

2025

Annual Law Enforcement Report



State of Wyoming

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Message from the Chief

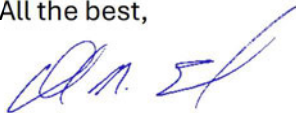
Every day across the state, dedicated men and women put on their “red shirt” and head out the door to do their best for the people and wildlife of Wyoming. They conduct wildlife surveys, meet with landowners about habitat and access, respond to complaints about wildlife damage, answer questions from the public, respond to calls concerning wildlife conflict, and enforce the laws and regulations concerning hunting, angling, and boating. They’re expected to be the experts in all things wild, and a jack of all trades. As Chief Game Warden and Wildlife Division Chief, I see the effort and dedication of these game wardens, and the passion they share for wildlife and wild places. I am very proud of the work they accomplish, and often hear positive reports of how they interact with people.

One of the challenges we faced in 2025 was a shortage of about a dozen law enforcement personnel. When we are fully staffed, we have 52 district game wardens and 34 other law enforcement officers including investigators, supervisors, and game wardens in other positions. I’m proud to say every one of the neighboring wardens and officers stepped up and made sure law enforcement coverage was provided across these vacancies. The good news is, we have filled some of these vacancies and are currently recruiting to fill more.

This summary of the 2025 law enforcement efforts of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department illustrates the hard work of game wardens and their use of knowledge, skills, and relationships to protect and conserve Wyoming’s wildlife resource. As I’ve said before, our game wardens love to catch the “bad guys”. They use the latest techniques and will always go the extra mile in the investigation. You’ll read about cases involving repeat offenders, non-resident poachers, and unrespectable hunting mentors. You’ll see penalties of jail time and thousands of dollars in fines and restitution. And you’ll see that your tips about violations make a world of difference. They say “it takes a village,” and to protect Wyoming’s wildlife it takes all of us. Every tip from you matters as you will read in the following case reports.

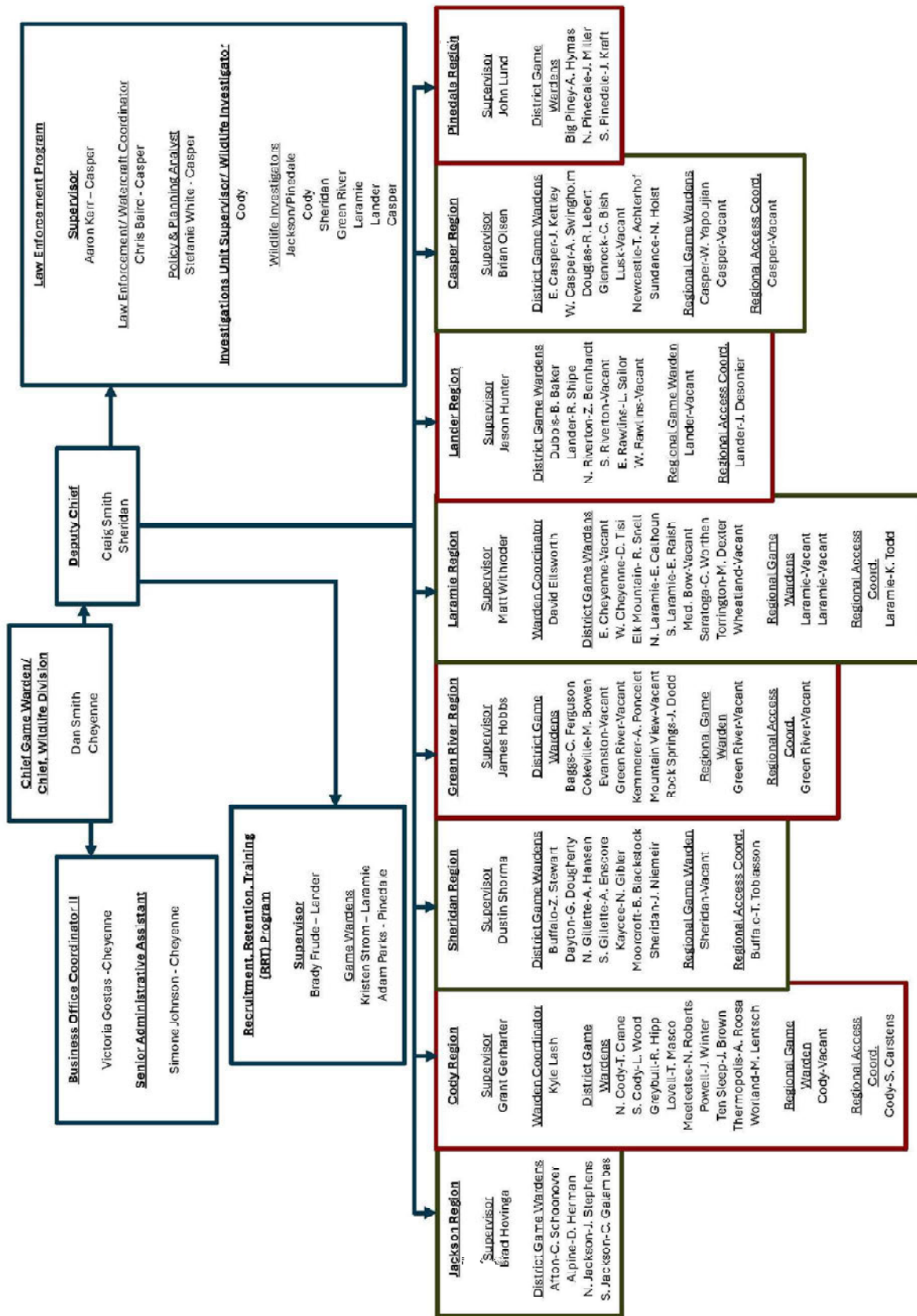
Thank you for your interest in protecting Wyoming’s wildlife and wild places. We will continue to work hard for wildlife and for you, and we look forward to meeting you in the field.

All the best,



Dan Smith
Chief Game Warden

Organizational Chart



As of December 31, 2025

Regional Overview

Jackson Region

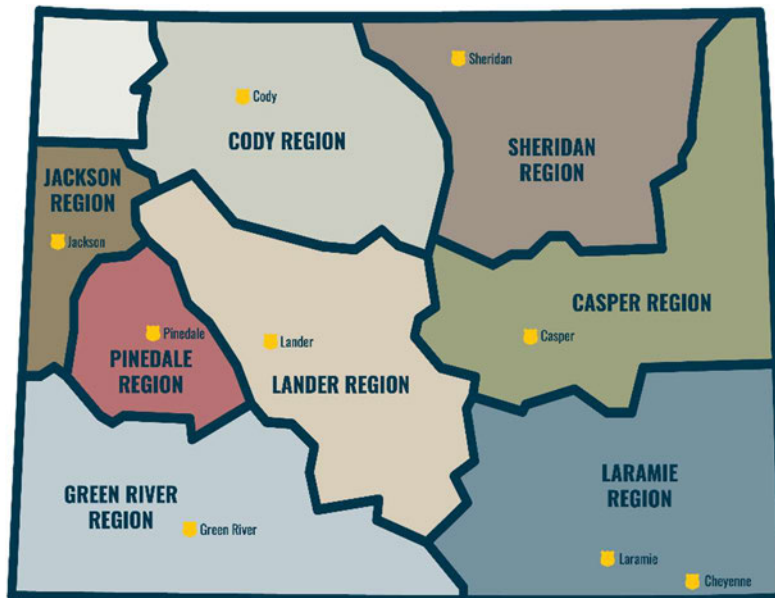
Powell, Lovell, Meeteetse, Greybull, Ten Sleep, Thermopolis, and Worland game warden districts.

Work Unit Overview

The Jackson Region has five law enforcement positions: four district game wardens, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Jackson Region is located south of Yellowstone National Park and game wardens patrol the Jackson Hole Valley, Gros

Ventre Range, and Star Valley, along with the Hoback and Greys River drainages. The region includes game warden districts covering North Jackson, South

Jackson, Alpine, and Afton.



Cody Region

Sheridan Region

Work Unit Overview

The Sheridan Region has nine law enforcement positions including seven district game wardens, one access coordinator, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Sheridan Region encompasses the east slope of the Bighorn Mountains, the Powder River Basin, the Rochelle Hills, portions of the Little Missouri River drainage, and the western edge of the Black Hills. The region includes game warden

districts in Dayton, Sheridan, Buffalo, Kaycee, North Gillette, South Gillette, and Moorcroft.

Work Unit Overview

The Cody Region has 12 law enforcement positions: nine district game wardens, one access coordinator, one game warden supervisor, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Cody Region is located in northwest Wyoming. Wardens patrol from the Montana state line south to Boysen Reservoir and from Yellowstone National Park east to the west slope of the Bighorn Mountains. The region includes the North Cody, South Cody,

Green River Region

Work Unit Overview

The Green River Region has 11 law enforcement officers including seven district game wardens, two regional game wardens, one access coordinator, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Green River Region covers southwest and south central Wyoming, including the Baggs, Rock Springs, Green River, Mountain View, Evanston, Kemmerer, and Cokeville game warden districts.

Laramie Region

Work Unit Overview

The Laramie Region has 14 law enforcement officers, including nine district game wardens, two regional game wardens, one access coordinator, one game warden supervisor, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Laramie Region covers southeast Wyoming, including the eastern Sierra Madre Mountains, Snowy Range, Shirley Basin, Laramie Range, and eastern plains to the Nebraska state line. The region includes the East Cheyenne, West Cheyenne, Torrington, Wheatland, Medicine Bow, North Laramie, South Laramie, Elk Mountain, and Saratoga game warden districts.



