



GMU 3B

Region 1 - GMU 3B: 2026 *(This document date reflects its most recent review. Updates are made only when necessary.)*

Species within this unit: [Pronghorn](#), [Deer \(Mule & White-tailed\)](#), [Black Bear](#), [Elk](#), [Over-the-Counter \(OTC\) Elk](#), [Taylor Hunt Area](#), [Mountain Lion](#), [Merriam's Turkey](#), [Tree Squirrel](#), [Waterfowl](#).

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Game Management Unit Boundaries

Beginning at Snowflake; southerly along State Route 77 to State Route 60; southwesterly along State Route 60 to the Fort Apache Indian Reservation boundary; easterly along the reservation boundary to the Vernon-McNary road (FR 224); northerly along this road to U.S. Hwy 60; west on U.S. Hwy 60 to AZ Hwy 61; northeasterly on AZ Hwy 61 to AZ Hwy 180A; northerly on AZ Hwy 180A to Concho-Snowflake road; westerly on the Concho- Snowflake road to Snowflake.

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 [here](#). 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.

Species Information

Pronghorn

Overview: The unit is comprised almost entirely of habitat suitable for pronghorn, and finding a place to hunt is not difficult. The animals are well dispersed in open country, but, due to the checkerboard land ownership patterns, hunters should scout prior to the hunt to find access roads.

Expect temperatures to be hot during the archery hunt, and warm to moderate during the general hunt. Snow is unlikely at this time of the year, but rain and wet roads are possible. Four-wheel drive is not required in most areas, as long as roads are dry.

The Little Colorado River and Silver Creek bisects the eastern half of Unit 3A. Be very careful if you decide to attempt a crossing in a vehicle. The riverbed is sandy and may be saturated below the surface even though appearing dry.

Land Status: Land ownership in this unit is generally in a checkerboard pattern between private and state lands. There is a small block in the southwestern corner of the unit that is owned by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Maps of the forestland can be purchased at District Ranger offices located in Overgaard and Lakeside. The rest of the unit is a mix of State Trust, private, and Bureau of Land Management land. BLM land status maps are useful in determining ownership; the Holbrook and St. Johns quad maps cover the unit. A good portion of the unit is open to hunting. Hunter access is generally better west of State Highway 77 compared to the eastern half of the unit.

Along State Route 77 and 180, some land is posted and locked up, however, landowners may grant access. Do not enter posted or locked land without obtaining written permission for the period of your hunt. Camping while hunting is allowed on State Trust and BLM lands, but you'll need to obtain permission prior to camping on private land. The unit has numerous roads, and vehicle access to hunting areas is generally good. East of State Route 77, there are many widely dispersed homes. Check the area you intend to hunt and avoid discharging a firearm within quarter mile of an occupied structure.

Cross-country travel is prohibited.

Areas: This unit has decent access by paved highway. State Route 277 and the highway from Snowflake to Concho provide access from the southern boundary. Unit 3A is bisected north to south by State Route 77. and State Route 377 from Heber to Holbrook is the northwestern boundary of the unit, while the northeastern



boundary is State Route 180 from Holbrook toward Concho. Improved dirt roads are numerous in the southeastern portion of the unit.

Main routes of access in the eastern portion are the Old Woodruff Road, Woodruff-Hay Hollow Road, and Hay Hollow Road. In the western part of 3A, two improved dirt roads, the Zeniff Road and the old Holbrook Highway, connect State Route 277 to State Route 377.

Deer: Mule and White-tailed Deer

Overview: The Unit 3B deer population is predominately mule deer, with an occasional sighting of a white-tailed deer being reported. Although improving, recent extended drought conditions have severely affected annual recruitment of fawns into the adult population of the mule deer herd. As a result, overall deer numbers are down throughout the unit, while buck-to-doe ratios remain stable. Current hunt structure is limited to archery and muzzleloader-only hunts.

