



GMU 12A

April 5, 2025

Species within this game management unit (GMU): Blue Grouse, Kaibab Squirrel, Merriam's Turkey, Mountain Lion, Mule Deer Elk and Bison.

Game Management Unit Boundaries

Beginning at U.S. Hwy 89A and the Kaibab National Forest boundary near mp 566; southerly and easterly along the forest boundary to Grand Canyon National Park; southerly and westerly along the park boundary to Kanab Creek; northerly along Kanab Creek to Snake Gulch; northerly, easterly and southerly around the Kaibab National Forest boundary to U.S. Hwy 89A near mp 566.

All Hunts

Your big game hunter questionnaire link is located on the back of your tag. You also will receive a hunter questionnaire postcard in the mail. You can choose to return the hunter questionnaire postcard via postal mail or online: <https://www.azgfd.com/hunting/questionnaires>. You may also receive an email containing a link to your hunter questionnaire. You can respond by one method only. This information is a critical component of the hunt recommendation process, and your information helps us to accurately estimate species harvest and set permit levels.

Kaibab National Forest Travel Management

The Travel Management Rule only allows motorized use on designated roads, trails and areas as identified on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). These maps are available for free at Forest Service offices and at [the following link](#). Only motorized retrieval of elk and bison is permitted in Game Management Unit 12A. Motorized retrieval of other wildlife, including all other big game species, is not permitted on national forest lands in Game Management Unit 12A. For further information regarding the Travel Management Rule, please contact the Kaibab National Forest.

Species Information

Elk and Bison

[Detailed bison hunt information web page](#)

Update: For the past few years, bison have been seen near Wall Lake, as well as along Forest Service Roads 219B, 223, 270, 268 and 610.

*There are currently no Population Management Seasons for elk tags available for successfully drawn deer hunters in GMUs 12A East and/or West.

The Department reminds hunters that bison within these hunt areas may not be present during the hunt. Therefore, chances for success can be lower. The Grand Canyon National Park is not open to hunting. Elk seasons are described in the pronghorn and elk regulations.

Hunters purchasing an elk tag should be aware that this GMU has few elk and is considered a limited opportunity hunt. In the last couple of years, only a few elk have been spotted and harvested in the vicinity of Mile and a Half Lake south to Franks Lake, on the west side of the Kaibab Plateau. The Grand Canyon National Park is not open to hunting.

Mountain Lion

Overview: The GMU 12 (GMUs 12A and 12B) mountain lion population, based on harvest information and observed lion sign, appears to be healthy and robust. The current yearly threshold on lions harvested in GMU 12 stands at 19. Yearly reported harvest figures fluctuate around 1 dozen lions with most of these animals taken by houndsmen during the winter months. The lion population in GMU 12 is a migratory population of roughly 60-80 animals with the lions essentially following the deer herd as it migrates from summer to winter ranges. During the winter months access to areas within GMU 12 can be extremely limited, even nonexistent. Many hunters utilize horses and mules, snowmobiles, and other recreational vehicles to overcome these access limitations.

Be prepared for extreme weather. The most common technique for lion hunting in GMU 12 is similar to that used throughout the "Rim" country in Arizona. After a snowstorm a hunter will drive the roads found within the GMU 12 winter deer range early in the morning looking for tracks. Once a track is located the hounds are released and the lion is pursued until "treed". Also, several lions are sighted each year by hunters glassing canyons and watching waters. Some lions have been harvested incidental to these other activities. If you are fortunate enough to receive a coveted 12A or 12B deer tag you might consider purchasing a mountain lion tag before heading to the GMUs.



Areas: Any areas with concentrations of deer often have lions associated with them. Concentrate your efforts in areas with rim-rock and significant changes in elevation. The large canyons and rocky areas that form the edges of the Kaibab and Paria plateaus are likely areas to locate “lion sign”. The Warm Springs and Nail Canyon areas in 12AW, the Cocks Combs area in 12AE, and the Paria Plateau have seen harvests in recent years and are good starting points. If you are considering hunting mountain lions on the Kaibab for the first time consider hiring a good houndsman/guide to increase your likelihood of success.

Hunters are required to report their mountain lion harvest information to the Arizona Game and Fish Department within 48 hours of taking a mountain lion. Hunters can report their mountain lion harvest in person, by telephone at 1-877-438-0447, or [online](#).

In addition to the 48-hr reporting requirement, the hunter (or their designee) needs to present the mountain lion’s skull and hide with attached proof of sex to a designated Arizona Game and Fish Department employee for inspection within 10 days of taking the mountain lion.

