

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

LAW ENFORCEMENT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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CONSERVATION OFFICERS

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LOGAN HAMMER | Estelline

JASON HAMIL | Pierre

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JACKSON KNIGHT | Watertown

DIANA LANDEGENT | Chamberlain

SETH LORTON | Hot Springs

KYLE LENZNER | Watertown

TRAVIS MARCH | Chamberlain

CALVIN MEYER | Webster

EDGAR MEZA | Lemmon

AUSTIN NORTON | Webster

ALEX OSBORNE | Salem

RYAN PEARSON | Sturgis

SHANE PEDERSEN | Redfield

DEREK PELTON | Wall

DYLAN PETERSON | Ft. Pierre

TANNER PIETZ | Vermillion

CHRISTOPHER SCHIERA | Lake Preston

D.J. SCHROEDER | Hot Springs

JACOB SCHWINT | Belle Fourche

ANNA SELLS | Sisseton

ANDREW STARK | Flandreau

TONY STOKELY | Elk Point

BLAKE SWANSON | Milbank

CODY SYMENS | Madison

JOSH THOMPSON | Spearfish

ZACH THOMSEN | Clark

RON TIETSORT | Custer

DYLAN URBAN | Mitchell

ERIC VOIGT | Ipswich

WYATT WEBER | Presho

LAW ENFORCEMENT

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2024 LAW ENFORCEMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

I am pleased to present the 2024 Law Enforcement Annual Report. Within this report are numbers, updates, reviews, reports, and more. It is easy to focus on the number of contacts that conservation officers make every year; 55,000, or the number of programs delivered to schools and civic organizations; 375, or the number of times our officers assisted landowners during the last year; 500. These are all great, but, when I look at this report I think about the men and women that put the uniform on day after day to serve and protect. I think about the conservation officers who came before us and worked hard to make sure the traditions we hold dear in South Dakota were protected, which is why we always make sure to honor those men and women in our memorandum section. I think of the millions of people who visit our state park and recreation areas or hunt and fish in South Dakota, and it can seem like a daunting task to make sure they are all safe and that the fish and wildlife they pursue are protected. Our conservation officers are up to the task though. They will continue to work hard each and every day protecting the resources that we love.

Sam Schelhaas

LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION CHIEF



NEW CONSERVATION OFFICERS



DYLAN URBAN joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in February 2024. Dylan grew up in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He graduated from the University of Minnesota-Morris where he studied environmental studies of natural resources. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Dylan worked as a Park Ranger for the Utah DNR. After completing the training program, Dylan was assigned the Mitchell duty station.



ANDREW STARK joined the Conservation Officer Training Program in February 2024. Andrew grew up in Egan, Minnesota. He graduated from the University of South Dakota where he studied Criminal Justice. Prior to becoming a Conservation Officer, Andrew delivered packages for amazon and was an intern for GFP. After completing the training program, Andrew was assigned the Flandreau duty station.

MULTI REGIONAL GROSS PHEASANT OVERBAG

Conservation Officers from Region 1, Region 2, and Region 4, utilize surveillance footage in conjunction with Call Detail Records to make a large overlimit case in north central South Dakota.

In October 2021, Conservation Officers in Region 2 were made aware of an anonymous group of upland bird hunters from Watertown that frequently hunted near Eagle Butte, South Dakota. Information provided to Conservation Officers indicated that the group of hunters had little-to-no respect for daily harvest limits on pheasants and the group would frequently kill as many pheasants as possible in a three-day hunting trip to the Eagle Butte area. Further, Conservation Officers were informed that the group was fully aware that what they were doing was unlawful, and the group would go to great lengths to hide their unlawful harvest from local Conservation Officers.

After the initial information was received Conservation Officers from Region 1 and 2 were able to identify a suspect group of hunters pheasant hunting in Eagle Butte in the late fall of 2021. The officers made plans to attempt to catch the group in the fall of 2022.

In early October 2022, Officers from Region 2 completed a field check on the suspect group, positively identifying multiple members. The group did not have an overlimit of pheasants in their possession at the time of the check, but Officers were suspect of the actions of the group during the check and noted that some statements made by members of the group were out of the ordinary.

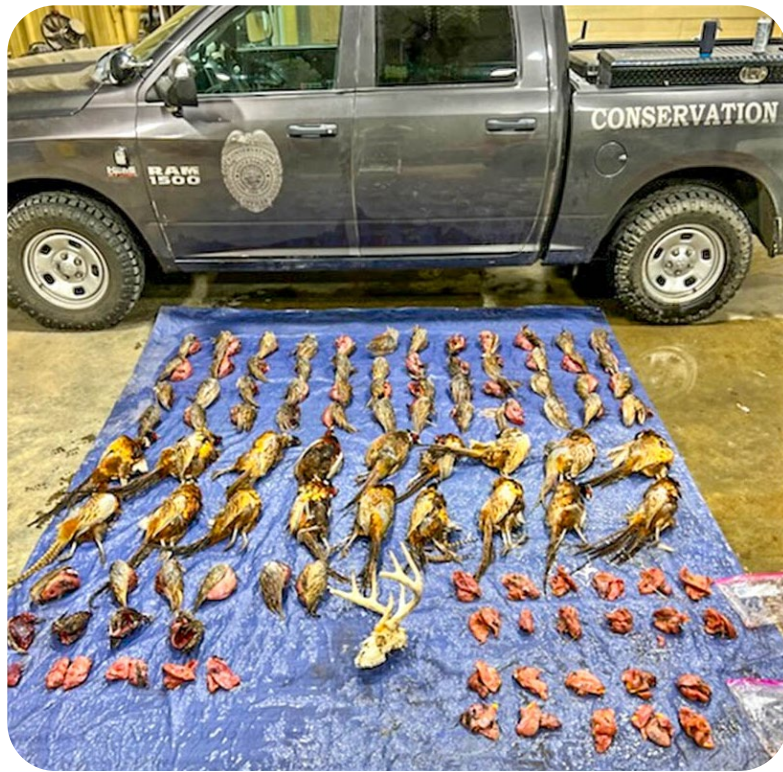
Information about the field check and the location of the check was shared amongst Officers from Regions 1 and 2, and Officers began to piece together a history. Specifically, in the previous year, Officers had documented finding multiple “breasted out” or unlawfully cleaned pheasant carcasses in remote areas where the group had been observed.