Game wardens working at a checkstation

Lander Region

Work Unit Overview

The Lander Region has seven law enforcement officers, including six district game wardens, and one regional wildlife supervisor. District game wardens are stationed in Dubois, North Riverton,



South Riverton, Lander, West Rawlins, and East Rawlins. The Lander Region is located in central Wyoming and game wardens patrol from the Red Desert north to the Owl Creek Mountains and from the Gas Hills west to the Wind River Range and southern Absaroka Mountains.

Casper Region

Work Unit Overview

The Casper Region consists of 10 law enforcement officers, including seven district game wardens, one access coordinator, one regional game warden, and one regional wildlife supervisor. The Casper Region is in east-central Wyoming with game wardens patrolling from the Rattlesnake Hills and southern Big Horn Mountains, east to the Nebraska and South Dakota state lines, along with a portion of the Thunder Basin National Grasslands and the Black Hills. The Casper Region has district game wardens stationed in Glenrock, Douglas, Lusk, Newcastle, Sundance, East Casper, and west Casper.

Pinedale Region

Work Unit Overview

The Pinedale Region has four law enforcement officers, including three district game wardens, and a regional wildlife supervisor. The region is in western Wyoming and covers Sublette County from the west slope of the Wind River Range to the east slope of the Wyoming Range. The Pinedale Region includes the North Pinedale, South Pinedale, and Big Piney game warden districts. The regional wildlife supervisor and the Green River access coordinator also assist with enforcement efforts in the region.

2025 Law Enforcement Efforts

Game wardens in the great State of Wyoming enjoy one of the most unique law enforcement jobs in the world. In addition to enforcing fish, wildlife, and watercraft laws and regulations, they investigate and mitigate damage caused by wildlife, respond to reports of sick or injured wildlife and educate the public about wildlife management issues and hunter safety. They also investigate human/predator conflicts, work with landowners to enhance habitat and public access, and investigate watercraft incidents. Depending on where a warden is stationed, they could be investigating bear damage to domestic sheep in the morning and conducting a traffic stop at a check station in the afternoon. The varied duties of a Wyoming game warden are highly appealing to many of the Department's officers. These duties call for a high degree of skill and dedication, and officers across the state continue to answer the calls and get the job done with a level of professionalism second to none.

In 2025, weather conditions were relatively mild across the state and throughout the seasons. Late winter and spring seasons kept wardens busy with the usual damage mitigation, winter range patrols, and shed antler enforcement. The enforcement of shed antler collection closures on public lands in western Wyoming continued to be a priority and was especially important this year. Disturbance of big game animals in the late winter and early spring can lead to increased mortality of animals with limited fat reserves. Over the past several years, there has been increased public interest in shed antler collection and the Department regularly receives complaints regarding antler collection during closed periods or on private

lands without permission. New legislation went into effect in 2024 stipulating that any season for the collection of big game antlers or horns shall begin seven days earlier for residents than nonresidents. Game wardens investigated several reports of nonresidents looking for shed antlers during the first week of the season. Wardens in the Lander, Jackson, and Pinedale regions also spent considerable time monitoring antler collection area closures, the Alpine antler sale, National Elk Refuge / Scout Antler auction, and other antler sales.

Spring and summer seasons of 2025 saw mostly mild conditions across the state and many regions' wardens found themselves focusing on watercraft, fishing, and AIS enforcement. In recent years, neighboring states have discovered new zebra and quagga mussel infestations in their waterways, most notably Lake Pactola in South Dakota and on the Snake River near Twin Falls, Idaho. These mussels spread rapidly and can cause considerable problems with other wildlife and infrastructure in and around the waterways they inhabit. The Department prioritizes inspecting and decontaminating watercraft entering the state to prevent the spread of these and other AIS. In 2025, much of this effort again focused on the busiest AIS check stations, on I-80 near Evanston and I-25 in Cheyenne. Statewide, game wardens documented 253 violations of AIS regulations. Of these, 17 were watercraft that had already been launched without a required AIS inspection.

Fall and winter continued with relatively mild conditions that offered generally excellent hunting and fishing opportunities across the Cowboy State. Moderate weather often encourages recreation deeper into the backcountry and Department personnel found themselves involved in enforcement activity in those areas. The mild conditions also led to many auxiliary elk seasons, and as is often the case, led to increased violations like trespassing, exceeding bag limits, and illegal killing of the incorrect sex of animal. Long-range shooting sometimes resulted in wounded animals, over-limits, or mistakenly killing spike bulls by cow/calf licensed hunters. Several regions conducted decoy operations during big game hunting seasons. In the Laramie Region a deer decoy was used to target road hunting, trespassing, and other wildlife violations. Two enforcement cases were made with this deployment, which detected 15 wildlife violations.

A recurring theme across the state was the challenges faced due to staffing of enforcement personnel. Several game warden districts and trainee positions remained vacant throughout much of the year. The reduction in personnel resulted in fewer task forces and more difficulty in responding to calls. However, without exception, regions adapted and overcame to continue to provide coverage and service to people and resources across the state. Personnel stepped up to help their neighbors across region boundaries and assigned duties. The total number of violations detected in 2025 was 4,350. This is up 1,230 from 2024. This increase was split almost evenly between warnings and citations. This increase can be attributed to several factors. Notably, enforcement personnel who were new in 2024 gained experience and were established in key districts across the state. This increase in experience, coupled with assigning wardens to crucial districts where they are well suited, led to increased detection of violations.



Notable Cases

Social Media Recluse

An anonymous report of a social media post started an interstate investigation into the illegal take of a mule deer near the town of Recluse during the fall of 2023. Gillette area game wardens



Social Media Photo

were notified of suspicious social media posts indicating a female South Dakota resident had taken a mule deer with archery equipment in Wyoming. Several search warrants were executed for social media

accounts and

residences in both Wyoming and South Dakota.

Ultimately the investigation revealed that the female suspect had taken a mule deer buck, with a rifle, during a closed season, using her male hunting companion's resident license. Arrest warrants were issued for both individuals and the male was arrested by game wardens in Rozet. Several charges were filed against the suspects. Guilty pleas in 2025 resulted in total fines of \$2,790 and \$8,000 in restitution. Both suspects had their hunting privileges suspended until 2030.

Nonresident Ranch Hand Poaches and Pays

In early August 2024, two buck mule deer and a buck antelope were reported to have been taken without licenses south of Gillette in 2023. Information from the report allowed wardens to

obtain search warrants for the residence, vehicle, and cell phone of the individual. In August of 2024, the violator was stopped along Highway 387 and the search warrants were served.

The investigation revealed the suspect, a Virginia man working as a ranch hand in the area, had little respect for game laws in Wyoming. The violator was arrested and booked into the Campbell County Detention Center. Total fines were \$140 with an additional \$11,000 in restitution for the two deer and one antelope. The violator spent 10 days in jail and his hunting privileges were suspended until 2040.

Repeat Offender Takes Time Out From Hunting

While on patrol in October, the Evanston game warden observed a suspect shoot from the road toward several mule deer. He then observed two individuals searching the sagebrush briefly and quickly return to their vehicle without retrieving any game. The game warden stopped the vehicle and interviewed the suspect, an Evanston man with a significant history of wildlife violations. The suspect told the game warden he had been shooting at a buck but was a lousy shot and missed. The game warden returned to the site and quickly located a freshly killed doe. The area was only open to take antlered deer.

Prior to this violation the suspect had six separate violations from 2009 to 2023, including failure to tag a big game animal, shooting from a road, trespassing to hunt and hunting during a closed season. He was cited for shooting from the road, failing to make a reasonable effort to retrieve the animal, and take wrong sex of deer. He lost his

hunting privileges for two years and had to pay a \$750 fine.

Waste Prevented, Violator Pays

The Baggs game warden received a report from a concerned hunter who had witnessed a deer shot and left in the field. They also reported a detailed description of the suspect's vehicle but couldn't give a plate number. The game warden responded quickly and found a two-point buck had been killed in an area with an antler point restriction. The game warden had communicated to other wardens and biologists to be on the lookout for the suspect's vehicle.

While the game warden was collecting evidence and retrieving the carcass to preserve the meat, one of the Department's technicians identified a possible match to the vehicle description and provided the game warden a plate number. This led to a female hunter out of California who admitted to shooting and leaving the buck. She was cited and warned for several violations and was ordered to pay \$500 in fines. The recovered meat was donated to those in need.

Nonresidents Deal in Illegal Outfitting in the Backcountry

A Cody game warden successfully prosecuted an illegal outfitting case that originated from a tip in 2023. The tip alleged that South Dakota residents were planning to illegally guide Washington residents. The game warden contacted the suspects at the Eagle Creek Trailhead, where they claimed they were just friends out hunting. The investigation continued when a Yellowstone National Park Service ranger notified the game warden that the group had departed Mountain

Creek, leaving a note suggesting one of the Washington hunters had harvested an elk, with the suspected illegal guide assisting them in the wilderness area.

Evidence from a trail camera later showed the suspected illegal guide leading the group both into and out of the area, with a mule carrying an elk head on the exit. Subsequent investigation and interviews led to multiple charges filed. In 2025 both hunter and guide were found guilty. The illegal guide was fined \$1,720 and lost all hunting privileges for one year. The associated hunter, who failed to appear in court, was arrested on a warrant in Utah and paid fines totaling \$970.

Expensive Antler Hunting Outing

The Meeteetse game warden investigated an interesting case of trespassing in April. A resident of Casper had trespassed by landing a personal aircraft on private property at a ranch near Meeteetse. In addition to not having permission to land on the private ground, he then proceeded to collect shed antlers from nearby public land. The game warden discovered the violation and made contact the following day, issuing a citation. The individual was charged with collecting antlers on private property without permission. Subsequently, the antler hunter was found guilty of trespassing and received a fine of \$450.

