullets hitting buildings, farm equipment, signs, livestock, and other property; long shots; and wounded game
- **Inappropriate driving and parking:** blocking gates, leaving gates differently than how you found them, driving on roads that are muddy, driving off roads without permission, parking or driving vehicles in tall vegetation during high fire-risk periods
- **Inappropriately contacting landowners:** hunters calling late at night, early in the morning, or on holidays, or asking landowners to help retrieve game carcasses
- **Disobeying property rules:** hunting among livestock, building campfires without permission, harvesting species for which permission was not given
- **Disrespect:** arguing with the landowner when they decline to give permission to hunt, using foul language, harassing livestock, using the property while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- **Vandalism:** cutting fences, breaking fence posts, littering, inappropriate defecating, shooting property

Tools for planning your hunt

There is a host of resources to help you as you plan your hunt and enter the field. A current copy of Montana's hunting regulations remains the most important tool in your toolbox, but numerous mapping and planning resources are also available online, many of them for free.

Please note that third-party applications, while helpful in many aspects, may not provide the most current information on hunting regulations, restricted areas, Block Management updates, or other information critical to your hunt. Consult the hunting regulations and the appropriate land management agency for the most current information.

Here's an introduction to several reliable tools available online for free.

Montana FWP Hunt Planner Map - fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/huntPlanner

FWP's Hunt Planner Map is a free interactive mapping website that allows you to research hunting opportunities in the state. This is an official resource for current information on hunting district boundaries, block management updates, and hunting regulations. The website can be used from a computer or mobile device. Important features include:

- Hunting district boundaries for each species, with links to applicable hunting licenses and harvest statistics
- Harvest opportunities by license and hunter type, including a lookup tool to view where your hunting license or permit is valid
- Rotating surveillance areas for chronic wasting disease (CWD), as well as CWD sampling stations and carcass disposal sites
- FWP restricted hunting areas (may not include USFS, BLM, or other restricted areas)
- Species distribution
- Block Management areas (with printable maps) and other access opportunities
- Public and private land ownership
- Ability to find your location on the map and coordinates of cursor location on the map
- Polygon and route drawing
- Links to printable geo-referenced PDF maps
- Ability to create a GPX file to upload to your GPS device
- Multiple base maps (topographic, satellite imagery, etc.)
- Help tools and links to other FWP resources

Montana Cadastral Mapping Project - svc.mt.gov/msl/mtcadastral

This free mapping website is maintained by the Montana State Library. It is a useful and reliable tool for confirming land ownership.

ACME Mapper - mapper.acme.com

If you prefer traditional topographic maps, this can be a useful resource. ACME Mapper is a free third-party, general-purpose mapping website. It does not contain layers for hunting districts in Montana, nor is it a tool for confirming land ownership. But it does provide satellite imagery and topographic map layers, with roads and county lines, for the lower 48 states.

Weatherbase - weatherbase.com

Many hunters ask what weather is typical for certain areas. While weather and its influence on wildlife movements can vary greatly from year to year, weatherbase.com is a resource for finding monthly averages for temperatures, precipitation, and other data.

Download Montana hunting regulations online - fwp.mt.gov/hunt/regulations

Wildlife biology 101

Some of the most common questions from hunters pertain to animals and their behavior: At what elevation do animals live? When is the rut? When do elk migrate? What do deer eat? When do bears hibernate?

Most of these questions have no single answer. But understanding some basic behavioral factors can help you decide where, when, and how to hunt. Here are some important terms to know and considerations for several of Montana's game animals, as well as wolves. Also listed here are questions FWP staff may or may not be able to answer for you.

What do game animals eat?

Wildlife diets vary by species and time of year. Most of the diets referenced for the herbivore species below fall into these categories:

Browse: shrubs, deciduous trees, and woody vegetation. Examples include willows, aspen, sagebrush, currant, chokecherries, service berries, mahogany, bitter brush, and rabbitbrush.