Land Status: Widely dispersed private lands create a checkerboard of land ownership north of Hwy 60 where favorable deer hunting opportunities exist. This checkerboard land status creates some local access issues that require a combination of pre-season scouting and obtaining landowner permission. Land status maps are strongly recommended for hunting north of Hwy 60. Hunting opportunities south of Hwy 60 exist almost entirely on Forest Service lands, where access is not an issue. For hunters who might consider applying for Unit 3B deer hunts, the overall hunter success rate averages about 20 percent.

Areas: Most predictable deer hunting opportunities north of Hwy 60 exist around Mesa Redonda and along Black Mesa. These areas give hunters some glassing opportunities below upper ridges on slopes where ample browse plants exist. Most stalking will be uphill, but in brush cover favorable to the hunter. Some early morning deer will be located in lower and open flats, however, stalking opportunities are complicated for archery and muzzleloader hunters due to lack of available cover. In good, consecutive rainfall years, these areas produce moderate numbers of mule deer. They also produce the best opportunities for the unit, where occasional bucks approaching 30-inch main beam spreads can be found. Establishing local contacts and pre-season scouting for fresh deer sign will greatly improve the quality and success rates for this difficult hunt.

For hunters who prefer to hunt on public lands without the complications found in northern portions of the unit, hunting south of Hwy 60 is best. Most success in this area is limited to numerous individual knolls and mountains where browse is available on the upper third of the slope. Hunters also have success in recently harvested timber sale areas, where above-average growth exists, or along riparian travel corridors, where a diversity of perennial plants provides adequate cover and forage. Stalking cover for archers and muzzleloaders is more than adequate in these predominately-timbered areas, but overall deer numbers are lower and locating deer will prove difficult. On average, the larger mule deer in Unit 3B are north of Hwy 60, but some of the more elusive timber bucks are very worthy quarry for most hunters.



Deer observations in the southern portion of Unit 3B have been increasing over the past two years, potentially due to higher fawn survival rates on Forest Service lands.

Archery Deer Nonpermit-Tag Special Regulation: Hunters are responsible for confirming whether the GMU is still open before going into the field and should monitor the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest tracking page](#) to ensure the season remains open. 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. Click [here](#) for more information on archery deer regulations and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report archery deer harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a deer. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest reporting page](#) to complete the mandatory report.

Black Bear

Overview: The current fall hunt structure for Unit 3B black bears includes two general firearms hunts and one archery hunt. Each hunt season has non-permit tags that can be purchased over the counter.

Special Regulations: Legal animals include any bear, except a sow with cubs. This restriction requires hunters to study located animals prior to harvesting them, and establish that cubs are not nearby and simply out of sight. Studying bears prior to the kill in the early season will also limit hunters from harvesting bears with rubs on their coats during warm weather. It will also allow hunters to select for mature animals.

Female harvest limits are in place in Unit 3B, and may vary annually. There is an annual limit for the unit as a whole, and female harvest limits for individual hunts. The female harvest limit is also affected by female bears destroyed by the Department by policy because of human-wildlife conflicts.

Hunters are responsible for confirming whether the GMU is still open before going into the field and should monitor the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest tracking page](#) to ensure the season remains open. Click [here](#) for more information on black bear regulations and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report black bear harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a black bear. In addition, the hunter (or their designee) must present the skull and hide, with attached proof of sex, to a designated department employee for inspection within 10 days of harvest. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest reporting page](#) to complete the mandatory report and schedule a physical checkout.

Areas: Lake Mountain and surrounding knolls in the southeastern portion of the unit contain areas where



bears are harvested annually. Hunting techniques in these areas vary annually due to weather fluctuations, and hunters should adjust accordingly. For example, acorn crops may prove to be successful hunting areas one year, while water may be limited and thereby increase success in the following year. Hounds are the most effect method to harvest a bear. Hunters should always be aware of fresh sign around water holes and drainages.

Wolf Mountain is also a popular hunting area during the early hunts due to the high numbers of bears and the close proximity to rocky slopes and thick oak stands. Other locations with high success rates in the unit are areas surrounding Blue Ridge, Little Brushy, and Ecks Mountains.