Spray and Pray Doesn't Pay, and Often Costs Extra

In November, a Cody area game warden and biologist were patrolling the Absaroka Front Hunter Management Area on foot, hiking a ridge top known to be a good spot to find elk hunters. While hiking they heard rifle shots from the next drainage over

and began counting how many shots they heard while hiking to the location. By the time they located all the hunters they counted a total of 26 shots. The investigation determined that two individuals had shot into a group of elk at approximately 600 yards with the intent of filling their two cow/calf licenses. A search of the area determined three total elk were shot, one of them being a bull.

One of the individuals was charged with taking a bull elk without a license and failure to wear fluorescent orange. The bull elk and rifle were seized. The game warden and biologist helped process the over limit of elk and the meat was donated to a needy family. The violator paid \$1,340 in fines.

Drugs, Guns, and Poached Deer in Two States

The Worland game warden continues his storied career with a fantastic case conducted with the Wyoming Highway Patrol in November of 2024. Troopers contacted dispatch to report they had discovered a fresh mule deer head in a suspect's vehicle during a traffic stop, and that the suspect could not produce a deer license. The troopers had smelled marijuana during the traffic stop and had performed a consensual search of the truck. They found marijuana in the cab of the truck and the mule deer head under a tonneau cover in the bed.

When the game warden responded, troopers relayed that the suspect had changed his story multiple times and his final story was that he had hit the deer with his truck and cut the head off. The troopers said they had also found a 300 Win mag caliber rifle, two sets of binoculars, a spotting scope, a range finder, ammo for the rifle and a pack

with multiple hunting knives. The troopers stated the suspect had a lengthy criminal history and a current arrest warrant out of Montana relating to failure to pay fines, convictions of wildlife violations. These included taking a mule deer without a license, hunting from a public road, and trespassing.

The game warden's subsequent investigation and interview revealed no evidence supporting the suspect's tale of hitting a deer with his truck. The suspect did admit to shooting the deer as a part of his vehicle collision story. The troopers arrested the suspect on drug related charges and he declined to talk to the game warden any further about the deer. In July of 2025, the suspect was ultimately charged and found guilty of taking a deer without a license. He served six days in jail and was fined \$7,320.

Retired Warden Still in the Game

In November, a Cody game warden responded to a Stop Poaching tip filed by a retired game warden. The report described a suspicious vehicle and unlawful shooting and hunting activity near private land around Powell. The report detailed that the suspect vehicle had multiple occupants in the truck bed.

The game warden located the vehicle, which was registered to a resident of Powell. The driver confirmed they were hunting deer. Upon contact, the primary suspect was found riding in the truck bed with several other individuals, including a person using a motorized wheelchair. There was also a freshly killed buck that had not been field dressed in the bed of the truck. The suspect initially claimed the deer was harvested by the young man in the wheelchair but later admitted to

shooting the animal himself. When questioned, the suspect eventually confirmed he had shot the mule deer buck on private property without landowner permission and admitted to shooting it from the truck bed. The game warden verified both the private property trespass and the shooting location with the landowner on-site.

The suspect was cited for trespassing to hunt a mule deer and shooting from a vehicle. The suspect was ordered to pay a total of \$900 in fines. The mule deer head was seized, and the meat was donated to the public. The game warden expressed gratitude to the retired game warden for providing the crucial Stop Poaching report. Once a game warden, always a game warden!

Elk Poaching Tip from PD Officer

The Big Piney game warden learned of a small bull elk harvested with archery equipment by an individual while talking to a local police officer in early September. While looking into the license history of the individual, it was discovered the suspect did not have an elk license, archery license, or elk special management permit. After a short investigation, the game warden identified another individual whom he believed covered the illegal harvest with their license.

When the game warden interviewed the two individuals, he learned that the person who shot the elk did not have a license and the tag on the antlers was from the second person who did not harvest the elk. Furthermore, the second individual dated the license for the day before he purchased it! The suspect was cited for taking an elk without a license and the second individual was cited for transfer of license. The suspect lost

his hunting and fishing privileges for three years and fines totaled over \$2,500.

No Miracle for Hunting Guide Turned Poacher

Casper game wardens concluded an investigation concerning a professional hunting guide in 2025. The suspect had a notable violation history and game wardens had reason to believe he was back in Wyoming hunting after losing his residency status. The suspect had moved to Tennessee but still applied for several Wyoming resident limited quota licenses in the spring of 2024. He also purchased over the counter resident general deer and elk licenses after doing the same in Tennessee in September 2024.



Seized evidence

Game wardens discovered the suspect was in Wyoming beginning in October and tracked his movements. The suspect was located with two accomplices in the Miracle Mile area. Upon contact, game wardens discovered the group had just killed two cow elk without licenses, trespassed on the property the suspect used to lease, shot them with illegal calibers and transferred them to a Florida hunter's license. Further investigation revealed that the suspect

poached a 6x6 bull elk in Hunt Area 16 the previous night. The group packed it out in the dark and concealed it at multiple residences in Casper. Furthermore, it was discovered that the suspect had poached a mature buck mule deer near Jackson that same week.

Additional charges included multiple trespassing violations, a buck antelope taken illegally, and multiple transporting and tagging violations. The suspect was charged and convicted on 15 wildlife violations between Carbon and Teton county and was ordered to pay over \$25,000 in fines and \$9,000 in restitution. The suspect was sentenced to two years of supervised probation, two years of suspended jail time, forfeiture of two firearms as well as the loss of all game and fish privileges including guiding for 10 consecutive years. His accomplices also lost all game and fish privileges for three years and paid a combined \$14,000 in fines. All firearms, licenses, animals, and other gear used was forfeited to the state. Meat from all three elk, mule deer, and antelope were donated to needy families through the Food from the Field program.

Adults Teaching Youth What Not to do

In November, Casper area game wardens were alerted to a possible trespassing issue during the elk hunt in the Rattlesnake Range. Upon contact game wardens learned a young hunter on his first elk hunt had harvested a respectable branch antlered bull while accompanied by his father and uncle. This field contact became more complicated when issues of improper tagging arose. It was obvious to the game wardens the young hunter was distraught and that more discussion with the group was required.

Further interview and investigation revealed that the young man had inadvertently shot the smaller of many bulls in the herd. The father and uncle had expressed that they thought he should have killed one of the larger bulls and told him they would find someone else to tag the bull he had killed so he could kill a bigger bull. The young man told the game wardens that he did not agree it was right but went along with the direction from his elders. In the end, four of the adults involved were cited as accomplices to trespassing, transfer of license, and failing to tag a big game animal. They were ordered to pay a total of \$2,500 in fines. The bull elk was seized and the meat donated to those in need. The young hunter received written warnings for his involvement.

Trophy Bull Elk, No License, Guilty Conscience

In September, the Elk Mountain game warden received a call from an individual who said he had a game and fish issue and requested to talk in-person about it.



Shot and left elk

The reporting party said a friend was in town and had always wanted to go hunting, but had never drawn a tag. Earlier that evening, the friend had accompanied two others on an elk hunt. The other two pursued a group of elk onto private property they had permission to hunt. While waiting at the side by side, the suspect saw a group of elk come past him. He pursued the group of elk to a meadow and killed a bull elk with a rifle without a license.

The group left the area and came back to town without field dressing the elk and discussed what to do for an hour or two. Eventually the reporting party decided to talk to the game warden. The game warden and the hunting party searched for the bull elk that evening, but were unsuccessful in locating it. During this time, the suspect made statements that corroborated the story the reporting party had described, including killing a bull elk with a 7mm Remington Magnum rifle and not having an elk license. In addition, the suspect showed the game warden two photos he had taken of the dead 6-point bull elk after he had shot it.

The next morning, the game warden met the hunting party at the approximate location of the kill and they were able to locate the elk and salvage the meat. The game warden was able to recover a bullet and other evidence from the scene.

Later that day, the game warden met with the suspect, documented the rifle used to kill the elk, and confirmed it matched the ballistic evidence recovered from the bull. The suspect appeared in court and plead guilty to taking an elk without a license. He was sentenced to \$6,000 restitution, \$1,240 in fines, a two-year suspension of hunting and fishing privileges, and was ordered to retake a hunter safety course.

Pronghorn Poaching Leads to Partnership with Parks

A confusing report with very few details came in December of 2024 in which the reporting party stated that they were in the vehicle with an acquaintance who shot some antelope south of Laramie and then dumped them. The reporting party was struggling to provide details, a full name, an address, or location where this may have occurred, but was willing to try to work with game wardens.

It was difficult to determine initially if this was a legitimate report and if there was truly wildlife involved. Cheyenne game wardens made a call to the adjacent Colorado game warden, and let him know there may have been a poaching event on the county road between the two states the night prior. The Colorado game warden was unavailable to assist but told Wyoming game wardens about an area that matched the description of the dumping location from the reporting party. He asked if Wyoming game wardens could check this location.

On the exact curve of the county road the Colorado game warden mentioned, the Wyoming game wardens observed several magpies, indicating a carcass nearby. Down the small incline off the road were two freshly dumped antelope carcasses, no more than a day old sitting on the snow. The carcasses were collected, brought to the evidence freezer in Laramie, and were necropsied the following day by game wardens from both states. While scavengers had already started in on the carcasses, DNA samples were collected and game wardens were able to determine a few things about the antelope, including that they were likely shot and showed no sign of vehicular collision.

Questions remained as to the animals' origin and which state they were killed in. Game wardens realized the reporting party knew additional details but struggled to articulate them, so they spent additional time with the reporting party to understand what occurred and who was involved.