Forbs: non-woody flowering vegetation. Examples include dandelions, sagewort, and clover.

Grass: non-woody herbaceous plants with leaves growing from the stem.

What are summer and winter ranges?

Summer range includes habitat areas used by migratory wildlife during the summer and early fall. These are usually at higher elevations where water and high-quality forage overlap.

Winter range includes habitat used by migratory animals during the late fall through early spring when most of the landscape is covered by snow. Winter ranges are where food resources are most accessible — usually at lower elevations or ridgelines exposed by the wind and sun.

When do game animals migrate?

Many game animals travel between summer and winter ranges seasonally. Seasonal migrations are driven primarily by weather — as forage at higher elevations becomes difficult to access due to snow, animals migrate to winter ranges where forage is more accessible. The timing of wildlife migrations can be highly variable from year to year and difficult to predict because they are weather dependent.

Some game populations do not migrate, and they reside in the same area year-round.

What is the rut?

The mating season for a game animal is often called the **rut**. Animals, especially males, are usually more active for longer periods each day during the rut. The rut is generally triggered by shorter periods of daylight in the fall.

How do diet, habitat, and the rut vary by species?

Elk

Diet: Elk are generalists. They consume browse, forbs, and grasses.

Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, elk on public land use high-elevation sagebrush grasslands, grasslands, conifer forests, deciduous forests, and low-elevation agricultural lands during the summer and early fall. During times of significant snow cover, elk migrate to lower winter ranges, which may include river bottoms and valleys, much of which are on private land. Some elk don't migrate. Because elk are generalists, they can be found just about anywhere in Montana at almost any elevation.



Rut: The elk rut in Montana usually occurs from mid-September to mid-October, but this can vary by a couple of weeks in either direction.

Mule deer

Diet: Mule deer consume grasses, forbs, and shrubs while vegetation is green and nutritional content is high. As grasses cure and the nutritional quality diminishes, mule deer diets transition to forbs and browse. Winter diets are often completely browse.

Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, mule deer use high-elevation sagebrush grasslands, grasslands, conifer forests, deciduous forests, and low-elevation agricultural lands during the summer and early fall. Winter snow accumulation triggers migrations to lower elevations during late fall or early winter. During winter, mule deer concentrate within shrub-dominated habitats at low and mid elevations. Some mule deer don't migrate. Mule deer can be found anywhere in Montana.



Rut: The mule deer rut in Montana occurs throughout November.

White-tailed deer

Diet: White-tailed deer consume grasses, forbs, and browse.

Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, white-tailed deer mostly use low-elevation valleys predominated by agriculture. These areas are mostly private lands. A small portion of whitetail populations migrate to high-elevation summer ranges.



Rut: The rut for white-tailed deer occurs throughout November.

Pronghorn (antelope)

Diet: Pronghorn consume grasses, forbs, and shrubs while vegetation is green and nutritional content is high. As grasses cure and the nutritional quality diminishes, pronghorn diets transition to forbs and browse. Winter diets are often completely browse.

Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, pronghorn use rangeland habitats at all elevations during the summer and fall. As snow accumulates, those pronghorn at high elevation migrate to rangelands at low elevation, where all pronghorn spend the late fall, winter, and early spring. Some pronghorn are don't migrate.



Rut: The rut for pronghorn in Montana occurs from mid-August through early October.

Moose

Diet: Moose consume grasses, forbs, and shrubs while vegetation is green and nutritional content is high. As grasses and forbs cure and nutritional quality diminishes, moose transition to a diversity of deciduous browse. By late winter, most moose diets are predominantly willow browse.



Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, moose use deciduous-dominated riparian areas (places adjacent to water) and aspen-dominated forests year-round. During warm summer periods, moose often seek shaded environments within dense conifer forests. Moose use a variety of shrub-dominated habitats during the fall. Some moose migrate, others don't. Migratory moose are distributed across high-elevation habitats during the summer and fall and migrate to lower elevations as snow accumulates.

