



Hunting in the San Juan Islands Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife August 2024

Hunting Background

- Hunting is a vital way of life for many people in Washington, plays a critical role in wildlife management and conservation efforts.
- Hunting is an important wildlife population management mechanism that provides valuable data used to monitor game population health and helps maintain optimum population levels for the benefit of the hunted species (disease management, nutrition/starvation, etc.) as well as other sensitive species and habitats. Hunting also provides local and ethically sourced food for people while generating funding for natural resource conservation. State and Tribal hunting seasons throughout the San Juan Islands are established for a variety of wildlife including deer, game birds (waterfowl, quail, etc.), and small game (rabbit, raccoon, muskrat, etc.). This document will discuss Washington state regulated hunting.
- State laws:
 - Hunters must have valid hunting licenses, tags and endorsements.
 - Hunter education training is required for obtaining a hunting license and promotes positive hunting knowledge, skills, ethics, and most importantly safety.
 - Hunting on private lands in San Juan County requires the hunter to obtain and carry written permission from the landowner per San Juan County Code 9.08.
 - Firearms restrictions in San Juan County do not allow modern rifles. The only weapon types allowed for hunting in the county are a specialized class of short-range pistols, shotguns, archery equipment, and muzzleloader rifles. Definitions and more information are available on the [Firearm Restriction Areas page](#) of the hunting regulations, as well as [the Equipment & Hunting Methods page](#).
 - Hunters are required to wear high visibility hunter orange and/or pink in many but not all hunting seasons: WAC (Washington Administrative Code) 220-414-080.
 - Hunting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. WAC 220-413-060
 - Hunters are required to retain the edible portions of harvested game and are not allowed to waste harvested meat: RCW (Revised Code of Washington) 77.15.170.
 - If you notice any violations of these laws, report it to the WDFW Enforcement Program in the Contacts section below.

Seasons

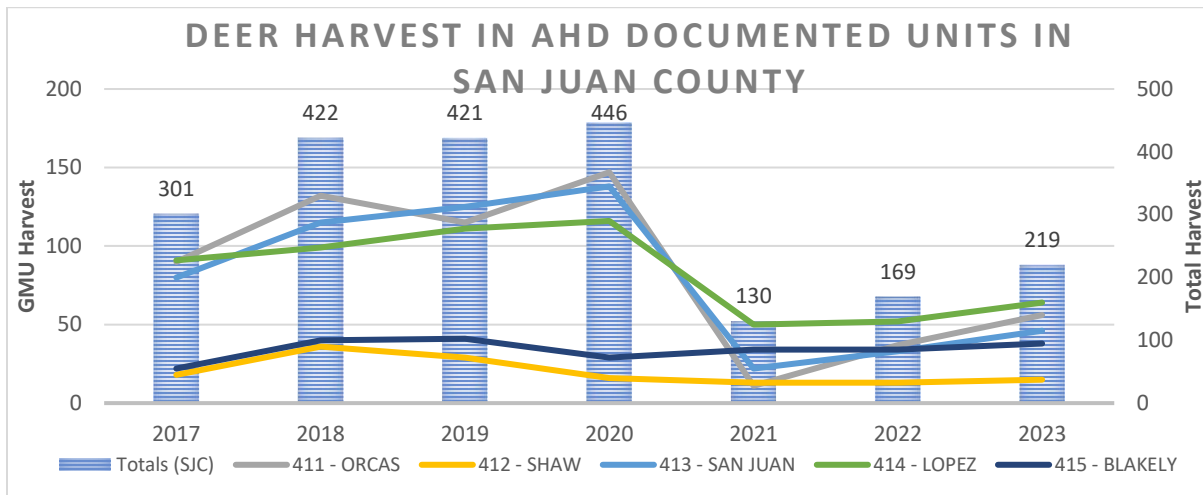
- Seasons vary by species, weapon type and location. **See the respective hunting regulations for specifics.**
 - Deer: Hunting seasons generally occur from September 1st until December 31st. Male and/or female deer may be harvested depending on the season.
 - <https://www.eregulations.com/washington/hunting>
 - Waterfowl: Specific dates between September 2024 and January 2025.
 - https://www.eregulations.com/assets/docs/resources/WA/24WAWF_LR3.pdf
 - Small Game: Generally, between September 2024 and March 2025.
 - https://www.eregulations.com/assets/docs/resources/WA/24WAWF_LR3.pdf

Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*)

- Deer overpopulation has severe consequences to sensitive habitats and species like oak woodland habitats and the critically endangered island marble butterfly (*Euchloe ausonides insulanus*). Deer herbivory of island marble host plants and eggs/larvae is a major mortality factor impeding recovery of this butterfly and negatively impacts other Species of Greatest Conservation Need.



- Improving public deer hunting access benefits wildlife conservation. Find more information on the WDFW hunting access on private lands website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/private-lands>
- In 2021, an outbreak of a viral infection causing adenovirus hemorrhagic disease (AHD) was documented in deer throughout the San Juan Islands. The disease killed hundreds of deer and spread quickly through the dense island populations. Harvest data suggests deer populations are recovering quickly, especially on Orcas, San Juan and Lopez islands.



- More details on game harvest statistics can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest>.
- A variety of options exist for addressing deer damage on private land. Utilize strategies listed on the following link to prevent conflicts with deer and contact your local WDFW Conflict Specialist for more information on additional conflict reduction measures. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/nuisance-wildlife/deer>

Resources

- North Puget Sound – Region 4, District 13 Hunting Prospects: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects>
- WDFW Game Status and Trends Report; Islands Deer Management Zone (Pg 61): <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02474/wdfw02474.pdf>
- WDFW Hunt Washington blog: a guide to getting started: <https://wdfw.medium.com/hunt-washington-a-guide-to-getting-started-7bcd8d93d0f3>
- Lambert, A.M. 2011. Natural history and population ecology of a rare pierid butterfly, *Euchloe ausonides insulanus* Guppy and Shepard (Pieridae). Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Washington, 199 pp. <https://npshistory.com/publications/sajh/lambert-2011.pdf>
- Long ES, Tham EJ, Ferrer RP (2024) Succession and climatic stochasticity induce long-term decline of a forest browser. PLoS ONE 19(2): e0298231. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298231>

Contacts

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- WDFW Law Enforcement, 877-933-9847; reportpoaching@dfw.wa.gov