A Cheyenne game warden found blood splatter on the Sand Creek Rd south of Laramie, and she collected samples for DNA analysis. With the help of multiple game wardens from the Laramie Region and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, a search warrant was served on the Laramie apartment of the suspected shooter. After initially denying their involvement, the suspect admitted to jumping out of his vehicle and shooting numerous rounds at a herd of antelope in the county road using his headlights sometime after 11:00 p.m. on December 20. Phone records show he attempted to get a friend to help salvage the meat, but when that fell through, he and the acquaintance who reported the event drove the carcasses south to dump them. On their way back to Wyoming,

around 2:00 a.m. the next morning, they got their vehicle stuck in a snow drift and spent the rest of the early morning hours attempting to get out. A Good Samaritan from a nearby ranch finally assisted around sunrise and they made it back to town, where the shooter told the reporting party to wash the truck bed. Despite the carwash, blood and hair remained in the truck bed, which were collected by game wardens.

Forensic lab results linked blood found in the suspect's truck, blood in snow along the road and DNA samples from the discarded antelope, together sealing the case. Through a plea deal, the suspect was charged with one count of wanton destruction, fined \$620, ordered to pay restitution of \$6,000 (\$3,000 per antelope), and lost his hunting privileges for two years. Other charges in this case were dismissed. The suspect was also charged in Colorado for transporting the illegal carcasses into the state. The reporting party, who was present for the violations committed, was not charged with accessory due to the circumstance.



Game wardens assist USFWS at the Casper Airport



Baiting case

Wildlife Investigations Unit

Work Unit Overview

The Wildlife Investigations Unit (WIU) is comprised of six wildlife investigators and one supervisor/investigator. The WIU is responsible for investigating large scale, complex, lengthy, overt and covert cases. The WIU places its highest priority on cases with commercial involvement, multiple suspects, multiple violations, and wildlife violations taking place across several jurisdictions. Investigators also assist game wardens with larger enforcement cases, task forces, and other special projects. The WIU maintains several intelligence databases. WIU members operate with unmarked vehicles and typically out of uniform. The WIU is equipped with digital media forensics, modern evidence collection materials, and equipment for surveillance, tracking, and covert operations. The WIU also works closely with other states' wildlife investigators and with several federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

2025 Law Enforcement Efforts

The WIU initiated at least 18 major investigations in 2025 and assisted game wardens throughout Wyoming and officers from other jurisdictions across the country with over 100 other cases. Investigators spent significant time working ongoing investigations across Wyoming and several other states. A substantial number of hours were spent traveling to conduct interviews and execute search warrants for numerous investigations. This effort precluded work on other, high

priority cases.

The WIU continues to explore new technologies related to tracking suspect activity, covert operations, and digital forensics. The WIU analyzes all cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices seized from wildlife violators in Wyoming. WIU personnel forensically examined 22 cell phones, 14 SD cards/flash drives, and one computer seized by game wardens and investigators as evidence. Investigators also analyzed information produced by social media platforms and cloud data. These forensic extractions require hundreds of hours of analysis by investigators to produce forensic reports for case officers. The WIU wrote and executed dozens of cell phone, Google geofence, and social media preservation letters and search warrants as well as search warrants for premises and property in 2025.

Notable Cases

An eight-year investigation wrapped up in Sweetwater County on September 26, 2025, when a Farson resident was sentenced on multiple wildlife charges. The charges stemmed from an investigation into making false statements to procure Wyoming resident licenses and the illegal take of black bears, pronghorn, deer, elk, and other wildlife in southwest Wyoming when this individual and his family moved to Wyoming in 2014.

Investigators initially learned of illegal activity committed by the Farson resident and his family in 2017 while investigating unrelated wildlife crimes. The investigation began in earnest from 2018 through July 15, 2021 when Investigators working with their counterparts in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Utah executed search warrants and interviewed numerous individuals associated with committing wildlife crimes in Wyoming.

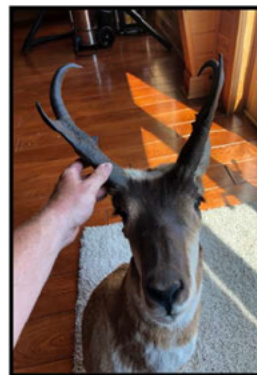


Suspect vehicle

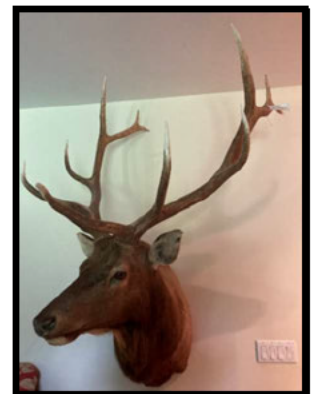
Following the execution of search warrants in July 2021, the investigation uncovered dozens of wildlife crimes committed by ten different suspects in Wyoming, Minnesota, and Utah. Following are the penalties assessed from the Sweetwater County Circuit Court in Rock Springs:

- Three suspects in Minnesota each served two days in jail, fines totaling \$1,710, restitution of \$14,000 and one year hunting suspensions. These suspects also forfeited a .338 Lapua firearm, a shoulder-mounted buck pronghorn, a shoulder-mounted buck mule deer, a shoulder-mounted bull elk along with another bull elk skull, pronghorn meat, and a bear pelt.

- Four suspects in Wyoming received fines totaling \$13,700, restitution of \$11,000, suspensions ranging from one to five years in length and forfeited a .300 WSM Safari Browning rifle, a buck pronghorn head, two bull elk heads, two packages of deer meat, a badger carcass, a green bobcat pelt, and a black bear hide and skull.
- Two Utah suspects received fines totaling \$5,820 and restitution of \$6,000, with one individual receiving a two-year hunting suspension and the forfeiture of two bull elk skulls.
- The main Wyoming suspect was sentenced to, and served, 40 days in jail after initially being charged with three counts of making false statements to obtain Wyoming resident licenses, five counts of accessory to the intentional take of two buck antelope, a doe antelope, a cow elk, and a bull elk, ten counts of accessory to making false statements to obtain Wyoming resident licenses, one count of wanton destruction of a calf elk, one count of taking a calf elk with a motor vehicle, and one count of a violation of Wyoming Game and Fish



Seized antelope mount



Seized elk mount

Commission regulations. This main Wyoming suspect was fined a total of \$9,070; \$6,000 in restitution; 36 months of unsupervised probation – 24 months to be served consecutively and one 12-month period to be served concurrently. As a term of his probation, he may not possess firearms or deadly weapons. He also had his hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges suspended for 20 years and forfeited additional wildlife parts seized during a search warrant in 2021.

Another investigation began in 2020 when the Lusk game warden received information that a local landowner may have transferred her license to an Oklahoma man to cover an illegal elk poaching. This investigation revealed that this landowner obtained an interstate game tag transferring the entire elk to the Oklahoma man, who later turned out to be her son. Further investigation revealed several photographs showing the Oklahoma man and a Utah resident posing with the bull elk and a video talking about how one was going to get shoulder mounted. Additional photographs were located showing the Utah resident posing with a different dead bull elk.



Shot and left elk

Following a lengthy investigation, in December of 2023, investigators coordinated a multi-state takedown, serving multiple search warrants in Wyoming and interviewing suspects in Wyoming, Utah, and Ohio. Two bull elk mounts were seized in December 2023 and additional suspects were identified in Wyoming and Michigan.

In February 2024, game wardens in Michigan interviewed a father and daughter and gained confessions on the illegal killing of two buck mule deer, one bull elk, and one buck antelope without licenses in Wyoming. Michigan game wardens seized an elk, antelope, and mule deer mount from the Michigan suspects and also identified multiple poaching offenses in Michigan, including the illegal killing of furbearing and big game animals. This case culminated with six suspects being charged and convicted of various wildlife crimes in Wyoming and led to total fines of \$57,820, restitution totaling \$29,000, and suspensions of hunting and fishing privileges ranging from one to five years.



Seized elk mount

Large Carnivore Section

Work Unit Overview

The Large Carnivore Section (LCS) executes the management and conflict resolution of Wyoming's apex predators: mountain lions, black bears, grizzly bears, and wolves. Given the high-stakes controversy and inherent danger of these species, the LCS demands sound biological expertise and law enforcement proficiency.



Processing a grizzly bear captured for livestock depredation

Stationed in Lander, the LCS Conflict Coordinator (Coordinator) serves as the central repository for trophy game damage mitigation across the Pinedale, Lander, Cody, and Jackson regions. This role oversees the execution of the Wildlife Services-Wyoming Game and Fish Department contract and leads the Department's Predator Attack Team (PAT). As the primary conductive electrical weapons

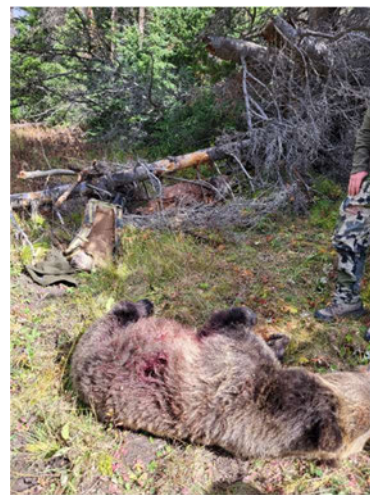
(CEW) trainer, the Coordinator directs all investigative and advisory efforts regarding human attacks, working in cooperation with federal agents and regional game wardens to evaluate and mitigate threats while enforcing state and federal statutes.