New Harvest Thresholds – When the number of harvested mountain lions reaches the threshold, that zone closes to the additional harvest of mountain lions at sundown the Wednesday immediately following. Before each hunting trip, verify that the zone is still open, by calling 877-438-0447 or checking online: view [harvest thresholds and zone closures](#). A map of the zones can be found at the [mountain lion management zones map](#).

Mule Deer

Overview: The world famous, or infamous, Kaibab Mule Deer herd. Books and countless articles have been written on the subject. Dreams have been realized, or shattered, on every hunt in this GMU since its inception. Huge bucks, forkhorns, and even does have been the objects of desire for hunters in this GMU. Many come with visions of 32" wide racks with multiple points per side, still others are happy with a tender yearling forkhorn. The Kaibab has supplied many happy hunting experiences in the past and will hopefully continue to do so for generations to come.

Some say the great days of the Kaibab are past, others maintain things are as good or better than ever, and still others claim things will be great in the future.

Data currently indicates that buck: doe ratios, a very important management statistic, have rebounded as of late and are significantly higher than the statewide average. Under alternative management these favorable ratios should be maintained or even improved. With continued and persistent drought, the woody winter browse in 12AW has been less productive for the past several years and as result concerns over the carrying capacity of this vital range are warranted.



The health and longevity of this winter range is critical to the long-term sustainability of the 12A deer herd. The effects of the 58,000 acre Warm Fire during the summer of 2006 appear to be largely positive for the foreseeable future with an incredible aspen, forb, and grass response being noted. This area will provide an excellent opportunity for archery and early season general deer hunters for the foreseeable future. Proactive management steps in the form of an Alternative Management Plan and a large-scale habitat improvement project in cooperation with the USFS have been taken by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in order to maintain a favorable buck:doe ratio, increase the representation of older age bucks in the population, ensure long-term high quality habitat, and provide for greater hunt success. Current data indicates that buck:doe ratios are excellent. The average age of a buck harvested on the late hunts has climbed to over 4 years of age in the past several years, yearling buck weights have stabilized at an acceptable level in recent years and as a result antler development has been excellent.

A relatively constant output of older age-class deer has been evident throughout the history of the plateau. Hunt success figures have fluctuated around the 40-60% range for the last decade, some of the highest hunt success for mule deer in the state. With conditions slowly improving in the burned area of 12AW, and with the initiation of a landscape scale habitat restoration effort, the outlook for the Kaibab deer herd is indeed very optimistic. If you are fortunate enough to draw one of the most sought-after deer tags in the United States, come to the Kaibab with realistic expectations. Remember, we hunt for the experience. Enjoy the natural splendor of the Kaibab Plateau, revel in your good fortune at having a tag, but most of all be a responsible sportsman and represent our sport in the best manner possible.

Antlerless Hunting: After several years of antlerless hunting, many of the does on the plateau have become as hunter wise as most bucks. Antlerless hunters continue to enjoy high hunt success. However, locating and harvesting an antlerless deer is likely to become more challenging as these animals become more educated about two-legged visitors to the plateau

Areas: It may be hard to believe but the likelihood of running into an older age class buck, as near as the author can tell, is just about equal almost anywhere on the plateau. Follow a few simple rules and your chance of success will increase exponentially.

First, on an archery hunt don't bother with pinyon/juniper areas unless it has snowed (not likely). Concentrate your efforts in areas with waterholes (not necessarily on the water), as the plateau is often dry at this time of the year. Getting off the road and into the canyons will improve your observations of mule deer bucks, especially mature ones. Tree stands up or down canyon from waters can be excellent and reduce the inevitable territorial dispute with other hunters over the waterhole. Walking and stalking in areas determined by scouting to hold bachelor herds of bucks can be exciting and productive. Salt licks are a great attractant for deer and provide the same opportunity as waterholes.

Finally, mule deer throughout their range are altering their behavior as hunting pressure increases. As the



season progresses mule deer bucks on the plateau become more and more secretive. This behavior includes becoming more and more nocturnal, spending more time in thick aspen and mixed conifer stands, and remaining in unroaded canyon habitats. Adjust your hunting strategies accordingly and have fun.

On a 12A early hunt, once again, don't bother with pinyon/juniper habitat types unless it has snowed. Remember this deer herd is extremely migratory and will remain at higher elevations until significant snowfall pushes them off. As the fall progresses the deer become more and more secretive. Being in position at first shooting light can be critical as the big boys are often bedded down for the day within minutes of the sun breaking the horizon. Waterhole hunting becomes less productive as frost begins to supply the need for water. By this time of year, the deer are visiting water in the dark.

