

Cell Phone Misplaced at a Party Leads to Wildlife Investigation

A cell phone misplaced at a party was turned in to the police department in Gillette, WY. In an attempt to locate the owner's information, the Gillette police investigator searched through the cell phone. In addition to some random drinking and partying pictures on the cell phone, the investigator also located a picture of an individual holding a dead golden eagle. This information was reported to Game Warden Travis Crane who, after coordination with USFWS Investigator Tim Eicher, was asked to investigate the case.

With the help of the Campbell County Juvenile Probations Office, the subject in the picture was positively identified as Bo Leonard of Gillette, WY. Warden Crane interviewed Leonard, who admitted to knowing about the dead eagle. Leonard stated the eagle was shot by Thomas Hooper, who owned the cell phone. Hooper used his cell phone camera to take the picture of Leonard holding the eagle approximately one year earlier. Using the background of the photo and information obtained during the interview, Warden Crane was able to locate the area where the eagle was killed. Warden Crane located the remains of a dead eagle in roughly the same area Bo Leonard was standing in the picture. Warden Crane packaged up the evidence and it was sent to the USFWS Forensics Lab. The lab found traces of lead in the remains of the eagle, consistent with having been shot with a lead bullet.



Warden Crane interviewed Thomas Hooper, who admitted to shooting the eagle with a .223 caliber scoped rifle. Written statements provided by the suspects were turned over to the USFWS, who prosecuted the case. Thomas Hooper pled guilty to killing the eagle and was fined \$6,000, of which \$2,000 was to be paid to the Wildlife Heritage Foundation, \$2,000 to the Wyoming Protectors Association, and \$2,000 to Wyoming Raptor Rehabilitation.