2025 Operations & Enforcement

LCS law enforcement led critical investigations into aggressive grizzly bear encounters, including multiple incidents involving human injury. Serving as the primary liaison to the USFWS, the Coordinator spearheaded enforcement for several high-profile grizzly bear cases.

Key Metrics & Deployments:

- **Self-Defense Shooting Investigations:** Coordinated the forensic and field investigations of eight self-defense shooting cases (six grizzly bear, one mountain lion, one black bear).



Investigation of self-defense shooting of a grizzly bear near Dubois

- **Enforcement Actions:** Successfully closed multiple cases involving big game, black bear hunting, and fisheries violations, resulting in eight citations/cases.
- **Rapid Response:** Directed the PAT in response to multiple grizzly-human conflicts, ensuring immediate tactical deployment. The Coordinator authored and delivered comprehensive investigative reports to the U.S. Attorney's Office.
- **Non-Lethal Interventions:** Department personnel executed three CEW deployments to safely extract and release entangled wildlife (one moose, one mule deer, one mountain lion).



Capture of sow and two cub grizzly bears

Regional Conflict Mitigation

LCS personnel maintained an active presence in the Lander Region throughout 2025, monitoring and documenting 128 high-level conflicts involving livestock depredation and property damage. Through responsive field operations, several black and grizzly bears were either lethally removed or strategically relocated to mitigate further risk to the public and agricultural interests.



Scene investigation: black bear entering garage

Watercraft Safety Program

The Department is the state agency primarily responsible for watercraft safety education and enforcement. Each year, Wyoming game wardens spend much of their time patrolling water bodies. From major reservoirs to small ponds and streams, they enforce fishing and boating safety laws and regulations and promote safe boating activities.



Game warden at Glendo Reservoir

Game wardens worked 2,965 hours and contacted thousands of boaters during their watercraft safety enforcement and educational efforts. At full staff, the Department has eight regional game warden positions assigned primarily to watercraft duties between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. However, most of these positions were unfilled for much of the summer boating season due to turnover and retirements. District game wardens in many parts of the state worked additional watercraft safety enforcement along with their other duties to ensure an enforcement and safety presence on Wyoming waterways.

To accomplish the Department's boating safety mission, game wardens work in partnership with county sheriff's offices, municipal police departments, local fire departments, and volunteer search and rescue organizations. The department also partners with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and other boating safety organizations nationwide to work toward consistent regulations and education messaging among the states. According to USCG statistics, on average, drowning accounts for nearly 70% of all boating-related fatalities nationwide in a given year. In approximately 85% of these cases, the victims were not wearing life jackets. Many of these deaths could have been prevented with life jacket wear.



Game warden working at Curt Gowdy State Park

For this reason, game wardens emphasize the importance of carrying and wearing properly fitting life jackets aboard watercraft when contacting the boating public.

Watercraft incidents that occur in the state are investigated by game wardens. To develop the skills necessary for these investigations, the Department sends game wardens to advanced training in watercraft incident investigation techniques. This week-long course aids game wardens in conducting thorough, professional investigations to determine the causes of watercraft accidents ranging from those involving minor property damage to incidents involving serious injuries or death. Two game wardens attended incident investigation training.

There were 10 reported boating incidents investigated in 2025. This is down from 13 incidents in 2024. In

August a small speed boat with a big block motor caught fire on Alcova Reservoir. The two people onboard bailed out and were picked up by a third party. According to statements it was the maiden voyage of the craft and the fire started while the boat was on plane. The two occupants were unable to subdue the fire with a fire

extinguisher and both grabbed life jackets before exiting the boat. The Natrona County Sheriff's Office was the first to the scene followed by Casper Department personnel. Game wardens extinguished the fire using their propeller to spray water on it and towed the remains of the craft to the shore.



Boat fire on Alcova

The Department again participated in Operation Dry Water, a nationwide effort to educate the public about the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol and drugs (BUI) and encourage boaters to designate a sober operator. No BUI arrests were made over the 4th of July weekend. Five BUI arrests were made throughout the state in 2025, all resulting in convictions. Alcohol and drug use have contributed to many of the most serious watercraft accidents in Wyoming over the past several years.

The Department remained involved in national and regional associations dedicated to safe boating. Law Enforcement Coordinator Aaron

Kerr served on the executive board of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and participated on the association's Enforcement and Training Committee, which is dedicated to developing and providing training resources to marine law enforcement officers nationwide. In September, Chris Baird

became Wyoming's new boating law administrator and accompanied Aaron Kerr to the NASBLA conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

State Land Enforcement

The Department assists the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments by enforcing certain statutes applying to Wyoming State Trust Land (state land). Game wardens have the authority to enforce prohibitions of off-road travel, overnight camping, open fires, and littering on state land. Wardens detect most state land violations during their hunting and fishing patrols.

On many state land parcels throughout Wyoming, off-road travel is an ongoing issue and has caused considerable resource damage to some areas. Much of this off-road use

occurs in the early spring or fall when soils are wet or when roads are blocked by snow and people attempt to drive around the drifts.

Illegal overnight camping on state lands occurs throughout the year and can contribute to resource damage and littering. Many of the state land violations discovered by game wardens were handled with verbal or written warnings to educate the violators, although several more serious violations causing resource damage were addressed with citations.

State Land Violations			
Violation	Written Warnings	Citations	Total
Off-Road Travel	11	24	35
Camping	17	2	19
Open Fires	4	7	11
Littering on State Land	22	11	33
Total 2025	54	44	98
Total 2024	32	21	53
Total 2023	45	26	71



Typical state land camp set up

Visit our web page: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/enforcement>

Regional Law Enforcement Statistics

Jackson Region – 5 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	2,093	0	21,400
Watercraft Enforcement	112	16	1,293
Total 2025	2,205	16	22,693
Total 2024	3,254	45	32,878
Total 2023	2,515	47	27,864

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	34	78	7	119
Sport Fish	14	20	0	34
Non-Wildlife	7	4	0	11
Aquatic Invasive Species	2	0	0	2
Total 2025	57	102	7	166
Total 2024	152	87	3	242
Total 2023	141	79	2	222

Cody Region – 12 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	5,823	0	90,704
Watercraft Enforcement	122	18	991
Total 2025	5,945	18	91,695
Total 2024	6,500	9	98,441
Total 2023	6,731	28	102,686

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	115	77	13	205
Sport Fish	31	14	0	45
Non-Wildlife	6	1	0	7
Aquatic Invasive Species	3	0	0	3
Total 2025	155	92	13	260
Total 2024	162	115	3	280
Total 2023	197	132	3	332

Sheridan Region – 9 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	5,450	5	92,815
Watercraft Enforcement	435	132	5,714
Total 2025	5,885	137	98,529
Total 2024	6,653	140	94,813
Total 2023	5,571	136	78,411

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	243	156	72	471
Sport Fish	29	32	0	61
Non-Wildlife	75	36	0	111
Aquatic Invasive Species	27	3	0	30
Total 2025	374	227	72	673
Total 2024	373	195	69	637
Total 2023	444	192	68	704

Green River Region – 10 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	3,509	13	53,388
Watercraft Enforcement	202	46	3,016
Total 2025	3,711	59	56,404
Total 2024	3,620	83	53,689
Total 2023	3,857	75	66,634

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	72	86	11	179
Sport Fish	5	18	0	23
Non-Wildlife	10	3	0	13
Aquatic Invasive Species	10	43	1	54
Total 2025	97	150	12	269
Total 2024	151	56	24	231
Total 2023	145	77	14	236

Laramie Region – 11 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	5,493	6	76,073
Watercraft Enforcement	741	162	11,584
Total 2025	6,234	168	87,657
Total 2024	7,609	239	115,948
Total 2023	4,628	45	79,273

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	349	191	26	566
Sport Fish	61	47	0	108
Non-Wildlife	100	24	0	124
Aquatic Invasive Species	96	11	0	107
Total 2025	606	273	26	905
Total 2024	491	169	7	667
Total 2023	395	150	7	552

Lander Region – 7 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	4,133	0	53,207
Watercraft Enforcement	293	78	3,852
Total 2025	4,426	78	57,059
Total 2024	4,817	182	61,050
Total 2023	4,140	64	48,767

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	144	52	23	219
Sport Fish	17	14	1	32
Non-Wildlife	20	2	0	22
Aquatic Invasive Species	6	1	0	7
Total 2025	187	69	24	280
Total 2024	117	83	15	215
Total 2023	99	58	12	169

Casper Region – 10 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	4,229	18	69,200
Watercraft Enforcement	575	96	6,181
Total 2025	4,804	114	75,381
Total 2024	4,501	161	70,034
Total 2023	4,427	124	62,175

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	326	166	22	514
Sport Fish	42	48	0	90
Non-Wildlife	91	51	0	142
Aquatic Invasive Species	34	3	0	37
Total 2025	493	268	22	783
Total 2024	325	233	29	587
Total 2023	267	182	16	465

Pinedale Region – 4 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	1,801	24	23,693
Watercraft Enforcement	135	17	1,749
Total 2025	1,936	41	25,442
Total 2024	1,678	33	20,280
Total 2023	1,442	30	14,957

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	58	42	0	100
Sport Fish	19	10	0	29
Non-Wildlife	7	0	0	7
Aquatic Invasive Species	4	2	0	6
Total 2025	88	54	0	142
Total 2024	61	42	5	108
Total 2023	58	39	15	112

Law Enforcement Administration/ RRT

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	1,610	2	16,785
Watercraft Enforcement	453	7	1,501
Total 2025	2,063	9	18,286
Total 2024	2,069	27	21,474
Total 2023	2,282	54	27,643