Conservation Officers continued to monitor the group in 2022 and determined that the group would be returning to hunt the area the weekend of November 4-6, 2022. Plans were put in place to discreetly surveil the group during that timeframe, as Officers were aware that the group was known to take extreme measures to cover up their actions.

Officers surveilling the group noted that a group of six hunters in three vehicles showed up to the Eagle Butte area on November 4, 2022. The group was discreetly observed hunting on November 4, 2022, and Officers noted that the hunting party appeared to be visiting an abandoned farm site multiple times throughout the day, and the group was observed around the abandoned farm site well after dark as well.

On November 5, 2022, Officers again observed the group make multiple stops at the abandoned farm site throughout the day, and Officers were able to watch members of the group unloading pheasants from the back of a vehicle at the site.

Late on November 5, 2022, Officers entered the abandoned farm site and immediately encountered breasted out pheasant carcasses in addition to a large pile of pheasant wings. Officers also located Ziplock bags of pheasant breast meat in addition to a cooler full to the top with 48 legally cleaned pheasants. At that time, Officers determined that 59 pheasants had been placed at the abandoned farm



site by the six hunters. Officers noted that the group was well over their two-day limit in addition to having the potential to violate game bird transportation laws if they were to transport the birds.

On November 6, 2022, the group of hunters once again returned to the same area to continue hunting. As Officers were making plans to intercept the group in the Eagle Butte area, plans immediately changed when Officers watched as the group quickly returned to the abandoned farm site and loaded up the previously observed cooler and begin heading east.

Officers attempted surveil the three-vehicle convoy east along US 212 while Officers in Region 4 worked to find a suitable location to intercept the convoy with enough manpower to effectively deal with the large group. Officers still at the abandoned farm site noted that one of the Ziplock bags containing pheasant breast meat from 11 pheasants was left behind to rot.

Ultimately, Officers from Region 4 set in place plans to intercept the group on the east side of the town of Faulkton. However, as the convoy approached the edge of Faulkton, Officers in Region 2 noted that the three-vehicle convoy started to break up, with the last vehicle making multiple random stops along the highway and travelling at a slow rate of speed. Officers

on the east side of Faulkton waited for the two lead vehicles to appear on the highway, but they did not show up. Officers realized that the group likely was aware they were being followed and immediate action was needed. Officers elected to perform a traffic stop on the third vehicle still west of Faulkton. Shortly after the traffic stop was initiated on the third vehicle, Officers waiting east of Faulkton observed one of the vehicles leaving a gas station in Faulkton and heading east out of town, and a traffic stop was initiated. The other missing vehicle was observed driving south of Faulkton, and a traffic stop was initiated on that vehicle as well.

After all vehicles were stopped and information gathered, Officers determined the last vehicle in the convoy that was stopped west of Faulkton was likely the “decoy” vehicle. Officers noted that the vehicle was carrying the cooler with the 48 legally cleaned pheasants in addition to 18 fresh, uncleaned pheasants for a total of 66 pheasants. All members of the six-person party now claimed that the group had actually hunted for four days instead of three, with multiple members of the party stating the group shot a quick six-man limit of pheasants at sunset on a farm near Zell, South Dakota, on their drive to Eagle Butte on November 3. By the group claiming to have hunted an extra day on the trip this would have allowed for the party to have up 72 pheasants.

Officers then returned to the gas station where the vehicles were briefly observed in Faulkton. Upon inspection, Officers found a similar Ziplock bag to the one left behind at the abandoned farm site in the dumpster of the gas station parking lot containing the meat of ten additional pheasants.

Officers then began searching the area where the vehicle south of Faulkton was observed prior to the traffic stop. In the ditch in that area, Officers found the remnants of another similar Ziplock bag and the meat from an additional 12 pheasants scattered in the tall grass along the road.

With the additional pheasants found, this brought the total pheasants associated with the group of six hunters to 99 Pheasants. However, members of the group stuck to their story and claimed to have hunted for four days



instead of three. Additionally, the subjects claimed to know nothing about the pheasants left behind at the abandoned farm site or the other pheasants found in the dumpster and south of Faulkton in the road ditch.

In order to bolster their case against the group, Officers in Region 2 and Region 4 turned to private surveillance footage. Officers worked quickly to secure footage from multiple business along US Highway 212 on November 3, 2022. With that footage, Officers were able to completely disprove the group's story of killing a quick limit of pheasants near Zell, SD, at sunset. Officers also utilized call detail records to determine that one member of the hunting party did not even leave Brookings, SD, until the early morning hours of November 4.

Additionally, Officers were able to secure video surveillance footage from the gas station in Faulkton where the pheasants were found in the dumpster. That footage clearly showed members of the party running out of the gas station at the time of the first traffic stop while one individual was actively talking on his cell phone. Also clearly visible was a member of the party placing the Ziplock bag of pheasants in the dumpster. Surveillance footage also showed the member of the party found south of Faulkton opening the hood of his pickup and pulling two Ziplock bags of pheasants out of the engine compartment of his vehicle.

Officers put together a strong case linking the group of five men from Watertown and one man from Brookings to 99 pheasants over a three-day period, or 45 pheasants over their legal limit. After a lengthy court process the six defendants all plead guilty to three violations of South Dakota Codified Law 41-14-32 Unlawful Possession of Fish and Game. The group was fined criminally \$4,800 in addition to a \$4,500 in civil penalty. Each member of the hunting party was sentenced to six months of probation and ten days in jail (suspended) in addition to a one-year hunting revocation.

