

ELK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Why does the Game Commission radio-collar elk?

Research and data collection are a fundamental part of elk management in Pennsylvania. Radio collars are specifically used to estimate three things: age specific survival, habitat use and population.

How many elk do we have in Pennsylvania?

As of January 2017, there are about 1,000 elk in Pennsylvania.

How long do elk live?

This varies with geography. In Pennsylvania wild cow elk live and average of 10 years, while bulls live an average of 8 years. The oldest known cow in Pennsylvania was 32, and the oldest bull was 15. Captive elk live longer than wild elk.

Do elk have any natural predators in Pennsylvania?

Yes, bears and coyotes will prey on elk calves, but cow elk have a strong maternal instinct to protect their calves and predation accounts for less than 1 percent of elk calf mortality. People are the only predator of adult elk in Pennsylvania.

Do elk compete with deer for food?

To some degree, nearly all Pennsylvania wildlife compete for resources. Elk are primarily grazers while deer are primarily browsers, however, elk will seasonally shift to a browse-based diet, particular in winter. Nevertheless, the Game Commission puts a tremendous amount of time and effort into improving elk habitat, which inevitably benefits deer and other wildlife.

When is the peak of the elk rut?

The elk rut is triggered by photoperiod (day length) and generally begins around the middle of September and carries through the early- to mid-October. If a cow is not bred in her first estrus cycle, she'll re-cycle approximately every 21 days providing up to three additional opportunities for conception.

What's the best time to view or hunt elk?

Elk are crepuscular, moving more during dawn and dusk. So whether you're trying to view or hunt elk, you'll have more success if you go early in the morning or late afternoon/evening. The most popular time of year to observe elk is during the rut because they are very active.

When are elk calves born?

Cow elk usually begin calving the last week of May through the first two weeks of June, with the peak around June 5th. Every year one or two newborn calves are seen later in the summer (July or August) and these animals are from cows that were bred after the peak of the rut (September).

What is the average weight of a calf?

At birth calves generally weigh between 33 and 45 pounds, with males being heavier than females. A calf's birth weight is correlated to the health of its mother, which is dependent upon the quantity and quality of the available habitat and seasonal variation in weather patterns.

How long do calves keep their spots?

Calves grow very quickly, and by late September they will lose their spots as their summer coats are replaced with winter coats.

Do elk have twins?

Very rarely, twinning is possible but occurs in less than 1 percent of elk births. There is only one record of twins occurring in Pennsylvania and they were still-born.

Are elk canines real ivory?

Yes, many scientists believe that the teeth are remnants of tusks from prehistoric ancestors. They are also called buglers, whistlers and ivories.

When do bull elk shed their antlers?

Most bulls tend to lose their antlers right between March 10 and 25; there are always exceptions. Changes in photoperiod (day length) cause a reduction in testosterone that ultimately causes a bull's antlers to drop off.

If I find an elk shed can I keep it?

Yes, collecting sheds from public lands (except National Parks) or land you own or have permission to be on is legal. However, it is not legal to pick up any parts or bones of an elk you found dead, including skulls and antlers.

Where should I go to look for sheds?

Finding an elk shed is about 90 percent luck. There are a few tips that might improve your chances. First; think about where elk spend time when sheds are dropping. Elk home ranges shift seasonally, so searching for sheds where you've seen elk in the summer is generally a poor strategy. Second; go slow and try to develop an "eye" for sheds. Walk slowly through an area scanning back and forth and look for the white tips of the antler sticking up. Third; put your time in. The people that seem to find sheds every year are usually the ones that spend hours walking around the woods.

Source: <http://www.pgc.pa.gov/Wildlife/WildlifeSpecies/Elk/Pages/default.aspx>