Wildlife Investigations Unit – 7 Enforcement Personnel

Activity	Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	8,353	73,642
Total 2025	8,353	73,642
Total 2024	7,778	57,951
Total 2023	9,255	64,050

Law Enforcement Administration/ Wildlife Investigations Unit/ RRT

Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	46	19	2	67
Sport Fish	4	8	0	12
Non-Wildlife	3	0	0	3
Aquatic Invasive Species	7	0	0	7
Total 2025	60	27	2	89
Total 2024	96	38	1	135
Total 2023	77	26	11	114

Statewide Cumulative Law Enforcement Statistics

Activity	Hours	Watercraft Hours	Miles
Wildlife Enforcement	42,494	68	570,907
Watercraft Enforcement	3,068	572	35,881
Total 2025	45,562	640	606,788
Total 2024	44,848	603	572,460
Total 2023	48,804	947	626,375

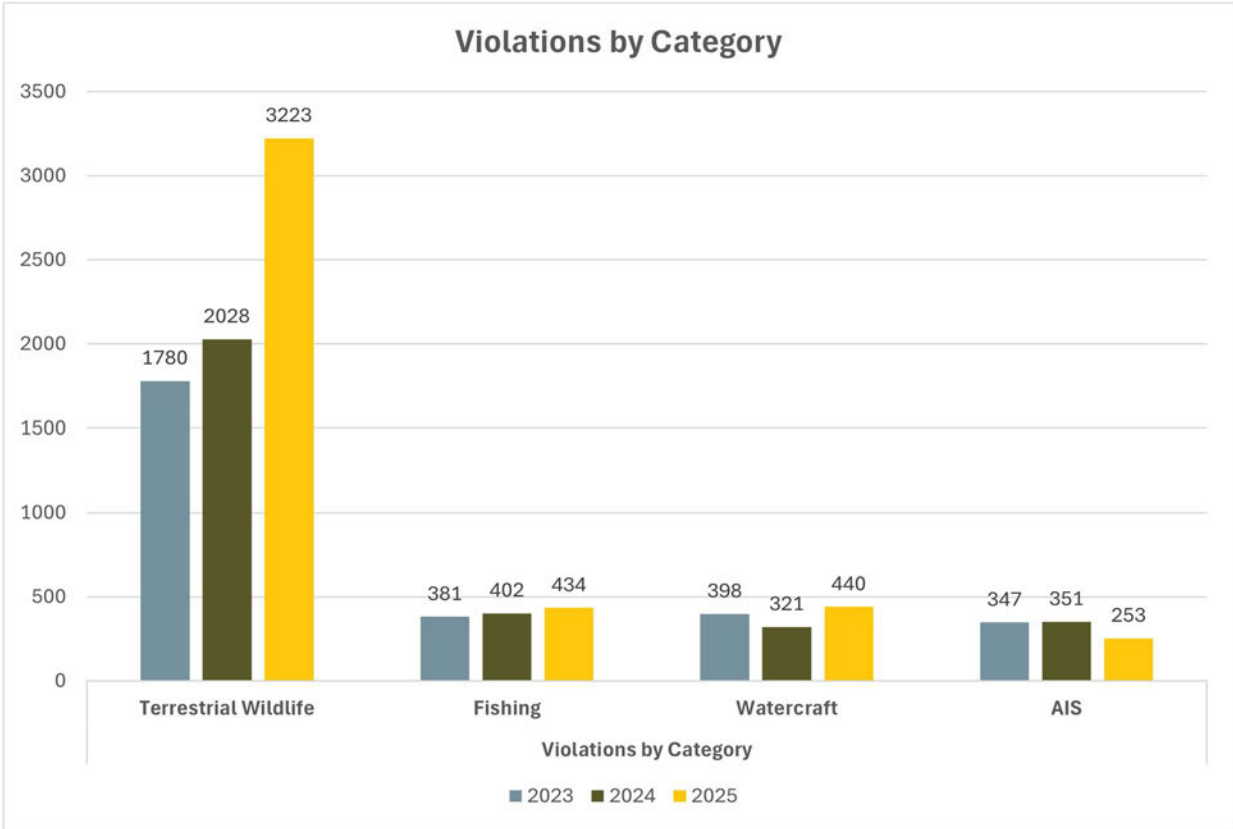
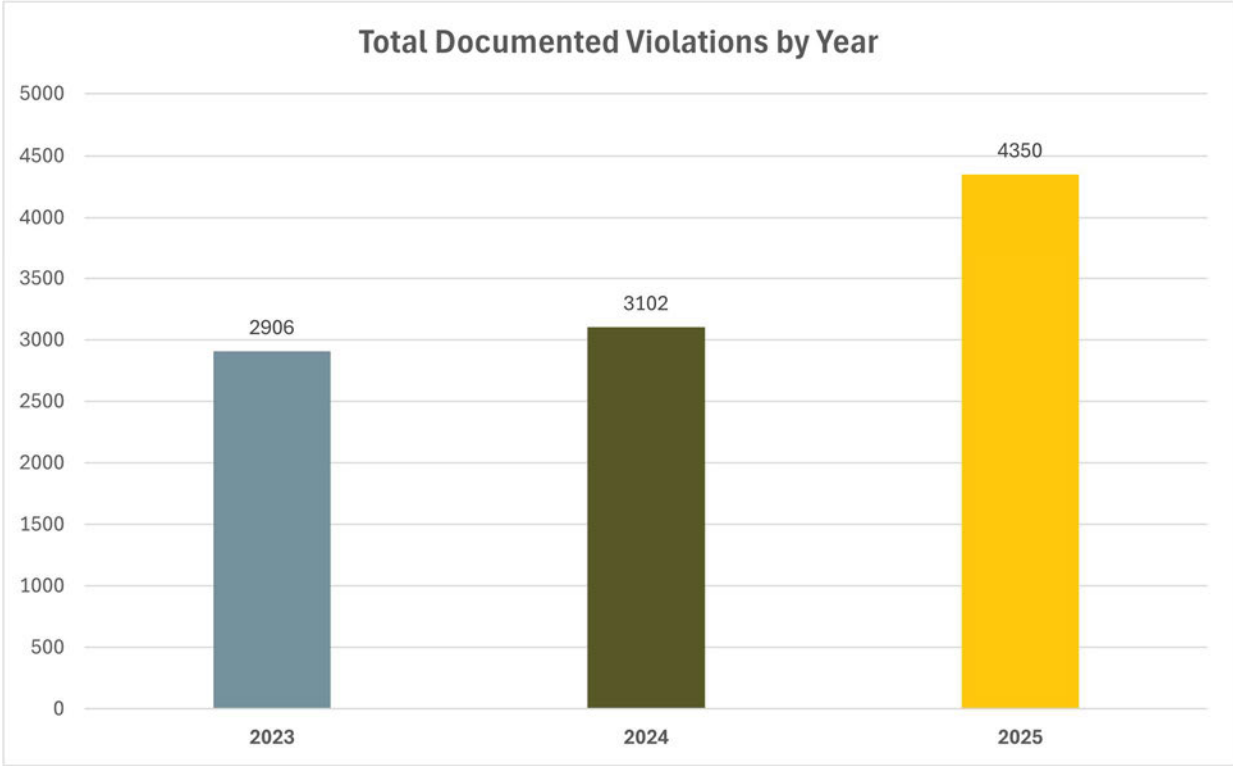
Program Enforcement	Warnings	Citations	Unknown Suspects	Total Law Enforcement Actions
Terrestrial Wildlife	1,832	1,213	178	3,223
Sport Fish	222	211	1	434
Non-Wildlife	319	121	0	440
Aquatic Invasive Species	183	63	1	253
Total 2025	2,562	1,608	180	4,350
Total 2024	1,922	1,024	156	3,102
Total 2023	1,823	935	148	2,906