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE PARKS

South Dakota is home to some of the best state parks and recreation areas in the nation. Over the course of 2024, almost eight million visitors stopped to hike, camp, fish, swim, or enjoy the beauty that our park and recreation areas have to offer. With over 60 state parks, recreation areas, and nature areas across the state, there is something for everyone.

Conservation officers work daily to ensure that those visiting our park and recreation areas have a safe and enjoyable experience. This is not always an easy task, and it isn't done alone. Our conservation officers work closely with park managers to ensure issues are addressed, there is a presence during peak times, and park visitors can enjoy the wide array of recreation opportunities in these areas. It doesn't stop there though. Many seasonal employees and volunteers work closely with conservation officers to accomplish this goal.

There are eight to ten seasonal law enforcement park rangers hired annually to assist in the enforcement efforts in some of our busiest park and recreation areas. These seasonal park rangers are certified officers who have past law enforcement experience or are currently employed by another law enforcement agency in the area. There are also specialized patrols that take place in certain areas of the state.

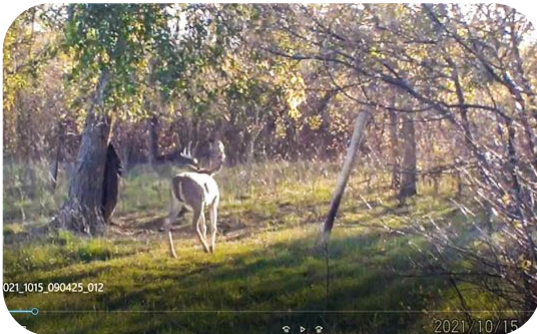
We have increased efforts at Angostura Reservoir's Breakers Beach to try and address issues with alcohol and drug use. We continue to provide an increased level of patrols in Custer State Park which sees more visitors annually than any other park. Custer State Park sees a dramatic increase in visitors during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally along with hosting the annual Governors Buffalo Round up which draws over 50,000 visitors.

We also have a team dedicated to patrolling the world-class snowmobile trails in the Black Hills. These men and women work in extreme conditions daily regulating the laws associated with snowmobiles, responding to accidents and search and rescue, and working with the groomers and trail maintenance crews. Our state park and recreation areas are truly amazing, and the South Dakota conservation officers will continue to work hard to protect them and their visitors.



CASE FEATURE

REPEAT OFFENDERS



In October 2021, Conservation Officer Krekelberg received information about baiting deer for hunting purposes on a property in Sully County. The landowner had been cited several years earlier for baiting and was still on probation from the prior offense. Krekelberg conducted surveillance, both through cameras and in person, documenting bait sites and people using this property.

Through this surveillance Krekelberg identified other suspects using the property and trying to kill deer with the aid of bait. Once enough information was gathered, he was granted a search warrant for the property and a cell phone for the first day of East River rifle deer season.

On November 20, 2021, a search warrant team was assembled and served the warrants. At the time, the person who was already on probation for baiting several years earlier and his adult son were on the property, and the adult son was actively hunting deer over bait. The warrant team seized several items from the site, including multiple guns, suppressor, crossbows, several types of bait, and electronics.

Krekelberg processed and viewed evidence from phones and cameras that were seized and discovered another site that the violators had been hunting approximately 25 miles away in another county. That site was also baited. Through his diligent investigative work, Krekelberg was able to locate this spot near the Bad River in Stanley County by comparing pictures and terrain and ultimately finding one tree.

At this point in the investigation, Krekelberg wrote and secured another set of warrants for the suspect's father house in Fort Pierre, the suspect's home in Pierre, the area of the second hunting blind, the suspect's cell phone, and a storage unit that the suspect used.

A multi-region search warrant team was assembled, and the following items were seized: Multiple crossbows, game cameras, laptop, deer meat, and one permanent hunting blind mounted on a trailer along with other related evidence.

Through the search warrants and subsequent forensics examination of cell phones, tablets, and an external hard drive, Krekelberg discovered an additional deer had been

killed by a person from North Dakota who, he discovered, was also obtaining licenses fraudulently as a resident. Krekelberg then worked with a North Dakota Game and Fish officer on the fraud license issue.

Thanks to the excellent work by Officer Krekelberg, the violators were brought to justice. He could have easily issued a class 2 violation for hunting over bait. Instead, he put the time and effort to really curtail the poaching of deer from this group. Krekelberg spent many hours reviewing surveillance footage, writing multiple search warrants for electronics, homes, and properties and even conducted a fraud investigation on top of the baiting issue and was successful in the prosecution. One defendant paid \$3,528.00 in restitution to GFP for the difference in prices of licenses he obtained while fraudulently claiming to be a resident of South Dakota. Officer Krekelberg showed great tenacity with this case, which started in October of 2021, and he pursued it through to the final adjudication of the last defendant on March 25, 2024—two-and-a-half years.



RESIDENT SUBJECT #1

Big Game Closed Season - Guilty

- » \$1,096.50 fine
- » 200 days jail - 200 suspended
- » 1 year probation

Big Game Unlawful Possession-Guilty

- » \$1,096.50 fine
- » 205 days jail, 200 suspended, 5 days in jail served

FORFEITURES: Hunting blind, Deer Cape, Antlers, deer parts

- » No bait stations anytime for 1 year
- » Take a Huntsafe course
- » 3-year hunting revocation
- » \$3,000 in civil damages for trophy deer

RESIDENT SUBJECT #2

Big Game-Use of Salt-Guilty

- » \$578.50 fine
- » 30-day jail, 30 days suspended
- » 1 year probation

Big Game Bait Station-Guilty

- » \$578.50 fine
- » 30-day jail, 30 days suspended
- » 1 year probation
- » Remove all blinds temporary and permanent, from property