Springer Mountain and huntable areas along Billy Creek outside the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside are attractive areas for archery bear hunters. Bears in these areas are often nocturnal nuisance animals within the city limits, and Billy Creek provides them a travel corridor and daily water needs. These bears establish predictable travel routes that can be detected by scouting Billy Creek and Springer Mountain.

Timber Knoll in the Vernon area and USFS areas surrounding the Pinetop-Lakeside Country Club also provide similar hunting opportunities for nuisance bears.

Elk

Overview: Elk management in Unit 3B focuses primarily on migratory animals utilizing historical breeding and wintering grounds in the southern portions of the unit. Hunt structures are designed to harvest bull elk through both early and late seasons, and antlerless elk primarily during winter migration.

Special Considerations: The Woolhouse Habitat Area, located south of Hwy 60, is closed to all motor vehicles. Contact the USFS Lakeside Ranger District office for more information. Access to the Woolhouse Habitat Area is limited to foot and horseback only, including the retrieval of game. Large herds may be located here during late hunts. To avoid exceeding the bag limit by mistake, hunters should not shoot into a herd. Severe weather can occur during late hunts, and hunters should be prepared for heavy snow and freezing temperatures. It is recommended that hunters wear hunter orange, especially while retrieving and packing game. Hunters are required to know their location and should seek permission prior to hunting on or across private property. Hunters are reminded that it is unlawful to shoot within a 1/4 mile of an occupied building or residence without permission.

Areas: Pre-season scouting is strongly suggested prior to all hunts. Early season hunters will be able to locate elk by listening for bugling bulls. Elk during this time will primarily be at higher elevations, south of Hwy 60. November season hunters may also locate elk in small groups on Forest Service lands north and south of Hwy 60. December season hunters will find elk at various elevations, depending on weather.

Depending on snow pack, antlerless elk can range throughout the southern two-thirds of Unit 3B during late



hunts. Deep snow at higher elevations prompts wintering elk to migrate northward. Large herds of elk can be located from the Timber Mesa area to Vernon, including the Woolhouse Habitat Area.

By doing ample pre-season scouting, early bull hunts can be very successful. Rutting bulls are generally located above 6,500 feet in the timbered southern portion of the unit, where open parks and meadows, in close proximity to escape cover, serve as breeding grounds. However, bulls are also commonly taken in the Woolhouse Habitat Area, the Timber Mesa area, and, to a lesser degree, north of Hwy 60.

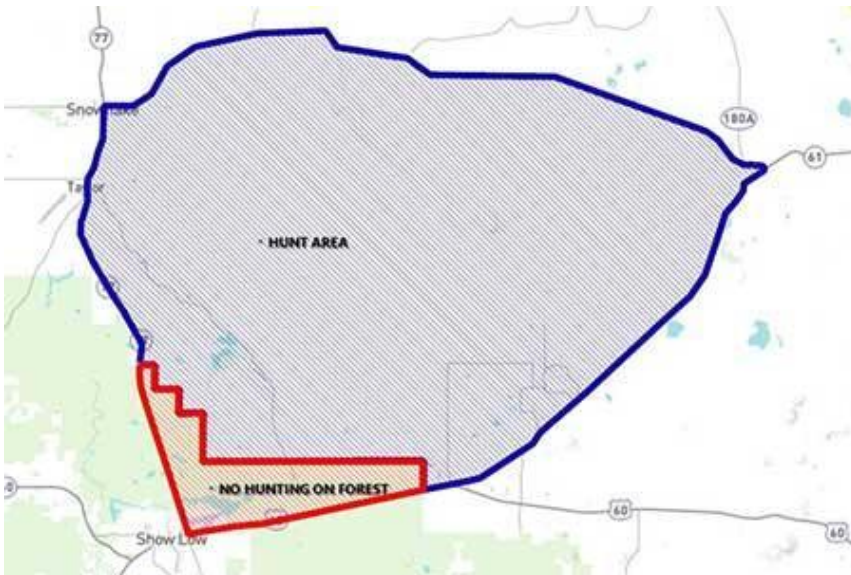
Elk numbers have been slightly increasing over the past few years in areas north of Hwy 60, specifically near Silver Creek and the communities of White Mountain Lake and Taylor. Care should be taken to ensure hunters are outside ¼ mile of structures and should secure permission prior to hunting on private property. Late season bull hunters can have success in 3BN near Flint knoll, Mesa Redonda, and Ortega Mountain. Numbers of elk are fewer but so are hunter numbers.

