



2003 Elk Harvest

By
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Elk Program Coordinator

Introduction

Arkansas held its sixth modern day elk hunt in the fall of 2003. Two five-day hunt periods were held September 22-26 and December 8-12 in 5 hunt zones. Arkansas' first modern day elk season was held in 1998 and was a significant historic event for the state following the successful restoration of Rocky Mountain elk. The eastern elk (*Cervus elaphus canadensis*) was extirpated from the state by 1840. Between 1981 and 1985, 112 Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsoni*) were stocked near the Buffalo National River in Newton County. The herd has grown to an estimated 400-450 animals.

Permits

A total of 20 permits (7 bull, one either-sex and 12 antlerless) were issued for use in four established elk hunt zones (public land elk zones 1-4). Four bull permits were allocated for the September hunt period and three bull permits, one either-sex permit and twelve antlerless permits were available for the December hunt period. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) donated two bull permits (two of 20 total permits available) to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for fundraising purposes. These two permits generated \$28,500.00 with 85% of the proceeds returned to Arkansas for in-state elk project funding. Only Arkansas residents could apply for elk permits through a standard application process. Almost 6600 (6587) people applied for draw permits and voluntarily donated \$4288.45 for elk project work in Arkansas. Eighteen permits were randomly drawn from a squirrel cage in Jasper, Arkansas on June 28, 2003. Applicants drawn were notified by phone or mail and each received an information packet by mail. Each hunter was required to attend a hunter orientation session prior to each hunt period. Eighty two (82) permits were issued for elk zone A (private land elk zone). These permits were valid for the September and December elk hunt periods. Landowner written permission was required for applicants to qualify for a zone A permit and the permit cost was \$35.00 with a limit of one either-sex elk. The zone A elk limit was 5 for the September hunt period and 5 for the December hunt period.

Results

Thirteen elk (Table 1) were taken in public land elk zones 1-4 with 18 hunters participating. Hunter success was 72% (number of elk taken/number of hunters participating). Six bulls and seven antlerless elk were harvested with three bulls taken during the September hunt (three hunters participating) and three bulls and seven antlerless elk taken during the December hunt (15 hunters participating). Eleven antlerless elk were taken from the private lands hunting zone, five in the September hunt and six in the December hunt. Total harvest increased from 21 elk taken in 2002 to 24 (6 bulls, 18 antlerless) in 2003 (Figure 1) with a total of 102 hunters having an opportunity to hunt elk.

Data and samples collected on harvested elk included weight, a tooth for aging, antler measurements, lactation information, reproductive tracts (December hunt only), and tissue samples for disease/parasite analysis. Weights on harvested cows taken ranged up to 610 lbs (live weight). Bull weights ranged up to 685 lbs (live weight). Ages of elk ranged from 1.5 to 6.5 years for bulls and .5 to 13.5 years for cows. Two of 6 bulls (1.5 years of age and older) were over 4.5 years of age. The bull with the largest antlers was a 6X7. Reproductive tracts were taken from 8 cows to determine reproductive rates and conception dates. Reproductive data collected from 1998 through early 2004 indicates an average conception date of October 10 and an average calving date of June 14. Tissue samples from animals were tested for chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis, brucellosis, Johne's disease, pneumonia, lungworm infection, and meningeal worm infection. No significant health problems were detected.

As in previous years most harvested elk were taken during the first three days of the hunt periods (63%). Elk sightings by successful hunters in elk zones 1-4 included 42 bulls (seven spikes and 35 branch antlered bulls), 128 cows and 32 calves (average 15.5 sightings/hunter, range 1-25). Elk sightings by successful hunters in elk zone A included four branched bulls, 52 cows and 12 calves (average 6.2 sightings/hunter, range 1-15). Undoubtedly some of the elk sighted were counted more than once. A post-season survey of all hunters (82) in elk zone A indicated that 47 (87%) of 54 (response rate of 66%) respondents hunted in 2003. Forty-two respondents (78%) participated in the September season and 24 (44%) respondents participated in the December