Rut: In Montana, the moose rut occurs from mid-September through mid-October.

Bighorn sheep

Diet: Bighorn sheep consume grasses, forbs, and shrubs year-round.



Habitat elements: In some areas of Montana, bighorn sheep prefer areas that are relatively steep and open. They also frequently use rocky terrain complemented with open, grassy benches that provide food. Seasonal migrations of bighorn sheep can vary — many have significant migrations across elevations, some migrate but stay at roughly the same elevation, and some do not migrate. Sheep will spend the winter wherever they can access food.

Rut: The rut for bighorn sheep usually begins in mid-November and can last as late as early January.

Mountain goat

Diet: Mountain goats consume forbs, grasses, shrubs, coniferous tree needles, and lichen.

Habitat elements: Mountain goat habitat is at high elevations and includes escape cover and steep terrain, though this may include timbered areas. Some mountain goats migrate, others don't. Most migrations are short, and goats may migrate up and down in elevation during the winter in search of forage.

Rut: In Montana, the rut for mountain goats occurs from early November through early December.



Black bear

Diet: Black bears are opportunists. As omnivores, they eat green grass, berries, leaves, and other vegetation, as well as carrion and live prey.

Habitat elements: Because they have a diverse diet, black bears do well in a variety of habitat types. Most often they prefer forested habitat, but they can also venture into river bottoms and more open landscapes wherever food is easy to obtain.

Mating season: Black bears mate between May and July and give birth in a den during winter.

Hibernation: Black bears can begin entering their dens as early as October, and most bears have left their dens by May.



Wolf

Diet: Wolves are primarily carnivores. They consume carrion and hunt live prey, including small and large mammals. On occasion, they have been known to consume berries.

Habitat elements: Wolves are highly mobile. While a single pack's territory can be around 150 square miles, they only occupy a small area of their territory at one time. Wolves, which are native to Montana, are highly dispersed across the western half of the state. They prefer areas with high prey density and low human populations.

Mating season: Wolves mate once per year in mid-February.



What should I know about chronic wasting disease?

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease that infects members of the deer family. In Montana, these include mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and moose. It is caused by infectious, misfolded proteins, called prions, that spread throughout the animal and result in organ damage and eventual death. CWD can spread from one animal to another through body fluids, either through direct contact or indirectly through environmental contamination.

CWD was first detected among wild cervids in Montana in 2017 and has since been detected in many parts of the state.

CWD is not known to result in illness or disease among humans. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that hunters who harvest a deer, elk, or moose from an area where CWD is known to be present have their animal tested for CWD prior to consuming the meat and not consume the meat if the animal tests positive.

CWD can be transmitted through carcasses of infected animals. For this reason, proper carcass disposal by hunters is critical to protecting Montana's herds. All discarded carcass parts should be left at the kill site or bagged and disposed of in a landfill. Dumping carcasses is illegal and can spread disease.

Hunting is the primary tool for monitoring and managing the spread of CWD. Concerns over CWD shouldn't stop you from enjoying hunting season. Hunters are critical to conservation efforts across the state and protecting our wildlife heritage.

For more information and updates about CWD in Montana, visit fwp.mt.gov/conservation/chronic-wasting-disease.

What hunting questions can an FWP biologist answer?

If you have questions about wildlife population trends, distribution, management objectives, or the rationale for season structures in a specific area, contact the area wildlife biologist. Regional FWP office staff can help connect you with the appropriate wildlife biologist for your area of interest. The more familiar you are with the focus area of your question before calling a biologist, the more they can help you find specific answers. A great deal of information, including annual surveys and biological data, can be found online at fwp.mt.gov/conservation.

Depending on the area, FWP wildlife biologists may be interested in observation reports of less common species, such as moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, wolves, or grizzly bears.