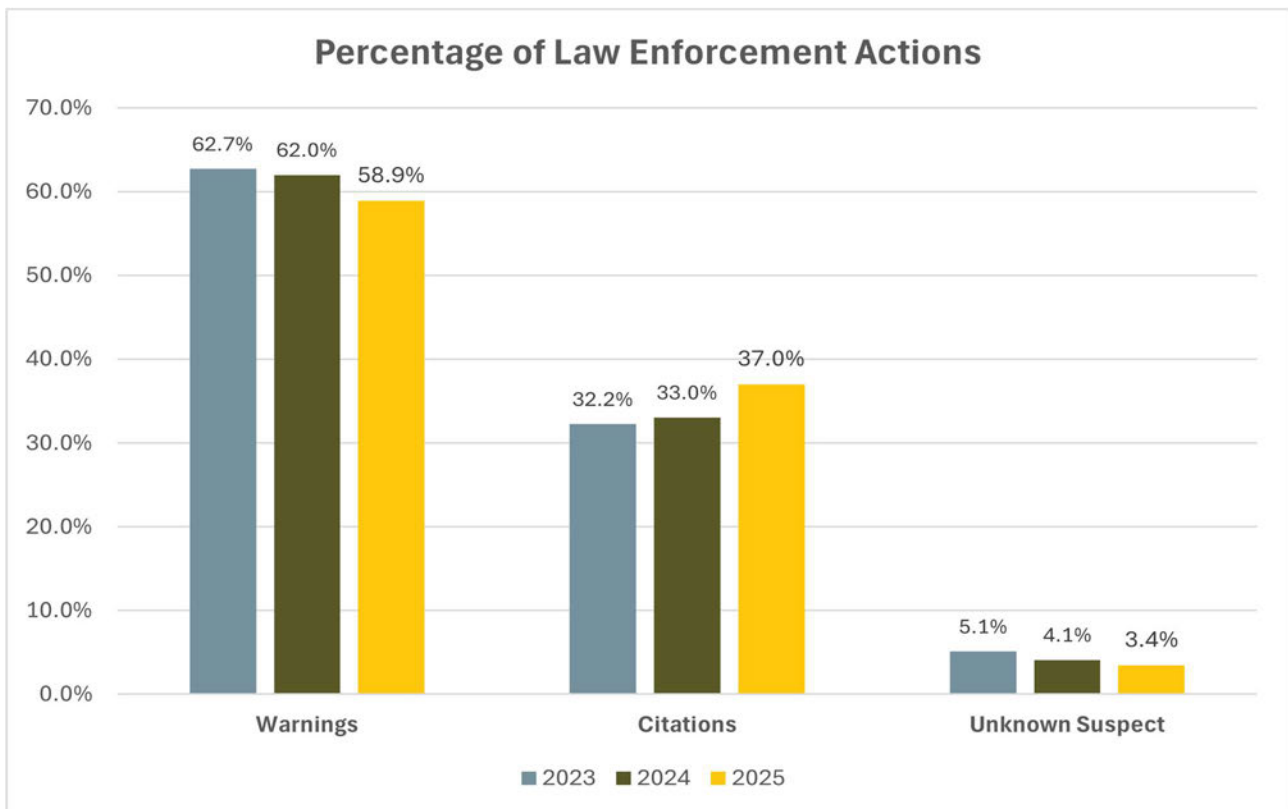
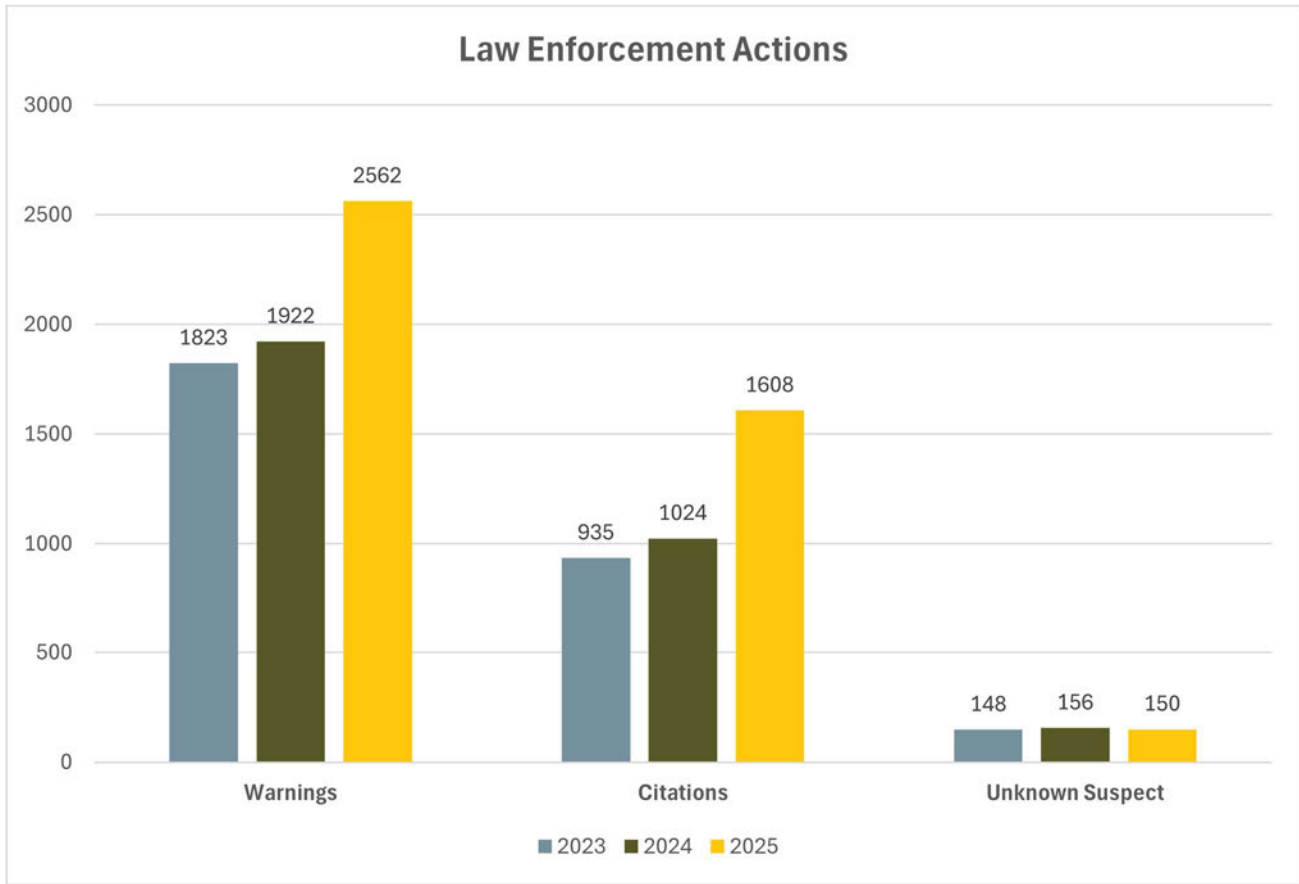
Fines Levied by Courts

Fines for Violations	\$375,118
Court-ordered restitution	\$141,103
Total 2025	\$516,221
Total 2024	\$422,804
Total 2023	\$605,505

Fines and restitution are imposed by the courts. Fine amounts are determined by a combination of state statute, which sets the severity of crimes (ex: misdemeanor versus felony) and the bond schedule, which specifies the fine for the charge if a defendant chooses to pay the citation instead of taking the case to court. Money collected for fines does not get paid to the Department.

Restitution is determined by the Court and can be designated to go to the Department or the Wyoming Wildlife Protectors' Association (WWPA).





Top 10 Violations

Top 10 Violations Documented in 2025	
1. Fishing without a license	282
2. Hunt, fish, trap, collect shed antlers on private land without permission (trespassing)	227
3. Fail to purchase conservation stamp	171
4. Fail to provide life jackets aboard watercraft	160
5. Fail to stop at AIS check station for inspection	130
6. Violation of rules governing use of Department-administered lands	120
7. Fail to tag big or trophy game animal	116
8. Waste or abandon edible portions of big game	105
9. Take wrong sex of animal	96
10. Fail to purchase AIS decal	89

In 2025, the top ten violations documented by Department law enforcement officers accounted for approximately 31% of all violations encountered. With few exceptions, the most common violations have not changed over the past several years and much of the Department's enforcement efforts are geared toward these violations.

Fishing without a license is consistently the most common violation in the state. Recreational anglers are the largest user group that game wardens contact in the field during the year. Many of these violations are committed by individuals who simply forgot to purchase a license, while others fish without licenses intentionally and take their chances on getting caught. Even with the ease of obtaining fishing licenses online with a smartphone, fishing without a license accounted for over 6% of all violations detected.

Responding to hunting, fishing, trapping, and shed antler collection trespassing complaints is a common job duty for many game wardens.

Several of the trespassing violations wardens responded to were unintentional by a suspect, but in many instances, the violators knew they were trespassing. Trespassing incidents accounted for approximately 5% of all violations.

Hunters and anglers, with some exceptions, are required to purchase a conservation stamp in addition to their license. The revenue generated from these sales is used to fund various Department projects, including the Access Yes program and wildlife habitat improvement projects. Failing to purchase a conservation stamp made up over 4% of all violations.

The most common boating safety violation continues to be having inadequate life jackets aboard watercraft. Game wardens patrolling the water emphasize the importance of this requirement due to the life-saving potential of proper life jacket wear. Many of these violations occur early in the boating season. Additionally, game wardens encounter many watercraft with an adequate number of life

jackets, but lacking jackets of the proper size for everyone aboard. Of particular concern are children provided with adult-sized life jackets, which can easily slide off them in the water or be pushed up in their faces, making it difficult to breathe. These violations made up approximately 4% of the total.

Violations of the AIS regulations remained high in 2025. The Department continued enforcement efforts at AIS check stations this year and stopped over 130 boaters who failed to stop for AIS inspections. This marks a 39% decrease in this violation from 2025.

Presumably this is due to a lack of staffing, especially in the Evanston area. Failing to purchase an AIS decal for a watercraft also remained prevalent. Many AIS violations are by non-motorized watercraft users, who are not required to register their watercraft. Motorized watercraft owners tend to be more familiar with boating and AIS regulations because they are offered a watercraft regulation brochure when they register their watercraft. The Department continues to expand awareness of the AIS program and the importance of preventing species like zebra mussels and invasive vegetation from becoming established in Wyoming waters. These two AIS violations combined comprised approximately 5% of total violations.

Department-administered lands include properties owned by the Wyoming Game & Fish Commission (Commission) and private lands enrolled in the Access Yes Program. Various regulations apply to these properties and are enforced by Department law enforcement officers. Several of the Commission-owned lands are closed to human presence during the winter months to protect wintering wildlife.

Over the past several years, multiple individuals have been cited for entering these properties during closures, mostly to gather shed antlers. Other common violations on Department-administered lands include off-road travel, open fires in restricted areas, lighting fireworks, failing to obey regulatory signs, and violations of “ranch rules” on Access Yes areas. Violations on Department lands made up approximately 3% of the total.

Failing to tag big game and trophy game animals continues to be a common violation. Licenses for these species contain carcass coupons, commonly referred to as tags. When one of these animals is harvested, the hunter is required to properly fill out the tag before leaving the site of the kill. Proper tagging entails detaching the carcass coupon from the license, signing the coupon, and cutting out the month and day of harvest to show when the animal was killed. Game wardens often encounter hunters in transit from the kill site who have failed to take one or more of the steps to properly tag their animals. In these situations, it is difficult to know whether the tagging violation was simply an oversight or if the person was trying to get their animal home without tagging it so they could go hunting again using the same license. Fail to tag violations made up almost 3% of the total.

