

Mentor or Poacher?

Casper Game Warden Daniel Beach asked for help from the public in early September after the discovery of a mule deer buck by an archery hunter that had been illegally shot and dumped on the 33 Mile Road. An informant came forward with information and a second informant, that resulted in the conviction of Casper resident Joshua Simkin, 21, and his wife, 20-year-old Jessica Simkin.

Following up on the tip, Beach conducted an investigation and obtained a search warrant for the Simkin residence. Joshua Simkin then confessed to shooting the deer while teaching a friend's two young boys how to hunt. Simkin had the boys pose for photographs with the poached deer and gave them the buck's antlers, which were later confiscated. "It sickens me to think Simkin was trying to teach these kids how to hunt and ends up poaching a deer in the process," Beach said.

Simkin also confessed to dumping the deer carcass on 33 Mile Road. Jessica Simkin confirmed the story and stated she was witness to the poaching and had assisted her husband in loading the deer after it was shot. Neither of them had a deer license. Joshua Simkin was found guilty of knowingly taking an antlered mule deer out of season without a license, and of wanton waste of a big game animal.



The Simkins will pay a total of \$10,120 in fines and restitution to the State of Wyoming for the crime. Joshua also lost all hunting privileges for 7 years and forfeited the Savage .243 rifle used in the crime. Because she was an accessory, Jessica lost her hunting privileges for 5 years. "She didn't pull the trigger," Beach said, "but she had knowledge of the crime and assisted with the poaching."

Beach is grateful to the informant who cared enough to come forward with the tip that helped solve this case. "This shows the system works, the Stop Poaching hotline works," he said. "The public is our best ally against wildlife crime." The Wildlife Protector's Association awarded the archery hunter and the two informants a combined \$5,000 for the tips.

Beach was satisfied with the outcome of the case. "Both the Natrona County District Attorney's office and the judge felt the egregious nature of this poaching warranted nearly the full extent of the law, and I agree with them."