The late season bull hunt averages 50% hunt success, with nearly one-third of those being spikes. Branch-antlered bulls are common, but unpredictable, and are generally associated with dense vegetation on north slopes. Smaller bulls will be located near antlerless herds. Inclement weather will cause bulls to migrate northward to lower elevations.

Population Management Hunts have been implicated in 3B north of highway 60 throughout the year to address problematic elk from White Mountain Lake to the town of Taylor. The elk mainly stay near the golf course and lake as it provides good feed and water. There is plenty of cover in juniper trees for the elk to bed during the day, which is where most hunters have been successful harvesting in this area. If you choose to hunt this area please be mindful of the “quarter-mile rule” as this country is very adverse with private land and structures.

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Elk – Taylor Hunt Area

The OTC elk Taylor Hunt Area boundaries are as follows: Taylor Hunt Area in Unit 3B – that portion of Unit 3B that lies north of State Route 60 and north of the National Forest Service boundary. See map below.



Season Dates for Taylor Hunt Area:

Mar. 1 – Mar. 31, 2023 – Any elk

Apr. 1 – Jul. 31, 2023 – Bull elk

Method of Take for Taylor Hunt Area: General. Methods as prescribed in R12-4-318.

Other notes for Taylor Hunt Area: Elk densities are low in this area. These small transient elk herds may feed on private land which consists of irrigated pastures and alfalfa fields. Hunters must respect private landowner rights.

Mountain Lion

Overview: A hunting license and permit-tag are required, and both can be purchased over the counter at any Game and Fish Department office or license dealer.

Lion observations have been reported throughout the unit, but with no consistency. Lion tracks are as rare as lion sightings. Most lions have been taken while hunters were involved in some other type of hunting. Hunters specifically interested in locating lions will have best success with the aid of quality hunting dogs.

Areas: Harvest data and observation reports show no trends for hunt area recommendations. Lions have been taken and or reported on Timber Mesa, Ortega Mtn., Sponseller Mtn., Wolf Mtn., Morgan Mtn., Blue Ridge Mtn. and in the far north portion of Unit 3B on Mesa Redonda.

Hunters are responsible for confirming whether the GMU is still open before going into the field and should



monitor the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest tracking page](#) to ensure the season remains open. When the harvest threshold is reached, the zone closes to additional mountain lion harvest at sundown on the Wednesday immediately following. Click [here](#) for more information on mountain lion regulations, the management zones map and harvest reporting.

Hunters are required to report mountain lion harvest information to the department within 48 hours of taking a mountain lion. In addition, the hunter (or their designee) must present the skull and hide, with attached proof of sex, to a designated department employee for inspection within 10 days of harvest. Visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department [harvest reporting page](#) to complete the mandatory report and schedule a physical checkout. If a hunter freezes the skull or hide before presenting it for inspection, the hunter shall prop the jaw open to allow access to the teeth and ensure that the attached proof of sex is identifiable and accessible. A premolar tooth will be removed during the inspection. Successful hunters are encouraged to contact the nearest Department office by telephone to coordinate inspections.

Merriam's Turkey

Overview: The current turkey hunt structure for Unit 3B includes an archery-only fall season and two limited weapon-shotgun shooting shot spring seasons. For the fall hunt, non-permit tags may be purchased over-the-counter, but during the spring, hunters must be drawn for hunt-permit tags through the spring draw process. Archery-only seasons are limited to bow and arrow-hunting equipment, while spring limited weapon shotgun seasons are limited to shotguns shooting shot, crossbow, and/or bow and arrow equipment. Rifled firearms are not a legal weapon for taking turkeys. Fall hunters can take any turkey, while spring hunters are limited to bearded turkeys only. A bag limit of one (1) turkey per calendar year is enforced.