Hunt the travel corridors up or down from water and you will improve your odds. Bachelor herds are typically broken up by this hunt and bucks can be relatively evenly distributed throughout the plateau. Concentrate on areas that are more inaccessible. These early hunts can be difficult because the deer are typically located in areas of formidable cover and are not easily located or glassed. Come prepared for all types of weather. Conditions can vary from 80 degrees to below freezing, from sunny to snow, and from pleasant to downright ugly. The prepared hunter is often the successful hunter.

On the ever in demand 12A late hunt, pray (if religious) for snow. Forage quality and snowfall will push the deer to the lower winter range. If old man winter has not yet shown his face, follow the suggestions given for the early hunt and good luck. If frost has cured out the summer range forage and some cold weather has struck, concentrate your efforts in the pinyon/juniper areas and even farther out in the sage and open canyon country. This is the classic western mule deer hunt. Practice with a flat shooting rifle at longer distances before the hunt begins. Also, before the hunt begins, study topo maps and enlist the aid of others who have hunted the area before. Bring binoculars and spotting scopes.

Find areas overlooking large open expanses and plan on sitting still for hours on end and glassing until you feel like your eyes are going to fall out. After an opening day of this activity, plan on spending the next nine days in the same manner. If the deer are low and you glass enough it will pay off.

Being prepared on this hunt is even more crucial than on the early hunt. Good boots, parkas, and camping gear can make or break your hunt. Four-wheel drive, chains, shovels, and winches can keep you hunting instead of being stuck for a day. Use common sense; don't take shortcuts as they often take a lot longer than the more sensible route.

Finally, remember that you could be sitting in the office, and enjoy the opportunity to get away and take part in the oldest, most admirable sport!

Archery Deer Nonpermit-Tag Special Regulation - All archery deer nonpermit-tag hunters must report their deer harvest online at www.azgfd.gov/ArcheryDeerReport or by telephone at 623-236-7961 within 48 hours of



taking a deer. When the number of deer equaling the archery deer harvest limit for a particular unit and species has been reported, that unit will be closed to further archery deer hunting at sundown the Wednesday immediately following. Hunters will be responsible for [checking online](#) or by telephone at 623-236-7961 before hunting to determine if their desired unit is still open.

Merriam's Turkey

Overview: GMU 12A, world famous for the Kaibab Deer Herd, is also home to one of the premier turkey populations in the state of Arizona. Excellent recruitment and low winter mortality for the past several years has led to population levels similar to the early 90's. GMU 12A continues to provide the turkey hunter and/or wildlife enthusiast a unique opportunity to observe Merriam's Turkeys. During the spring hunt, be prepared for cold temperatures and even snow. The fall hunt is often characterized by warm to hot daytime temperatures and afternoon rains. Be prepared for remote camping as the only amenities during the spring hunt are at Jacob Lake and in Fredonia. During the fall hunt gas, food, and lodging can be found in Fredonia, Jacob Lake, and near DeMotte Park.

Areas: During the spring turkey hunt significant winter snowfall can affect access and often dictates hunting locations. As a result of continued drought those areas of higher elevation, specifically those areas with spruce/fir/aspen forests have been the most productive areas for the past several years. Concentrate in areas dominated by this type of vegetation and look for turkey tracks in the snow, mud, dust, or around water sources. Also look for turkey "scratch", those locations where flocks of turkeys have been feeding and have disturbed the litter layer of the forest floor. Finally, during the night, prior to a morning hunt drive the roads getting out occasionally and turkey calling. Often roosting turkeys will respond to these calls giving a hunter a location to begin the morning's hunt. Once the location of turkeys has been determined, getting up early, hours before first light, is critical. As turkeys fly off the roost in the early pre-dawn, often the most active period of the day, they may provide a hunter the best opportunity to call in a wary old longbeard.

During the fall hunt, turkey hunting is a totally different game. While calling can sometimes be productive, the most successful technique is more like archery hunting mule deer. Watching waterholes that have turkey signs around them provide the turkey hunter with the best opportunity to bag a "bearded turkey" during this often-dry time of the year. Keep movements to a minimum, scan the surrounding area constantly, and listen for turkey vocalizations.

During both the spring and fall hunts be safe and acquire positive target identification. Finally, enjoy the finest terrain, climate, and surroundings that nature has to offer, the Kaibab Plateau.

Blue Grouse

Overview: According to David Brown in Arizona Game Birds the Blue grouse is a native of the Kaibab Plateau and restricted locals in the White Mountains. It has also been introduced in the San Francisco Peaks area near Flagstaff. On the Kaibab Plateau the bird has a very restricted range occupying mixed conifer habitat types



near the south end of the Kaibab National Forest and is also found in the Grand Canyon National Park – North Rim. Identification seems to be a prevalent problem for first time grouse hunters as poult turkeys, Band-tailed Pigeons, and even Northern Goshawks are often mistaken for grouse. Take care in species identification before dropping the hammer. Mature grouse average between 2 and 4 pounds of succulent white meat and provide delicious table fare. Grouse often flush at close range in thick cover so be prepared for quick shooting. A good bird dog can be of great assistance in retrieving downed birds. The grouse season in the fall provides a beautiful time to camp on the Kaibab and an inability to locate grouse is a great excuse for enjoying some of the finest scenery and weather Arizona has to offer.