What hunting questions can an FWP game warden answer?

If you have questions about a specific regulation and how it applies to a certain area or hunting situation, check the current hunting regulations first. If you are still unsure, contact the applicable FWP office to reach a game warden or other staff member who can help you.

What hunting questions can't FWP staff answer?

FWP staff cannot answer questions for which there is insufficient information available, or if the question is outside the purview of the staff member's work, seeks private citizens' personal information, or asks FWP to advocate for or against private businesses. Examples include:

- Can I drive or camp along road X? (contact the applicable land management agency)
- What will the weather be like during my hunt?
- On what date will the elk migrate?
- At what elevation should I hunt?
- Will I encounter a grizzly bear at location X?
- Where is a productive hunting area with easy access and low hunting pressure?
- Can you provide landowners' contact information?

- Which outfitter and guide service should I hire?

Bears in Montana

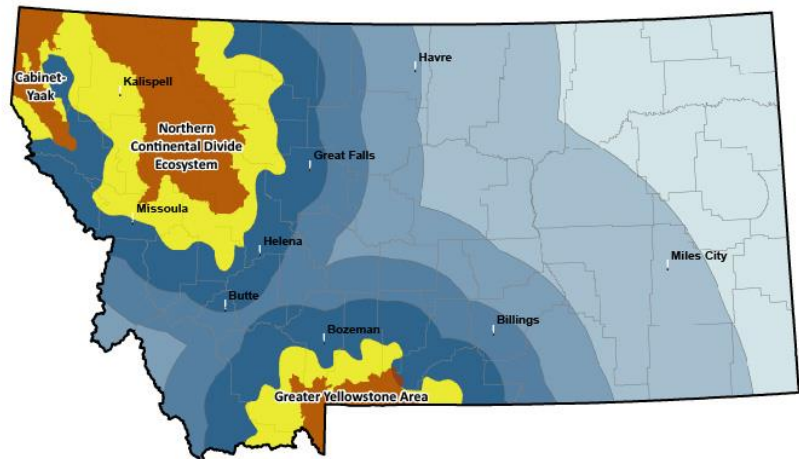
Both resident and nonresident hunters often want to know where bears — especially grizzlies — are in relation to where they plan to hunt. Being prepared for a bear encounter is essential when hunting and recreating in bear country. As you plan for this in your hunt, remember these key points:

- Bears can be anywhere.
- Both black and grizzly bears pose potential safety risks, and bear behavior determines your response in an encounter.
- Avoiding a conflict is easier than dealing with one.

Where are bears in Montana?

Black bears are common in the western half of the state and less common farther east. However, they can be seen anywhere in Montana.

Grizzly bear populations are expanding into places where they haven't occupied in many years. Grizzly expansion in Montana emanates from three recovery ecosystems, including the Greater Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide, and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems. As a result, hunters and other recreationists should be prepared to encounter grizzly bears anywhere in the western two-thirds of Montana (west of Billings).



General distribution of grizzly bears in Montana

Who manages grizzly bears in Montana?

Grizzly bears are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which works closely with FWP.

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) was formed in 1983 to help ensure the recovery of viable grizzly bear populations and their habitat in the lower 48 states through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, and research. The IGBC consists of representatives from several federal, state, and tribal agencies. For more information, visit igbconline.org.

How are black bears and grizzly bears identified?