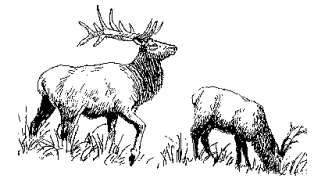
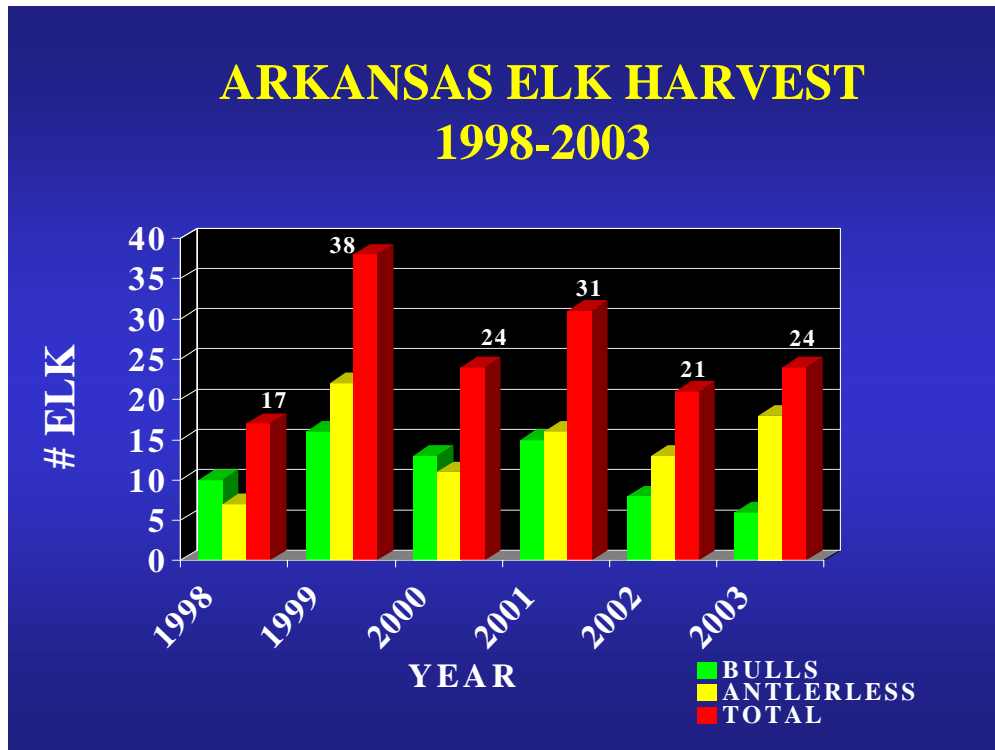
season. About half (67) of the 139 reported elk sightings by participating hunters were for the September season. Respondents who hunted averaged one day in September (elk harvest quota of 5 reached on first day of the September season) and 2.2 days in December.

Table 1. Elk harvest for the 2003 September and December hunts

Hunters	Bull	Antler-less	Age (yrs)	Wt.	Hunters	Bull	Antler-less	Age (yrs)	Wt.
Bert Haralson	6x7		6.5	685L	Ronnie Ramsey*		F	3.5	
Jerome Nunnally	2x2		1.5	375D	William Moore*		F	13.5	610L
Brian Hairston	6x8		2.5	350D	Terry French*		F	4.5	540L
Kevin Singleterry		F	5.5	330D	Danny Merritt*		F	2.5	310D
Jim Milum		F	6.5	345D	Kyle Elliott*	1x1		1.5	270D
Harold Johnson		F	.5	140D	Steve Hattabaugh*		F	6.5	512L
Sandra Johnson		F	3.5	330D	Byron Holloway*	5x5		2.5	550D
Larry Hurtt		F	2.5	305D	Trevor Davidson*		F	2.5	
Stacey Clark*		F	8.5	538L	Phillip Floyd*		F		
Randy White*		F	2.5		Tracy Floyd*		F		
Keith Linn*		F	1.5	255L	Luke Floyd*		F		
David Akins*	5x7		5.5	503L	Gabe Barrett*		F		

* December 2003 Elk Harvest (F - Female, M - Male, L - Live Weight (lbs), D - Dressed Weight (lbs))

Figure 1. Elk harvest summary, 1998-2003



ARKANSAS

GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

Wildlife Management Division

MEMORANDUM

Reply to:

File # 0211-06-25-08

TO: Mr. John Sunderland, Assistant Chief, WMD

Attachment

cc: Harris

Shook

File

FROM: Michael E. Cartwright, Elk Program Coordinator

DATE: May 28, 2004

SUBJECT: 2003 Elk Harvest Report

Attached please find a brief report on Arkansas' 2003 elk harvest. Total harvest was 24 for the combined September and December seasons, which is 3 above the number taken in 2002 (21). Age data indicates that the oldest harvested cow was 13.5 and was taken in elk zone 4. Two of six bulls taken were over 4.5 years of age with the oldest bull aged at 6.5. The largest bull taken weighed 685 lbs (live weight) and the largest cow weighed 610 lbs (live weight). Eleven elk (all females) were taken in elk zone A, 5 of those were taken the last day of the December hunt on Cocky Barrett's property. If no additional changes are warranted I am requesting that the report be forwarded to Arlene Green for posting on the AGFC website.