Probation violation

- » Restarted 7 years of being revoked from hunting again

NONRESIDENT SUBJECT #3

2 Counts of Fraud license-Guilty

- » \$2,193 fine
- » 180 days jail, 180 day suspended
- » 12 months probation

Unlawful possession of big game-Guilty

- » \$1,596.50 fine
- » 200 days jail, 200 suspended
- » Restitution for Fraud license \$3,528.00
- » Forfeit Antlers to GFP
- » 3-year hunting revocation
- » \$1,000 in Civil Damages

TOTALS FOR THE CASE

- » \$14,667.50 in fines, court costs, civil damages, and restitution for licenses not purchased as a nonresident.
- » 845 days suspended jail; 5 days served
- » 13 years in hunting revocation

CASE FEATURE

2024 FLOOD EVENT

In late June of 2024, South Dakota experienced a historic flooding event that affected multiple counties in the southeast corner of the state. Conservation officers jumped into action and took part in a wide variety of search and rescue, agency assistance, and surveillance calls. Conservation officers showed their bravery, leadership, and excellent decision-making skills on each call they answered. The officers' actions during the devastating event were an example of the high standards of service Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) provides to the State of South Dakota.



The severe flooding began in Minnehaha County on Friday, June 21, and the calls for service started during the morning hours. The first calls coming in required assistance for rescuing individuals who were stuck in their campers at Huset's Speedway along the Big Sioux River near Brandon. After the rescues at the racetrack were completed, multiple officers worked the rest of the day with Sioux Falls Fire Rescue's "swift water rescue team" performing rescues around the Sioux Falls Metro area. Officers exemplified their dedication to teamwork working with multiple agencies in the area to achieve the common goal – save the citizens of the state.

Later that night, conservation officers went home after a long day's work but knew the time off would be short-lived. As the rainfall intensified, the flooding drastically increased and spread south. Parts of Lincoln County received over 20 inches of rain within 24 hours! Local conservation officers were called back out after being home for only an hour, as a Lincoln County Deputy had been washed off the road responding to a call and was stranded in high water in her vehicle. Due to strategic planning, boats were already staged in key locations throughout the flooding area, and conservation officers were able to quickly respond and assist where needed.

Immediately after the call to assist the stranded Deputy, officers received another call of a motorist whose vehicle had been swept off the road south of Canton. The individual was hanging on to the top of their floating SUV, being taken by the current toward the violently raging Big Sioux River. Officers headed toward the location but were unable to get to the individual due to washed-out roads. Deep, rising water was flooding into patrol



vehicles while driving, and washed-out roads prevented officers from getting to the location. Conservation officers were able to communicate with local fire departments and other rescue boats to get rescuers in position to rescue the individual on the SUV. Many officers spent most of the night stranded on highways or in the Canton courthouse surrounded by impassable waters.

On Saturday, the flood waters in Lincoln County began to slow as the water pushed south into Union County. Officers worked with the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Managers to check flooded vehicles on roadways and continued to rescue stranded residents from homes and vehicles. Conservation Officers also assisted other law enforcement agencies with a fatal accident as a result of the flooding.

Saturday night as the flood waters continued moving south, calls for service once again brought local officers out in Turner, Lincoln, and Union Counties. Officers spent the majority of

the night launching their boats into road ditches and rescuing people from their flooded homes and vehicles. The dangers from rushing flood water littered with floating trees, corn stalks, floating vehicles, and propane tanks escalated the severity of these water rescues.

By Sunday morning, most of eastern Union County was affected by the flood waters. Officers continued to work together to make sure the needed equipment was organized and stored in a location that would not become flooded. Multiple state agencies set up an Emergency Operation Center in the area and looked to GFP conservation officers for guidance on what could be done. Due to the working knowledge of the conservation officers in that area, they were able to quickly guide boat rescue teams to the best possible routes to ensure successful rescues.

Officers spent the entirety of Sunday conducting rescues in rural Union County. There were dozens of residents who were unable to evacuate their home and needed to be rescued due to the

rapidly rising waters. Some residents were willing to leave, while others took some convincing. Residents in this area did not understand the full scope of the life-threatening flooding, and thought they could outlast the rising waters like they had in previous years.

During one rescue in particular, officers were tasked with evacuating a paralyzed male who was completely immobile. Officers had to lift the man out of the residence and into the boat before his house was fully engulfed by flood waters. Conservation officers repeatedly loaded their boats with individuals and pets bringing all safely to dry land. While there were officers operating the boats, the officers back at the roads were continually challenged with relocating multiple patrol vehicles and trailers due to rising waters.

Sunday afternoon/evening, the floodwaters crested over the containment berms and broke through the residential areas of McCook Lake. The devastation at McCook Lake made state and national news as entire homes were swept away in the rushing flood waters. Conservation officers worked with firefighters to rescue residents from their homes, as many structures were being swept away into the lake. Conservation officers from out of the area arrived on the scene to assist the depleted local officers. Officers had a wide variety of boats and equipment from across the state on scene.

The next several days required officers on the scene to maintain the safety of the flood zone and keep the public from putting themselves in danger on McCook Lake. GFP provided conservation officers around the clock in the area during the flooding and for multiple days after.



Throughout the week of the flooding events, conservation officers conducted over 40 rescue calls, which resulted in saving over 60 individuals. Some of the individuals rescued were literally taking their last breath when officers got to them. Conservation officers continually put their safety at risk to save the lives of South Dakota citizens. Officers relied on their training, equipment, and their partners in order to conduct every rescue as safely and efficiently as possible. Local agencies along with the public expressed their appreciation to these officers for their dedicated work during this stressful and deadly natural disaster.

CASE FEATURE

BLACK HILLS DECOY OPERATIONS



Every year millions of people flock to the picturesque Black Hills. They come to see the Ponderosa pine forests, the cool blue waters, and the wildlife that roam freely across the landscape. The Wildlife Conservation Officers of Region 1 are tasked with protecting and overseeing the wise use of wildlife found in the Black Hills. Decoy operations are one of the fundamental tools used in protecting the wildlife.