Knowing how to identify black bears and grizzly bears is essential, especially if you're hunting black bears. When identifying a bear species, it's important to look for a combination of characteristics rather than relying on one feature alone. A bear's color and body size are not reliable indicators of species. Here are some traits to look for:

Black bear

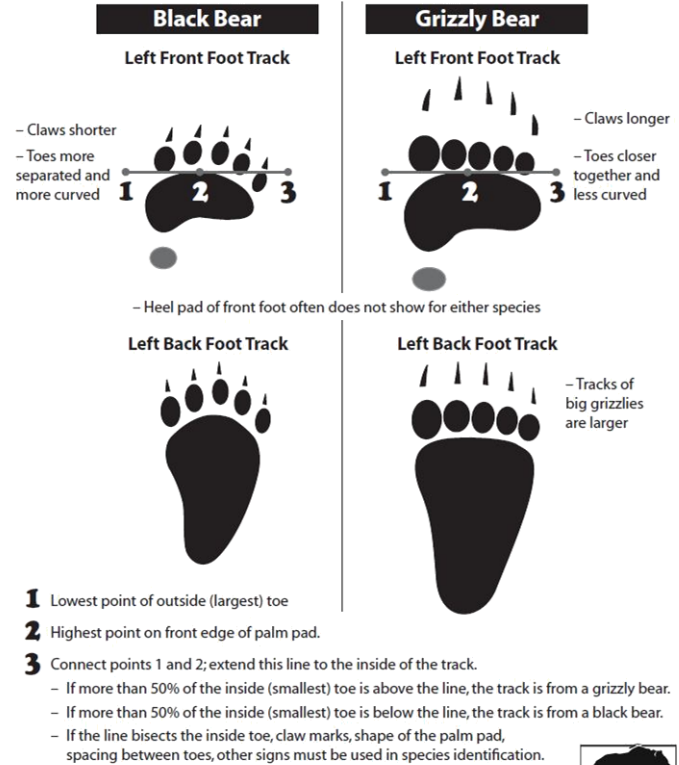
- Color varies from blond to black
- No distinctive shoulder hump
- Rump is higher than shoulders
- Face profile is straight
- Ears are tall and pointed
- Front claws are less than two inches long

Grizzly bear

- Color varies from blond to black
- Distinctive shoulder hump
- Rump is lower than shoulder
- Face profile appears dishd in
- Ears are short and rounded
- Front claws are two to four inches long



Tracks can sometimes help identify a bear's species and give a basic indication of how recently a bear has been present. Black bears' front feet have a more arched space between their toes and main foot pad. Grizzlies' front feet have a straighter space between their toes and foot pad. Indentations left by claws may give an indication of claw length.



Grizzly Bear Outreach Project



How does bear activity change throughout the year?

Spring

Bears emerge from hibernation when temperatures rise and food availability increases. Males emerge in early March. Females without newborn cubs emerge from late March to mid-April. Finally, females with newborn cubs will leave their dens from mid-April to early May. In springtime, bears often scavenge on carcasses of winter-killed animals.

Late spring/early summer

The mating season for bears occurs from May through early July. Males can be seen following females, and most fights between male bears happen during this time of year.

Summer

Bear distribution changes in response to seasonal and annual variability of food availability. Generally, bears often feed at lower southwest-facing elevations in the spring and move higher as the season progresses.

Fall

Bears become more active in the late summer and fall as they spend more hours each day searching for and consuming protein and calories in preparation for hibernation. This period is called hyperphagia. Bears can spend up to 20 hours eating each day. During this time, they may be less observant of their surroundings (creating conditions for surprise close encounters with humans). Bears will begin preparing a den in the late fall.

Winter

Bears may begin entering their dens as early as late October, though most bears enter their dens between mid-November and December. Some bears may remain active well into early winter months if food is readily available, such as ungulate remains left by hunters. Cubs are born during hibernation in late winter. Bears can awaken easily when disturbed during hibernation and may even wander from their dens periodically during winter. *Carry bear spray and be prepared for a bear encounter at all times of the year.*

How can I avoid negative encounters with grizzly bears while hunting?

Several aspects of hunting increase the risk of hunters encountering grizzly bears:

- Fall hunting seasons overlap with hyperphagia—when bears are most active.
- Hunters are often alone and tend to move quietly, against the wind, and during early-morning and late-afternoon hours when bears are most active.
- Elk bugling, game calls, and cover scents can attract bears and lessen the bear's ability to detect a person.
- Animal carcasses and gut piles can attract bears.

