



# BOONE AND CROCKETT ELK

# A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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One of the great events in the history of the United States was the Lewis & Clark expedition from May 1804 until September 1806. The route from St. Louis to the mouth of the Columbia River traversed pristine wilderness with unimaginable numbers of bison, deer, and elk. This remarkable journey is documented in the journals kept by Captain Merriwether Lewis and William Clark and four other members of the Corps of Discovery. The journals provide valuable insight into the abundance and type of wildlife present in the West prior to settlement.

The journals make clear the importance North American elk played in the success of the expedition. The journals record 375 elk kills, along with numerous entries remarking on the abundance of elk. These are the first detailed written "records" of elk hunting in the western United States. During the intervening 200 years, elk and elk hunting have undergone some dramatic changes. From historic lows around 1900 to the rebuilding of the elk population in the 20th century, it is a remarkable tale. The "records" we now keep concerning elk record the successes of wildlife conservation and immortalize bulls with impressive antlers and those fortunate enough to collect them.

This article details the Boone and Crockett Club's entries for records book North American elk. The Boone and Crockett Club recognizes two subspecies of elk, the

## THE TOP FOUR STATES FOR AMERICAN ELK



**STATE** WYOMING  
**HUNTER** Edward R. Kline, Jr.  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 368-4/8 Points



**STATE** MONTANA  
**HUNTER** Brendan V. Burns  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 410-3/8 Points (non-typical)



