



*The trophy deer mount displayed at a sportsmen's show in Salt Lake City in early 2016.*

## Exposed at Expo October 2016

**Big Piney** – A high-profile poaching case involving a large mule deer buck that had been illegally shot in the early winter of 2015 has been settled by the Sublette County Circuit Court with a guilty plea agreement prior to a scheduled jury trial.

On March 29, 2016, Nate Strong of Big Piney, Wyoming, was charged with intentionally taking an antlered mule deer out of season. Strong was formally sentenced on October 25, 2016, in the Sublette County Circuit Court. Strong was ordered to pay

over \$9,000 in fines and restitution, and will serve 10 days in jail or five days in jail and 50 hours community service. His hunting and fishing privileges were also suspended for seven years.



*A photo of the live deer taken in the fall of 2015.*

The case began on February 13, 2016 when Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas was contacted by concerned sportsmen who had observed the mounted deer on display at the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City, Utah. When they saw the deer on display, they immediately recognized it as one they had observed and photographed multiple times throughout the summer and fall of 2015 northwest of Pinedale. Several photographs of the large, non-typical buck had been taken after the hunting season had closed on October 7. As members of the public discussed this matter online, the case received significant public attention on social and traditional media.

During the investigation, Warden Hymas and members of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Investigative Unit learned that Strong had harvested the deer on November 14, 2015, west of Big Piney, about five weeks after the mule deer season had closed in that area. Strong, who had already harvested a mule deer in September, used a license valid for white-tailed deer to tag the mule deer, stating he thought the deer was a hybrid between a mule deer and a white-tailed deer.

John Lund, Pinedale Regional Wildlife Supervisor for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, said, "The concern and assistance from the public is certainly appreciated and this case is a good example of the public and Game and Fish personnel working together to protect Wyoming's wildlife. We often rely on tips and information from the public regarding wildlife violations."