If you are hunting or recreating in the western two-thirds of Montana, be prepared to encounter a grizzly bear. This includes:

- Carry and know how to use bear spray. Keep it within reach and be prepared to use it immediately. In sudden grizzly encounters, bear spray has proven to be a simple and effective deterrent tool.
- Stay alert, especially when hearing or visibility is limited. Watch for environmental indicators of recent bear activity. If there is abundant fresh sign of grizzly bears in the area, consider hunting elsewhere. Let other hunters know when bears and/or fresh sign are observed.
- Travel and hunt in groups whenever possible. This can help you make casual noise to alert bears to your presence, and it may also increase your chances of survival in the event of a bear attack.
- Follow all Forest Service food storage regulations. Contact the Forest Service to learn what food storage rules apply where you're hunting.
- Avoid carcass sites and concentrations of ravens and other scavengers.
- Carry the equipment you need to process a carcass and remove it from the field as quickly as possible.
 - If you plan on leaving the carcass for extended hours or overnight, quarter the carcass and hang the quarters away from the gut pile.
 - Leave the carcass or hanging quarters in a place where they can be observed from at least 200 yards away (bright-colored flagging can help with visibility).
 - When you return, scan the area from a distance for any movement or disturbance to the carcass. Then approach the carcass or quarters carefully. Yell or whistle repeatedly.
 - Do not attempt to frighten away or haze a grizzly bear that does not leave a carcass when it becomes aware of you.
- When possible, hang carcasses from designated food storage poles. This includes a pulley attached to a stout 15-foot-long "meat pole" that is at least 25 feet off the ground. The lowest portion of the carcass should be swinging from the center of the pole at least 10 feet above the ground.

Bears are opportunists and change their behavior in order to take advantage of new food sources. If you are hunting or living in grizzly country, always assume that grizzlies are in the area. Make sure your camps, cabins, and homes are bear proof and that bear attractants (food, garbage, anything smelly) are unavailable or secured.

For more information on avoiding conflicts with bears, visit fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/bear.

How should I respond in a bear encounter?

Most bear attacks on people involve surprise close encounters and/or females with cubs. Both grizzly bears and black bears pose a risk. In any encounter, your behavior matters. Bears respond to your actions. The bear's behavior should determine your response.

During an encounter with a bear, never run away. You cannot outrun a bear. Running may trigger a bear to chase. Never approach a bear.

Different situations call for different responses. If you see a bear at a distance, or if the bear appears unaware of you and you can move away undetected, do so quietly when the bear is not looking toward you. If you cannot avoid a bear that sees you, stand your ground and watch its behavior. Move away when it "disengages" or becomes uninterested in you.

1. If a bear is not actively engaged with you (looking away, ignoring you, running away, or retreating):
 - Give the bear space by backing away slowly and going in the opposite direction.
2. If a bear shows agitated/defensive behavior (huffing, jaws clacking, head swaying back and forth, bellowing, swatting the ground, hopping forward, and/or drooling):
 - Stand your ground, prepare your bear spray, or discharge your bear spray if the bear is within range, and speak in a calm manner until the bear moves off.
3. If a bear charges or appears ready to charge:
 - Stand your ground.
 - If it charges, use your bear spray.
 - If the defensive bear is going to make contact with you, go face down on the ground, cover your neck and head as much as possible, and deploy your bear spray in the bear's face. If you are unsure of the species, but you recognize it is defensive, play dead. Never play dead in an encounter with a black bear.
4. If a bear shows predatory/curious behaviors (follows you, or slowly, purposefully or methodically approaches you):
 - Stand your ground.
 - Get aggressive: wave your arms and shout vigorously.
 - Get bear spray out and ready.
 - Fight back if it makes contact.
5. If a bear enters or reaches into your tent:
 - Use your bear spray.
 - Fight back.