**STATE** ARIZONA  
**HUNTER** Bennie J. Rossetto  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 379-5/8 Points

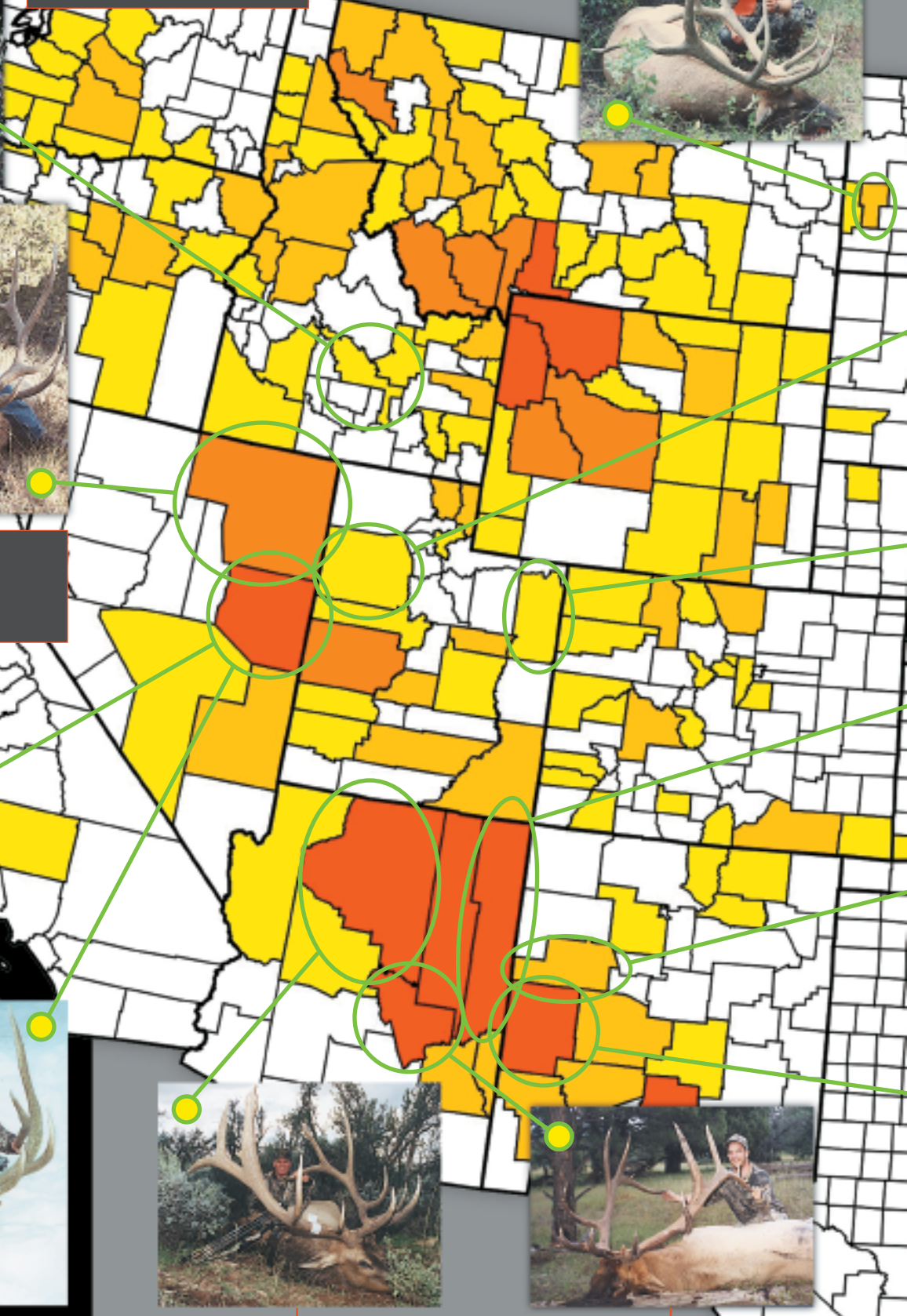


**STATE** NEW MEXICO  
**HUNTER** J.R. Dienst  
**YEAR** 1998  
**SCORE** 382-3/8 Points

- Arizona - 127 entries
- Montana - 108 entries
- Wyoming - 66 entries
- New Mexico - 52 entries

**DISTRIBUTION OF AMERICAN ELK ENTRIES BY COUNTY**

**STATE** IDAHO  
**HUNTER** Howard W. Holmes  
**LOCATION** Blaine County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 380 Points (typical)



**STATE** NEVADA  
**HUNTER** Michael K. Ryle  
**LOCATION** Elko County  
**YEAR** 1995  
**SCORE** 360 Points (typical)

**STATE** NEVADA  
**HUNTER** Thomas M. Brunson  
**LOCATION** White Pine County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 388 Points (typical)



**STATE** NEVADA  
**HUNTER** Stephanie C. Hull  
**LOCATION** White Pine County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 399-6/8 Points (non-typical)



**STATE** ARIZONA  
**HUNTER** Randall S. Ulmer  
**LOCATION** Coconino County  
**YEAR** 1997  
**SCORE** 375-6/8 Points (typical)



**STATE** ARIZONA  
**HUNTER** Gilbert T. Adams III  
**LOCATION** Gila County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 369-2/8 Points (typical)

**STATE** NORTH DAKOTA  
**HUNTER** Monte Hoggarth  
**LOCATION** Billings County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 375-5/8 Points (typical)



**STATE** UTAH  
**HUNTER** James A. Cook  
**LOCATION** Tooele County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 391-5/8 Points (typical)

**STATE** UTAH  
**HUNTER** Steven F. Thompson  
**LOCATION** Uintah County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 365-4/8 Points (typical)



**STATE** NEW MEXICO  
**HUNTER** Archie J. Nesbitt  
**LOCATION** Cibola County  
**YEAR** 1997  
**SCORE** 375 Points (typical)

**STATE** ARIZONA  
**HUNTER** James P. Brooks  
**LOCATION** Apache County  
**YEAR** 1997  
**SCORE** 412-6/8 Points (non-typical)



0 entries  
 1-2 entries  
 3-10 entries  
 11-30 entries  
 31+ entries



**STATE** NEW MEXICO  
**HUNTER** Terry K. Miller  
**LOCATION** Catron County  
**YEAR** 1997  
**SCORE** 378-4/8 Points (typical)

### TOP NINE AMERICAN ELK COUNTIES

1. Apache County, Arizona	50 entries
2. Coconino County, Arizona	35 entries
3. Navajo County, Arizona	19 entries
4. White Pine County, Nevada	18 entries
5. Catron County, New Mexico	16 entries
6. Park County, Wyoming	14 entries
7. Otero County, New Mexico	12 entries
7. Park County, Montana	12 entries
7. Teton County, Wyoming	12 entries

tule and Roosevelt's, with the remaining grouped under American elk. Note that this article does not include Canadian entries since county information is not given, making accurate mapping difficult.

### American Elk

*...we Saw three large Elk the first wild ones I ever Saw...*

JOHN ORDWAY, JULY 14, 1804

These first elk the expedition spotted were living in present-day western Missouri, and later on the voyage home the last elk would be killed near present-day Kansas City. These elk were either the Rocky Mountain or Eastern subspecies whose ranges overlapped on the prairie. Most experts believe the Eastern subspecies is extinct, while the Rocky Mountain elk's range has shrunk considerably.

The Rocky Mountain elk is grouped within the American elk category, which lists 659 entries, spanning the years 1850-2001. Ninety-six of these do not include county information, resulting in 536 entries being mapped. The majority of entries (295) were entered since 1990, and come from 155 counties located in 18 different states. There are 439 typical entries, with the World's Record typical scoring 442-5/8 coming from Arizona's White Mountains Country. There are 124 non-typical entries, with the World's Record non-typical being picked up near Upper Arrow Lake, British Columbia, and scoring 465-2/8.