Areas: In the fall, turkey hunters should hunt predominately-timbered areas in the southern portion of the district. These areas offer cooler temperatures and some prime fall turkey transition areas, which include an oak tree component, available water, and small clearings or open meadows. However, warm to hot weather conditions during August and September will cause few flocks to be located in Unit 3B, since birds will still be holding at even higher and cooler elevations in adjacent Unit 1. Try hunting south of Forest Service road (FR) 45, as few turkeys will be located north of timbered areas and cooler locations. Fall hunters should remember that fall non-permit tags are valid in multiple units, and hunters should check regulations for open areas to increase their hunting location opportunities and chances for success.

Spring turkey hunters will find birds on almost all mountains south and east of FR 45. Lake Mountain has the highest number of birds, but also the highest number of hunters. Locating over-mature ponderosa pine roost sites by calling in the evening will greatly increase hunter success the following morning. Turkeys are more vulnerable during spring and are known to respond to 'shock' gobbles from a wide variety of marketed locator-type calls, including owl hoots and gobbles. Hunters should locate, call, and hunt open areas within 100-150 yards of a roost in the very early morning hours of dawn. Hunting or attempting to stalk to the roost itself generally proves unsuccessful, and is considered unethical by many spring turkey hunters. Morning hunts



generally prove most successful, but are usually over by 6:00 a.m. if birds have not been located. A variety of turkey calls are available, but practice is more important than the call itself.

The Unit 3B spring turkey hunt will be a challenge, even for the most avid spring turkey hunter. Several days of scouting will be necessary to properly locate birds and develop hunting strategies. Peak gobbling activity is weather dependent, and can vary annually by as much as three weeks. This means that scouting and hunting may be necessary throughout the entire hunt. This annual variation in peak gobbling, combined with early morning alarm clocks for hunters, will prove to be nothing less than a challenge. However, it is this challenge that makes hunting this very noble and elusive wild animal a worthwhile adventure, and it is what drives avid spring turkey hunters, not the actual harvest.

Tree Squirrel

Overview: Tree squirrel populations, specifically Abert's, have good population numbers in Unit 3B, south of Forest Service road (FR) 45. Abert's squirrels may be located in ponderosa pine stands with interlocking crowns, and favor those areas that also support an understory of Gambel oak. This type of habitat provides the squirrels with escape cover, nesting areas, and foraging opportunities, and will give hunters a good place to locate Abert's.

Squirrels are active throughout the day, although the best hunting seems to be from first light to mid-morning. Stormy and/or windy weather provides less favorable hunting since squirrels are less active. Still-hunting is a preferred hunting method, where the hunter walks slowly, stopping and sitting often while the forest "quiets down." Scanning trees and the forest floor while still-hunting will provide quality time for both hunting and enjoying the day with a hunting partner, whether young or experienced.

An annual small game camp for youth is held in Unit 1, north of Greens peak off FR 117. This event is typically held during the first weekend of the squirrel season in October and includes tips for hunting small game, demonstrations and various outdoor activities. Check the Department Web site for more information regarding this annual event.

Forest Service maps for the area may be obtained at any Apache-Sitgreaves Ranger District office. For more information, contact their office at (928) 368-2100.

Areas: From Vernon to Lakeside, all timbered areas as described south of FR 45.

Waterfowl

Overview: Waterfowl hunting in Unit 3B is limited, but quality hunting opportunities do exist. Sportsmen will find that hunt quality and the quantity of birds are weather-related, and affected by both local weather conditions and weather fronts throughout the northern states of the flyway. A good rule-of-thumb is calm and clear days early in the season are less productive than breezy and overcast days late in the season.



