

Poaching is Poaching

On the morning of October 6, 2009, South Riverton Game Warden Chris Daubin received a call from the Fremont County Sheriff's Department in response to a large amount of blood they had found on a road west of Riverton. Game Warden Daubin, along with Regional Wildlife Supervisor Kent Schmidlin, responded to the scene. There he found a large amount of blood on the road continuing for over a mile. The blood trail led to the home of Peter J. Barton III. At the home, Game Warden Daubin, along with Fremont County Deputies, found blood in the bed and cab of a pickup belonging to Barton, as well as on an ATV parked in the yard. Warden Daubin introduced himself to Barton mother, Sandy Barton, and asked her where Peter was, where he lived, and where he worked. She stated that she did not know where he was, where he lived, or who he worked for, but she thought he was going to work in Rawlins or Rock Springs.

While collecting evidence, a vehicle arrived with Kyle Chivers and his mother inside. They were interested in what was happening. Chivers asked a lot of questions that raised the suspicions Daubin.



After many phone calls throughout the local oil industry, Daubin was able to determine that Barton worked for Encana between Pinedale and Big Piney as a roughneck. He contacted Pinedale Game Warden Herb Haley who was able to locate Barton and conduct an interview. There, Barton admitted to shooting the deer, dragging it with his 4-wheeler, loading it into his pickup and dumping it. Barton stated that he had hit the deer with his truck though and that is why he shot it. He also said that he was alone and called his friend Kyle who told him it was poaching so he disposed of the deer.

An interview with Chivers led to a similar story. Chivers however stated that Barton and he had been drinking together and that Barton was upset and wanted to kill something. While driving down the road, they saw the deer. Barton then got out and shot twice from the road, missing the deer with the first shot. Chivers then confirmed that they got a 4-wheeler and drug the deer out with it. He claimed the deer was dead at this point. He also stated that Barton had called and asked him to go back to the deer and break a couple legs to make it appear that it had been hit by a vehicle.



Years of experience raised doubt in Daubin's mind though. He felt, due to the amount of blood, the deer was alive when they were dragging it. Daubin was able to locate the deer in the location that Barton had described in the interview. He immediately took the deer to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Forensic Laboratory. There, lab supervisor Dedra Hawk, was able to determine that the doe mule deer had not been hit by a truck, it had one nonlethal gunshot wound, and that the injuries to the neck and head were premortem. The shoulder of the deer was worn down to the bone. This was also premortem.

With this evidence, Daubin went to the Fremont County Jail, where Barton was serving time for other crimes, and issued him citations. Barton asked Daubin if any of the violations were "poaching." He did not feel that it was poaching because he did not intend to take the deer home and it was a doe.

Barton was charged with hunting big game during a closed season, hunting/shooting/killing wildlife from a highway, wanton destruction of big game, and hunting on private land without permission. As part of a plea agreement, the first two charges were dropped. As a penalty for the second two violations, Barton was ordered to pay \$1060 in fines, \$4000 in restitution, to spend 60 days in jail, and he lost all hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges for 6 years.