Arizona has the most entries with 127, followed by Montana (108), Wyoming (66), New Mexico (52), Utah and Idaho (41), Colorado (39), Oregon (24), Washington (18), Nevada (14), North Dakota (6), South Dakota and Kansas (2), and Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, and California (1).

The best county is northeastern Arizona's Apache with 50 entries, higher than all but four of the state totals. Apache County also has the highest scoring elk from the United States, scoring 450-6/8. Other clusters of high-ranking counties are found in the greater Yellowstone area, southwestern New Mexico, and eastern Nevada. Of course, some counties rank high due to their sheer physical size, giving them an advantage over



**STATE** OREGON  
**HUNTER** Wesley A. Plummer  
**LOCATION** Coos County  
**YEAR** 2001  
**SCORE** 295-6/8 Points



**TOP FIVE ROOSEVELT'S ELK COUNTIES**

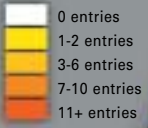
1. Clatsop County, Oregon	35 entries
2. Columbia County, Oregon	25 entries
2. Jefferson County, Washington	25 entries
3. Clallam County, Washington	18 entries
4. Tillamook County, Oregon	17 entries
5. Coos County, Oregon	11 entries

**STATE** WASHINGTON  
**HUNTER** Richard B. Grinols  
**LOCATION** Grays Harbor County  
**YEAR** 1992  
**SCORE** 304-3/8 Points



**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Monte D. Matheson  
**LOCATION** Del Norte County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 340-7/8 Points

**DISTRIBUTION OF ROOSEVELT'S ELK ENTRIES BY COUNTY**



**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Robert H. Gaynor  
**LOCATION** Del Norte County  
**YEAR** 2000  
**SCORE** 372-1/8 Points



counties with less area.  
**Roosevelt's Elk**

*"At this place we have wintered and remained and have lived as well as we had any right to expect, and we can say that we have never been without three meals of some kind a day, either poor (lean) elk meat or roots."*

WILLIAM CLARK, MARCH 26TH 1806



**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Paul H. Kunzler  
**LOCATION** Del Norte County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 300-1/8 Points



**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Patrick J. Papasergia  
**LOCATION** Del Norte County  
**YEAR** 1996  
**SCORE** 327 Points

Another member of the expedition, Sergeant Patrick Gass, recorded that 131 elk were killed during the winter of 1805-06, which was spent at Fort Clatsop near the mouth of the Columbia River in present day Oregon. These Roosevelt's elk are the largest bodied of all the elk subspecies, providing the expedition with a plentiful supply of meat, clothing, fat for candles, and brains for tanning leather.

During that time the Roosevelt's elk's range extended along the coast south

to San Francisco and north to Vancouver Island and inland to the Cascade Range. Although never in danger of extinction, its population and range was reduced significantly during the California gold rush and subsequent settlement. In 1898 the American biologist C. Hart Merriam first described the elk and identified it as a subspecies, naming it in honor of Theodore Roosevelt, the accomplished amateur naturalist, ardent conservationist, and founder of the then 11-year-old Boone and Crockett Club.

The Roosevelt's elk is darker in color than the American elk with more massive antlers, although with less spread. Its antlers also have the tendency to be webbed or crowned toward the ends, similar to the tule elk. The minimum score for awards listing is 275 and for all-time listing its 290. The World's Record Roosevelt's elk was shot in 1997 in British Columbia and scored 396-5/8.

The records book contains 209 entries from 24 counties in three states. Only four entries are not included on the map, with one of these being shot in 1958 on Raspberry Island in Alaska, representing the successful transplant of eight calves captured on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State in 1928. The majority of the entries come from Oregon (121) followed by Washington (62), and California (26). Oregon contains 7 of the top 10 counties with Clatsop County being the best with 35 entries.

### Tule Elk

The expedition never encountered a tule elk but its future was closely tied to the settlement that followed the expedition. In 1805-06 hundreds of thousands of tule elk roamed the Central Valley of California. This vast herd, numbering perhaps 500,000, combined with countless numbers of wildlife species, is often referred to as the American Serengeti. This herd dwindled nearly to extinction in the next 75 years due to the demand for meat during the gold rush, cattle ranching, and habitat alteration by settlers. Opinions vary, but most agree the tule elk's lowest population was less than one hundred individual animals. A cattleman named Henry Miller became interested in saving the remaining elk and in 1874 established a refuge on his property. His small herd prospered and became the source herd for reintroducing tule elk into other areas, eventually resulting in a current population of approximately 4,000.