Conservation Officers use decoy operations to zero in on the small percentage of people who come to steal the resource. These are not hunters following the laws or those coming to view nature. These are the poachers and the law breakers. Poaching is the taking of game or fish illegally or to take by illegal methods. These poachers commit various crimes in pursuit of game. Some of the violations include shooting from motor vehicles, shooting from the roads, crossing unit boundaries, trespassing, closed season, night hunting, and no license.

Officers spend hours preparing for each decoy



operation. Careful considerations are made for the safety of the public and officers involved. Locations are not random. They are carefully picked for their prior issues. Officers work with landowners who have concerns and on public lands areas that see violations.

Decoy operations serve many purposes. First, these operations attempt to stop poachers from creating dangerous situations. The locations used are areas where there is a safe backstop, no hiking trails, and no access to areas down range of the decoys. Officers receive calls every year of injuries or property damage from poachers shooting big game from the road. Decoy operations attempt to catch the poacher, stop the dangerous activity, and preserve the opportunity for all hunters. Shooting big game from a vehicle or from the road takes away the opportunity for others. It does not follow the rules of fair chase. When poachers drive around and shoot from the road or commit various other crimes, legal hunters can no longer harvest the poached game. If the poacher fails in killing the animal, often the game is left skittish from being chased by vehicles.

Poaching is often looked upon by many as a victimless crime, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. Well-regulated hunting is a crucial management tool for big game populations. When poachers do their dirty work, they harm wildlife populations. They impact the hunters and non-hunters' ability to enjoy wildlife.

CASE FEATURE

NONRESIDENT FRAUD



On November 22, 2023, Wildlife Conservation Officer Logan Hammer was contacted by a confidential informant who questioned the residency status of an individual claiming to live in Castlewood, SD. The confidential informant notified Officer Hammer that the individual had procured South Dakota resident East River deer licenses numerous times in the past years, while living in other states. Hammer began an investigation verifying the validity of the reported information. Additionally, Hammer was notified from the same confidential informant that the individual had possibly shot a whitetail buck on November 20, 2023, in Hamlin County. No other information regarding the deer getting shot was given.

On November 25, 2023, Officer Hammer and Officer Blake Swanson went to the address that the individual was claiming as his residence. The address being used to procure several big game tags was the address of the individual's parents' residence. The individual in question happened to be in the area due to a Thanksgiving celebration. Throughout the interview, the individual claimed that he did not kill the whitetail buck in question, but his father did. The individual admitted that he lived at a residence in California and spends more time in California than in South Dakota. During the interview, the individual showed the whitetail buck European mount to Hammer and Swanson. The deer was tagged with the individual's father's tag. The officers informed the individual that he did not qualify as a resident of South Dakota and confiscated his current East River deer tag. Officer Hammer began a bigger investigation into

this individual to determine who had actually shot the deer.

Officer Hammer was able to determine which taxidermist had done the European mount on the deer. Hammer and Officer Kyle Lenzner interviewed the taxidermist at his residence. Through the interview, it was confirmed that the individual in question had shot the whitetail buck and had sent photos of him posing with the deer to the taxidermist. Hammer was able to secure those photos.

After receiving the information from the taxidermist, Officer Hammer got a search warrant for the individual's location pings from his phone. Using the new Cellhawk program, our investigators were able to paint a perfect picture of exactly where the individual was hunting on the morning of November 20, when he had killed the deer in question. Officers were able to track all his movements shortly before and after killing the deer. Officers were also able to determine who the subject had texted and called around the time the deer was shot. A separate search warrant was obtained for the individual's father's phone. Several texts messages were located that determined that the individual shot the deer and used his father's tag, including a text message to the father that stated "you can bring the gator to the top of

the hill on the minimum maintenance road. Bring your tag."

Throughout a multi-month investigation and several different search warrants, Officer Hammer was able to uncover 17 different Class 1 misdemeanors between the individual and his father, which included Fraud in Obtaining A License, Big Game No License, Failure to Tag, Unlawful Possession of Big Game, and Tag Lending. A plea agreement was set up and the individual pled to three Class 1 misdemeanors for Big Game No License, Unlawful Possession of Big Game, and Failure to Tag. The Father pled to one Class 1 misdemeanor for Unlawful Possession of Big Game. During the investigation, officers determined that the subject had been fraudulently procuring resident licenses as far back as 2019. Between the individual and his father, there was approximately \$7,089.50 in criminal fines and \$4,000 in civil fines. The individual's hunting privileges were revoked for two years, and the father's hunting privileges were revoked for one year.

OPERATION DRY WATER

Operation Dry Water (ODW) is a year-round boating under the influence awareness and enforcement campaign. The mission of ODW is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related accidents and fatalities through increased recreational boater awareness and by fostering a stronger and more visible deterrent to alcohol use on the water.

Every year since 2009 South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Conservation Officers (COs) have participated in this nation-wide effort in an attempt to rid our South Dakota waters of intoxicated boat operators.

The purpose of the heightened enforcement component of the Operation Dry Water campaign is to deter boaters from boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol. When boaters chose to boat impaired they are endangering not only themselves but the many other boaters on the water as well.

With alcohol use remaining the leading contributing factor in recreational boater deaths, the primary focus of the ODW campaign and of those who support it is to change the cultural acceptance of drinking and boating and help boaters have safe and fun recreational boating experiences. South Dakota COs contact as many boaters as possible to spread this message of safe, sober, boat operation!