Areas: Concentrate your efforts on the southeast side of the Plateau in sub-unit 12AE. Areas around Crystal Springs, Sourdough Well, and along the 610 rd near the National Park Boundary provide the best opportunity for finding the often-secretive Blue Grouse. Look for areas with mixed conifer, aspens, and berry bushes in close proximity. Grouse, like squirrels, appear to be most active early in the morning but walking throughout the day can result in flushed birds. Be patient, many long time grouse hunters often return to camp, after a long day of walking, with an empty vest. Grouse hunting is a great excuse to come to the Kaibab to enjoy a cooler climate. Harvesting birds should be viewed as a bonus.

Kaibab Squirrel

Overview: GMU 12A is home to one of the most unique game animals in Arizona and perhaps the nation. The Kaibab Squirrel is a subspecies of the Abert's Squirrel which is found only on the Kaibab Plateau, Mount Logan, and Mount Trumbull. This squirrel is most active early in the morning and just prior to dark and is always associated with Ponderosa Pines. The squirrel is dark in color, has tufted ears, and has a large white bushy tail. The best hunting techniques include walking and watching and listening while sitting with your back to a tree. Since 2016 a slight decline in the number of squirrels observed has taken place.

Areas: As stated earlier, concentrate your efforts in areas with large Ponderosa Pine trees and focus your observation skills on the forest floor.

Game Management Unit Summary

Primary Game Species/ Hunting Month(s)

Mule Deer	August – November
Turkey	October, April/May
Bison	August – July

Secondary Game Species/ Hunting Month(s)

Pronghorn	September
Bighorn Sheep	December

Average # permits

Mule Deer - 165 12A East, 1050 12A West
Turkey - 1700
Bison - 45
Pronghorn - 15
Bighorn Sheep - 1

Climate Information

MONTH AVG. TEMP AVG. RAINFALL AVG. SNOWFALL

January Max 42°/Min 17° 1.64" 20.0"
April Max 58°/Min 28° 0.99" 13.0"
May Max 67°/Min 36° 0.75" 0.0"
August Max 80°/Min 48° 1.72" 0.0"
September Max 74°/Min 42° 1.27" 0.0"
October Max 55°/Min 32° 1.14" 4.0"
November Max 50°/Min 23° 1.80" 20.0"
December Max 44°/Min 18° 1.44" 22.0"

Other Climate Information

During the hunting seasons, GMU 12A is characterized by sudden and drastic weather changes. Temperatures and conditions may shift from temperate to extreme in the space of several hours. Be prepared for a wide range of conditions including severe winter weather.

Cities, Roads & Campgrounds

Major Cities and Towns in or Near Game Management Unit and Nearest Gas, Food, and Lodging

Fredonia, Marble Canyon, Page, Kanab, UT

Major Highways and Roads Leading To

From the East: U.S. Hwy 89A

From the West: U.S. Hwy 89A

From the North: None

From the South: None

Developed Campgrounds

Jacob Lake Campground, administered by Kaibab National Forest, intersection of U.S. 89A and State Hwy 67 at Jacob Lake; DeMotte Campground, Kaibab National Forest, Hwy 67; Grand Canyon National Park, North Rim.

Undeveloped Campgrounds

Camping is allowed in designated areas and within 30' of open roadways on Forest Service administered lands throughout the GMU. Please contact the USFS North Kaibab Ranger District for further information at the phone number listed below.

Brief Description of Terrain, Elevation, and Vegetation

Elevations vary from 3,000' to more than 9,200', with a large plateau, the Kaibab, comprising a majority of the GMU. The Kaibab Plateau ranges from 6,000' to 9,200'; vegetation consists of ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, and aspen. The GMU's lower elevations, those surrounding the plateau, consist of pinyon-juniper stands, open sagebrush, and cliff rose "pushes." GMU 12A is bounded on the south by the Grand Canyon, on the west by Kanab Creek, on the east by House Rock Valley, and on the north by the Buckskin Mountains and the Arizona-Utah border.

Government Agencies and Phone Numbers

Arizona Game & Fish Department, Region II – 928-774-5045

Kaibab Natl Forest, North Kaibab District – 928-643-7395

Grand Canyon National Park, North Rim – 928-638-7888