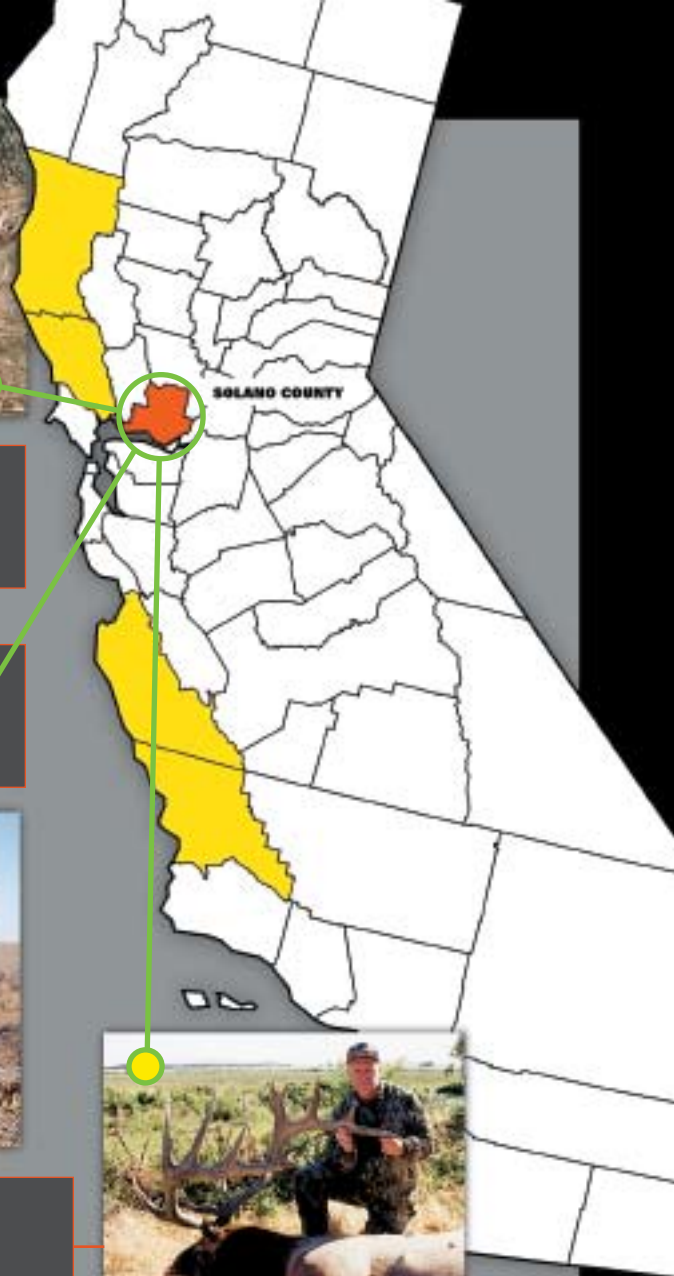
**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Alvin M. Wallen  
**LOCATION** Solano County  
**YEAR** 1990  
**SCORE** 341-4/8 Points

**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** David G. Paullin  
**LOCATION** Solano County  
**YEAR** 1994  
**SCORE** 315-4/8 Points



**STATE** CALIFORNIA  
**HUNTER** Tod L. Reichert  
**LOCATION** Solano County  
**YEAR** 1999  
**SCORE** 330-1/8 Points

### DISTRIBUTION OF TULE ELK ENTRIES BY COUNTY



Tule elk eventually reached the point where hunting seasons could be offered. Permits are now available through a limited draw system, with the California Department of Fish and Game offering 125 tags to California residents during the 2002 hunting season. Tule elk hunts are also available to non-residents on private lands that maintain herds.

Tule elk have been recognized by the Boone and Crockett Club's Awards program since 1999 and are scored the same as Roosevelt's elk. The records book contains 16 tule elk that have met the minimum score of 270 for awards listing and 285 for all-time listing. The oldest is from 1851, with the remaining 15 entered since 1990. Entries come from five California counties; Solano (11), San Luis

Obispo (2), Mendocino (1) Monterey (1), and Sonoma (1). The World's Record tule elk was shot in Solano County in 1990 and scores 351 points.

If you are an elk hunter, hopefully you are reading this article with fresh venison in the freezer that will be enjoyed during the upcoming holidays. Two hundred years ago the Corps of Discovery was huddled in the wet, cramped, confines of Fort Clatsop. William Clark entered the following in his journal on December 25th, 1805:

*"we would have Spent this day the nativity of Christ in feasting, had we any thing either to raise our Sperits or even gratify our appetites, our Diner consisted of pore Elk, so much Spoiled that we eate it thro' mear necessity, Some Spoiled pounded fish and a few roots."* ■