2024 OPERATION DRY WATER STATISTICS

Region	Officers	Vessels	Boaters	Citations	Warning	BUI	Non-Boat Violations	Lakes
Western	8	62	196	4	2	2	2	Angostura, Orman, Pactola, Shadehill, Sheridan
Central	15	187	851	7	30	3	8	Lake Oahe, Lake Sharpe, Lake Francis Case, Brakke Lake
Southeast	19	285	1156	24	47	4	26	Alvin, Brandt, Herman, Lewis and Clark, Madison, Mitchell, Oakwood, Thompson, Vermillion, Wall
Northeast	16	228	881	9	7	0	10	Big Stone, Clear, Cochrane, Drywood, Enemy Swim, Mina, Ordway Dam, Pickerel, Poinsett, Richmond, Roy, Sand, South Buffalo, Traverse, Wylie Park
Total	58	762	3084	44	86	9	46	33 Operations/Patrols in 2024



***ON THE ROAD OR THE WATER,
YOU'RE HEADED NOWHERE FAST***



**WHILE
IMPAIRED.**



**OPERATION
DRY WATER**

**YOUR BOATING
DOLLARS AT WORK**
Produced under grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and
Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

OPERATIONDRYWATER.ORG

TURN IN POACHERS (TIPS) PROGRAM

Since its establishment in 1984, the TIPS program has paid out over \$210,000 in rewards to those who have observed and reported violations. The funding for this program comes from various sources, including contributions from sportsmen themselves, making it a popular initiative among the community.

During the 2023 TIPS year, which spanned from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the program played a significant role in 324 investigations and 188 arrests. As a result of these investigations, violators faced fines amounting to \$17,569 and were required to pay \$38,000 in civil damages. Furthermore, judges sentenced offenders to a total of 1120 days in jail, with 1119 days being suspended. As a token of appreciation for their involvement, TIPS rewarded individuals with a total payout of \$3,500.

For over three decades, the South Dakota Turn In Poachers program has served as a shining example of how collaborative efforts between government, private industry, sportsmen, and the general public can effectively address a common problem and protect a public trust resource. This program showcases the immense impact that can be achieved when diverse stakeholders unite in the pursuit of wildlife conservation.

TIPS PROGRAM TOTALS

TIPs Year 2023

324 INVESTIGATIONS

188 ARRESTS

\$17,569 FINES

\$38,000 LIQUIDATED CIVIL DAMAGES

1120 DAYS OF JAIL

(1119 days suspended)

\$3,500 REWARDS PAID



**12 CLASS 1 MISDEMEANORS
FOR HUNTING OR TAKING BIG
GAME DURING NIGHTTIME,
CLOSED SEASON, AND
WITHOUT A LICENSE.**

Defendant was sentenced to the following:

- » \$24,000 civil fines (\$2,000 per count)
- » \$6,000 criminal fines (\$500 per count)
- » \$1,158 court costs (\$96.50 per count)
- » Four years jail, all suspended but 30 days
- » Hunting privileges revoked for 8 years
- » Forfeiture of all firearms involved in the crimes



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PROTECT YOUR RESOURCES. REMAIN ANONYMOUS. REWARDS AVAILABLE.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. MAKE THE CALL

CONSERVATION OFFICER

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Every year GFP conservation officers, supervisors, and administrative staff receive awards in recognition of their efforts toward wildlife law enforcement and management.

2024 SOUTH DAKOTA CONSERVATION OFFICER OF THE YEAR



Each year, Shikar-Safari Club International selects an outstanding Conservation Officer in each of the 50 states based on their exemplary performance in the areas of wildlife protection, wildlife law enforcement, and implementation of important wildlife conservation programs.

South Dakota's 2024 Recipient is Chamberlain Conservation Officer Travis March.

Travis was recognized for his outstanding community involvement, his dedication to the protection of South Dakota's natural resources and his commitment to carrying out the mission of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks.



NATE STUKEL Wildlife Investigator Supervisor in Gregory, received the Officer of the Year Award from the Midwest Association of Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers for his outstanding efforts in law enforcement.



TRAVIS MARCH Conservation Officer in Chamberlain, received the Officer of the Year Award from the South Dakota Conservation Officers Association for his outstanding efforts.



LYNN GEUKE Conservation Officer in Plankinton, received the Officer of the Year Award from the National Wild Turkey Federation for his efforts in connecting youth with the outdoors and support of conservation efforts.



DON ALLAWAY Conservation Officer in Yankton, received the Brook Brown Boating Safety Officer of the Year Award from the National Association of Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) for his efforts with boating safety.

2024 STATEWIDE VIOLATION STATISTICS

HUNTING VIOLATIONS = 724

54 | Big Game - Unlawful Possession
45 | Protected Bird - Hunt or Possess
42 | Artificial Light/Night Vision
40 | Small Game - Right of Way Restriction
38 | Big Game - Wrong Unit
37 | Big Game - Closed Season
31 | Nontoxic Shot Areas for Small Game
28 | Big Game - No License
23 | Game Bird Transportation/Packaging Requirements
22 | Small Game - Hunt Before/After Legal Hours
21 | Hunt within 660 Feet of Dwelling/Livestock
20 | Big Game - Failure to Tag
19 | Big Game - Hunting on Highway
19 | Big Game - Violate Conditions of License
19 | License - Apply/Purchase Big Game When Ineligible
19 | Small Game - Shooting from a Motor Vehicle
17 | Waterfowl - Unplugged Shotgun
17 | Small Game - Unlawful Possession
13 | Waterfowl - Unlawful Possession
12 | Small Game - Wrong Unit
11 | Artificial Light Prohibited After 10 p.m.
11 | Big Game - Improper Tagging
11 | Gun Protruding from Vehicle
11 | Waterfowl - No Federal Stamp
10 | Waterfowl - Lead Shot
9 | Small Game - No License
8 | Hunt Within 660 Feet of Dwelling/Livestock - Posted
8 | License - No Migratory Bird Certification
7 | Big Game - Transport Without Sex/Species ID
7 | Shooting Preserve - Records Violation
7 | Small Game - Closed Season
7 | Waterfowl - No License
6 | Big Game - Bait Station/Electronic Call Prohibited
6 | Small Game - Over Limit
5 | Big Game - Use of Salt Lick to Attract
5 | Unprotected Game - No License
4 | License - Purchase/Apply Under Revocation - Hunting
4 | Shooting From a Motor Vehicle (Deer)
4 | Turkey - No License
4 | Waterfowl - Closed Season
3 | Big Game - Transport without Tag (Taken Outside SD/
Tribal)
3 | Hunting Game Birds with Unlawful Firearm
3 | License - Lending
3 | Small Game - Violate Conditions of License
3 | Waterfowl - Right of Way Restriction
2 | Big Game - No Fluorescent Orange
2 | Interference with Lawful Hunting
2 | Protected Game - Unlawful Possession
2 | Shooting from a Motor Vehicle (Antelope)
2 | Shooting from a Motor Vehicle (Turkey)