The best technique for obtaining a bag limit is to hunt over decoys with a good dog, but some good areas, such as Silver Creek, do exist for jump-shooting opportunities. Hunters should practice their duck calling skills prior to the season since decoy spreads are greatly enhanced by skilled duck-callers. Nothing is worse than hunting next to a bad duck caller – and there should be no such thing with a little practice. Educational tapes are available and are very helpful to “tune your ear.” Chest-waders are recommended at all locations throughout the unit, and will allow hunters to reach the prime islands and hunting spots. Camouflage, including face netting, is strongly recommended.

Duck species commonly taken include mallard, gadwall, widgeon, teal, northern shoveler, canvasback, pintail, redhead, ringneck, and bufflehead. Plenty of opportunity also exists for harvesting coots.

Goose hunting opportunities are not predictable. An occasional goose is harvested, but generally by a lucky duck hunter.

Most recommended locations have perimeter areas where chest-waders are not necessary to hunt, but hunters without retrieving dogs must consider their ability, or inability, to retrieve game birds after they are downed. It is unlawful to waste game birds by failing to retrieve them.

The most common violations by hunters include: take after hours (legal shooting hours are: 1/2 hour before sunset UNTIL sunset), exceeding a species’ specific bag limit, using lead shot, unplugged shotguns, and littering while hunting by failing to pick up used shot shells. These violations can be avoided by such things as studying waterfowl identification booklets, available through Department offices, and positively identifying ducks prior to pulling the trigger. Purchase steel shot prior to the season and remove all lead shot from your gear. Check yourself to make sure your shotgun is capable of holding no more than three (3) shot shells, and pick up all litter while hunting, including shot shells. Remember that your hunting license can be revoked for littering while hunting.

Most areas in the unit improve later in the season as higher elevation lakes freeze and inclement weather patterns in northern states cause migrant birds to arrive.

Areas: Jacques Marsh, Allen Severson Memorial Wildlife Area, Silver Creek, Sponseller Lake and Little Mormon Lake.

Game Management Unit Summary



Primary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)

Elk	September/November/December
Pronghorn	August/September
Turkey	August/September, April/May

Secondary Game Species/Hunting Month(s)

Black Bear	August (until sow quota fills)/October
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Average # Permits in Past 5 Years

Elk	300
Pronghorn	240
Turkey	250 archery over-the-counter (OTC)
Black Bear	Sow quota

Climate Information

Month	Avg. Temp	Avg. Rainfall	Avg. Snowfall
April	Max 62°/Min 27°	0.80"	1.8"
May	Max 70°/Min 37°	0.86"	0.2"
August	Max 79°/Min 52°	3.97"	0.0"
September	Max 75°/Min 45°	2.45"	0.0"
October	Max 66°/Min 35°	1.72"	1.6"
November	Max 54°/Min 26°	1.76"	2.8"
December	Max 47°/Min 21°	1.95"	9.1"

Other Climate Information



Always check weather conditions during fall hunts. Early snowfall may lead to road closures. Be prepared for winter weather. During late hunts, animals tend to stay at lower elevations, i.e., juniper grassland.

Cities, Roads & Campgrounds

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

Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside, Snowflake-Taylor

Major Highways and Roads Leading To

From the East: U.S. 60, State Hwy 61

From the West: Interstate State Hwy 277, 260

From the North: State Hwy 77, 61, 180

From the South: U.S. 60, State Hwy 7

Developed Campgrounds

Downtown Lakeside; Scott's Reservoir, north of Lakeside; Los Burros, northeast of McNary near Lake Mountain; Fool Hollow State Park, north of Show Low

Undeveloped Campgrounds

Camping is allowed on Forest Service administered lands throughout the unit (except closed Habitat Areas).

Brief Description of Terrain, Elevation and Vegetation

Elevation ranges from 5,000' to 7,500'; vegetation from ponderosa pine forest in the south to juniper grassland in the north.

Government Agencies and Phone Numbers

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region I – [928-367-4281](tel:928-367-4281)

Arizona State Land Department – [928-367-0313](tel:928-367-0313)

Apache-Sitgreaves Natl Forest, Lakeside Ranger District – [928-368-2100](tel:928-368-2100)