2 | Small Game - Unplugged Shotgun
2 | Unlawful Possession - Furbearer
2 | Use of Vehicle/Boat to Disturb or Chase
2 | Waterfowl - Hunt Before/After Legal Hours
2 | Waterfowl - Overlimit
1 | Archery - Armed Accompaniment
1 | Big Game - Use of Trap, Dogs, or Bait (Lion)
1 | Hunting Guide Activities Barred From Certain State
Lands
1 | Minor Hunting without Adult Supervision
1 | Shooting From a Motor Vehicle (Elk)
1 | Shooting Preserve - Failure to Notify of Release
1 | Shooting Preserve - Insufficient Release
1 | Waterfowl - Transportation/Packaging Requirements

MISC VIOLATIONS = 885

151 | Drugs - Use or Possession of Paraphernalia
127 | Alcohol - Possession by Minor
88 | Alcohol - Open Container
73 | Trespass - Hunting (Unknowing)
70 | Driving Under the Influence - Misdemeanor
53 | Drugs - Possession of Controlled Substance
50 | License - Fraud to Obtain
33 | Drugs - Possession of Marijuana - 2 Ounces or Less
26 | License - Minimum Residency Required
26 | Trespass - Hunting (Knowing)
13 | License - Not in Possession
13 | Drugs - Ingest Intoxicant Other Than Alcohol
14 | Drugs - Ingestion of a Controlled Substance
10 | Motor Vehicle - Driver Use of Marijuana
10 | Motor Vehicle - Passenger Use of Marijuana
10 | Traffic - Reckless Driving
10 | Trespass - Criminal
8 | Impersonation to Deceive Officer
7 | Aiding and Abetting
7 | Habitual Offender - Prior Felony
7 | Obstructing Law Enforcement Officer
7 | Wanton Waste of Game
6 | Disorderly Conduct
5 | Driving Under Influence - Felony
5 | Habitual Offender - 3+ Felonies
4 | Grand Theft
4 | Intentional Damage to Property - \$5000 to \$2501 -
Felony 5
4 | Possess Loaded Firearm While Intoxicated
4 | Possession of a Controlled Weapon
3 | Eluding
3 | Reckless Discharge of a Firearm/Bow
3 | Resisting Arrest
2 | Burglary - Third Degree
2 | Commit Felony Carrying Firearm - First Conviction
2 | Enter Boundary Water without SD License

- 2 | Manufacture, Distribute, or Possess Controlled Substance
- 2 | Petty Theft Second Degree - \$400 or Less
- 2 | Trespass - Fishing (Knowing)
- 2 | Use of Two-Way Radio in Vehicle While Hunting
- 1 | Alteration/Forgery of a Registration Card - Felony
- 1 | Aggravated Eluding
- 1 | Driving with Suspended Driver's License
- 1 | Drugs - Possession of Marijuana - More than 2 Ounces
- 1 | Drugs - Possession, Sale, or Distribution for Intoxication
- 1 | Failure to Stop at Signal of Officer
- 1 | License Forms
- 1 | No Valid Drivers License
- 1 | Possession of a Firearm - Convicted Violent Felon
- 1 | Probation Violation
- 1 | Simple Assault
- 1 | Simple Assault Against Law Enforcement
- 1 | Taken Before Magistrate on Refusal of Promise to Appear
- 1 | Taxidermy - No License
- 1 | Threatening Law Enforcement Officer or Family
- 1 | Threatening or Harassing Telephone Calls
- 1 | Trespass - Fishing (Unknowing)

FISHING VIOLATIONS = 389

- 232 | Fishing without License
- 40 | Over Limit of Fish
- 28 | Illegal Transport and Storage of Fish
- 23 | Too Many Lines
- 16 | Unlawful Possession - Fish
- 12 | Length Limit Violation
- 11 | Unattended Lines
- 10 | Violations of Paddlefish Snagging Season
- 7 | License - Fish Under Revocation
- 4 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Fish and Bait Transportation Restrictions
- 1 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Illegal Possession/Transport
- 1 | Failure to Empty Bait Traps
- 1 | License - Purchase/Apply Under Revocation - Fishing
- 1 | Prohibited Bait
- 1 | Unlawful Possession of Minnows or Baitfish
- 1 | Waters Open to Taking of Bait

PARK AND PUBLIC LAND VIOLATIONS = 196

- 52 | Driving Off Roads Prohibited
- 28 | Traffic - Speeding in Park/Recreation Area
- 23 | Littering Prohibited
- 9 | Glass Containers Prohibited

- 9 | Limitation on Tree Stands/Platforms/Blinds
- 9 | Unauthorized Land Use on Posted GFP Property
- 8 | Unauthorized Land Use/Entry on Posted Land
- 6 | Failure to Have Park Entrance License
- 6 | Limitation on Trail Cameras
- 6 | Pet Prohibitions
- 6 | Traffic - Exhibition Driving in Park/Recreation Area
- 4 | Fireworks - Sell/Discharge
- 4 | Traffic - Operate/Park Vehicle in Violation of Posted Sign
- 4 | Unauthorized Fire/Public Land
- 3 | Bait Station Prohibited on Department Land
- 3 | Destruction or Removal of Natural Features
- 3 | Operating Vehicles on School and Public Land
- 3 | Use of Snowmobile Trail Restricted
- 2 | Leaving Property on Department Land
- 2 | Loud Speakers Prohibited - Disturbance Prohibited
- 1 | Failure to Obey Traffic Signs in Park/Recreation Area
- 1 | Littering from Vehicle
- 1 | Misc. Park Violations
- 1 | Operating Motor Vehicle on Mickelson Trail
- 1 | Placing Residential Trash at GFP Trash Facilities
- 1 | Unauthorized Use of State Land

FURBEARER VIOLATIONS = 3

- 2 | Furbearer - No License
- 1 | Unlawful Possession - Bobcat

WATERCRAFT VIOLATIONS = 350

- 119 | PFD - Insufficient Number
- 56 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Conveyance Removal Restrictions
- 52 | Operate Vessel Under Influence
- 30 | Operate Vessel Without License/Number
- 20 | Careless Operation
- 19 | Operate Vessel Without Lights
- 14 | Operate Vessel in Violation of Posted Waters
- 10 | PFD - Use Required (Child Under 7)
- 8 | Reckless/Negligent Operation of Vessel
- 4 | PFD - No Throwable
- 4 | PFD - Not Wearing on Personal Watercraft
- 3 | Aquatic Invasive Species - Failure to Comply with Inspection
- 3 | Water Skiing - No Observer or Mirror
- 2 | Improper Display of Boat Numbers
- 2 | Overloading PWC Prohibited
- 2 | PWC - Greater Than No Wake Within 150 Feet
- 1 | Navigation Rules
- 1 | PWC - Operate Without Lights

PFD = Personal Floatation Device
PWC = Personal Watercraft

2024 STATEWIDE VIOLATION STATISTICS

VIOLATION TOTALS BY ACTIVITY

Miscellaneous	883
Hunting	724
Fishing	391
Watercraft	350
Parks and Public Land	196
Furbearer	3
TOTAL	2,547

WRITTEN WARNINGS BY ACTIVITY

Watercraft	567
Hunting	327
Miscellaneous	271
Fishing	242
Parks	219
Trapping - Furbearer	5
Trapping - Fish	4
Shooting Preserve	2
TOTAL	1,635

SUSPENSIONS

Hunting	264
Fishing	242
Trapping	9
TOTAL	515

FINES AND COSTS

Fines assessed	\$186,361
Fines suspended	\$633
Actual fines assessed	\$185,728
Costs assessed	\$139,355
Costs suspended	\$0
Actual costs assessed	\$139,355
ACTUAL FINES & COSTS ASSESSED	\$325,083

JAIL TIME - DAYS

Jail time assessed	24,451
Jail time suspended	17,619
ACTUAL JAIL TIME SERVED	6,832

PROBATION - MONTHS

Probation	696
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CIVIL DAMAGES ASSESSED

Big Game	\$37,700
Fish	\$3,500
Furbearer	\$1,000
Small Game/Waterfowl	\$800
TOTAL	\$43,000



2024 STATEWIDE CONTACT STATISTICS

FIELD CONTACT TOTALS

Anglers – resident	15,408
Anglers – nonresident	6,900
Hunters – resident	8,019
Hunters – nonresident	4,815
Parks	13,633
Miscellaneous	1,864
Trappers – resident	107
Trappers – nonresident	10
TOTAL	50,756

LAW ENFORCEMENT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Radio	232
HuntSAFE classes	143
School programs	121
Presentations to groups	111
Newspaper articles	10
TV	4
TOTAL	621

LANDOWNER ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

Trespass	186
Shooting too close to dwellings/ livestock (660 feet)	121
Spotlighting	68
Miscellaneous	129
TOTAL	504

INSPECTION TOTALS

Watercraft	6,583
Snowmobile	574
Private Shooting Preserve	250
Taxidermist	99
Bait Dealers	19
Fur Dealers	6
Public Storage	6
Captive Game Bird	1
Private Fish Hatchery	0
TOTAL	9,540



IN MEMORIAM



On December 27, 2024, the world lost a wonderful father, grandfather, brother and friend. Harold David Haivala, 87 of Belle Fourche, SD passed away at the Spearfish Hospital. He was preceded in death by his wife of 63 years, Irene (Bell).

Harry was born on January 23, 1937 to Gus and Muriel Haivala of Buffalo, SD. He was the third son of nine children. After graduating from Buffalo High School, Harry joined the Air Force and married Irene in 1959. Their first son, Marty was born in 1961 in Spearfish, and Bryan was born in Phillip in 1965. The family soon moved to Belle Fouché, South Dakota where they lived for more than 50 years.

Harry was a dedicated game warden with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department for 30 years. He began in Phillip, but spent most of his law enforcement career in Belle Fourche. He joined the South Dakota National Guard and climbed the ranks to retire as a Command Sergeant Major. His long military service took him to Germany, South Korea, Jamacia and Panama. After retirement, Harry became a part-time realtor with Century 21 for several years.

Harry loved to hunt and fish. He always had the freezer stocked with wild turkey, pheasant, deer and elk. He served as a firefighter on the Belle Fourche Volunteer Fire department. He was member of the Belle Fourche Lions Club and volunteered on the Black Hills Roundup Rodeo Committee as Head of Security. Harry was a past President of the South Dakota Peace Officers Association, and later in life he gave tours at the Johnny Spaulding Cabin at the Tri-State Museum.

After Harry retired for good, he and Irene spent winters in Mesa, Arizona, and enjoyed golfing, biking and socializing with friends from the United States and Canada.

Harry was preceded in death by his wife, parents, and brothers, Paul, Kenny, Lenny, Jim and John. He is survived by his sons Marty (Carey) and Bryan (Kathy) and his grandchildren Jake, Sam, Sadie, Abby, and Daniel, and his sisters Mona Nussbaum and Leone Billmeyer and brother Gene Haivala.