Wyoming statute requires hunters taking big game to take specified edible portions of the animal from the field when the animal is harvested. Oftentimes wardens are called to investigate cases where this was not done properly according to laws and regulations. Hunters are required to take all the meat from the front and hind quarters, the back straps, and the tenderloins. Many times, a lack of

understanding leads to unintentional violations of these requirements. In rarer instances, unscrupulous hunters leave large portions or all of the animal in field. Oftentimes this is because the animal was taken illegally or simply because the hunter did not feel like packing the weight from the site of the kill. Waste or abandon edible portions of big game violations made up 3% of the total.

Hunting regulations specify limitations on the sex and species of animals that can be taken by a hunter holding a specific license. Each year, game wardens investigate incidents where a

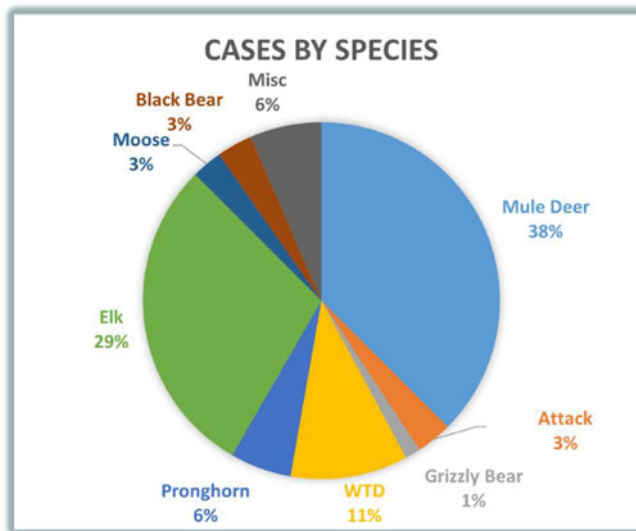
hunter has killed the wrong sex of animal. These typically involve taking an antlered or horned big game animal on a license valid only for antlerless animals. Most commonly, yearling buck antelope are taken by hunters with doe/fawn antelope licenses or spike deer or elk are taken by hunters with doe/fawn or cow/calf licenses. The Stop Poaching Hotline receives calls from multiple hunters each year reporting themselves for making this mistake in the field. Self-reported violations often result in reduced penalties imposed by the courts. Taking the wrong sex of animal made up approximately 2% of total violations.

Wildlife Forensics Lab

The forensic section of the Department's Wildlife Forensic and Fish Health Laboratory provides law enforcement analytical and technical forensic services to aid Wyoming wildlife law enforcement personnel, Wyoming biologists, and wildlife managers in an additional twelve states. The lab continues to maintain accreditation through the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) National Accreditation Board (ANAB) to ISO 17025 standards.

Wyoming's forensic lab personnel employ a variety of techniques to test evidence items collected during investigations of wildlife crimes. Species determination, sex identification, and DNA analyses are performed on blood, hair, saliva, tissue, and bones. Analyses also include DNA matching of submitted samples and determining the minimum number of animals represented in submitted samples. A detailed report of each

test is compiled and provided to the requesting officer. Lab personnel are often called upon to testify in court during trials of defendants charged with wildlife violations.



**Misc includes pig, cattle, coyote, and bobcat*

**Attack cases include black bear, grizzly bear, and coyote*

In 2025, various physical and biological properties were tested on 630 samples in response to 63 requests. A total of 18,750 tests

were conducted on meat/tissue samples, skulls, drillings, heads, arrows, knives, saws, blood, hair, hide, gut piles, saliva, clothes, and numerous other sample types. Results from forensic tests were used to obtain a minimum of \$77,300 in fines and restitution, which does not include pending fines, restitution or forfeitures. A combined 21 years of hunting and fishing privileges were lost, a combined six and a half years of unsupervised probation, a one-year jail sentence, and a one and a half-year suspended jail sentence.

Notable Case

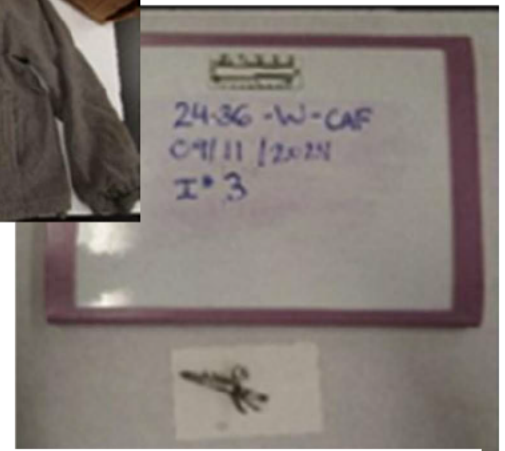
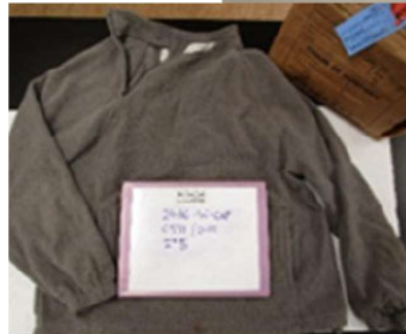
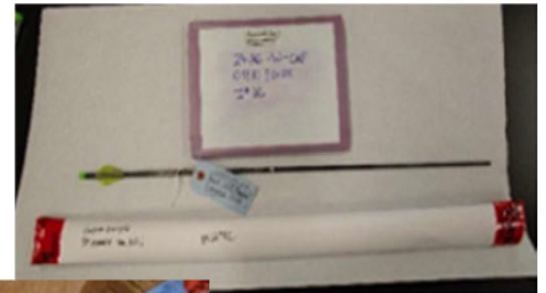
In the fall of 2024, the Wyoming Game and Fish Wildlife Forensic Laboratory received evidentiary items for a suspected wildlife poaching case from the Cody area, the lab submission was initiated by a game warden and wildlife investigator. Personnel in the forensic laboratory received 40 evidentiary items, including blood on arrows, broadheads, arrow inserts, a shirt, and eight mule deer tissue samples.

The forensic examination focused on answering the following three questions:

1. **Species Identification:** Determining the species of origin for the unknown blood and tissue samples
2. **Sex Identification:** Determining the sex of all submitted samples
3. **Individualization:** Determining if the unknown blood samples originated from any of the known mule deer tissue samples

Forensic testing determined that the submitted items represent a minimum of ten individual animals: two male mule deer, five female mule deer, one male white-tailed deer, one female white-tailed deer, and one female pronghorn.

According to the wildlife investigator in this case, the wildlife forensic results linked the suspect to virtually all recovered evidence, leading to 18 misdemeanor charges (taking deer without a license, wanton destruction) and one felony (destruction of a domestic cow). A guilty verdict was entered on nine misdemeanors and the felony. The individual was charged \$18,000 in restitution for deer offenses plus restitution for the cow, one year in jail (with 73 days credit), three years of supervised probation, and forfeiture of all archery equipment.



Three evidence items received that were swabbed for blood. Each one produced viable DNA that was used to identify species.

Recruitment, Retention, and Training Unit

The Recruitment, Retention, and Training (RRT) unit was established by the Department in 2023 to better address the training and professional development needs of personnel.

The RRT unit oversees the recruitment and testing process for new game wardens, manages the Field Training Officer (FTO) program, and organizes regular training sessions for game wardens across the state. During 2025 the RRT unit spent time on recruitment efforts across Wyoming and surrounding states. RRT members attended career fair events around the state, gave talks at the Department's boys and girls camps at Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp, and presented information on the game warden career at multiple University of Wyoming wildlife classes.

This year, the RRT unit worked with three new game wardens through the FTO process and

successfully trained six new game wardens who were promoted from regional game wardens to district game wardens.

In addition to their responsibilities with the RRT unit, these game wardens took on some additional duties and projects. RRT Supervisor Brady Frude assisted with vacant district coverage in the Lander Region and transplanted pheasants from the Sheridan bird farm to the Ocean Lake and Sand Mesa WHMA's. RRT Warden Adam Parks assisted with enforcement duties at the Fremont Lake ice fishing derby in March & the Kemmerer check station in October. RRT Warden Kristen Strom attended the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies trainers conference in North Carolina and provided coverage for the vacant districts within the Laramie Region.

Game Warden Applicant Testing

Wyoming statute requires that all game wardens be selected by competitive examination. The first step to becoming a Wyoming game warden has traditionally been to earn a bachelor's degree in wildlife management, biology, zoology or a closely related field. Since 2019, applicants with other degrees, such as criminal justice, are also considered, as long as they have a minimum of 20 college credits in wildlife coursework. This change in the minimum qualifications allowed the Department to consider applications from game wardens in other states who are looking to move to Wyoming. Many states do not require their game wardens to have a wildlife management degree as a prerequisite for

hiring. Wyoming has benefitted from recruiting and hiring experienced game wardens from other states. In addition to hiring game wardens from other states, the Department has also recruited and hired currently certified law enforcement officers from local sheriff's departments and municipal police departments, provided they have the necessary educational qualifications. Candidates who meet the education requirements and other initial employment qualifications are invited for a preliminary online interview. This determines which candidates will complete the game warden exam, in-person interviews, personality profile testing, psychological testing, and polygraph examination.

In 2024, the Department implemented a physical fitness test as part of the in-person testing week using the same standards as the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy's (WLEA) entrance assessment. Three categories are assessed; one-minute push-ups and one-minute sit-ups to test dynamic strength, and a 1.5-mile timed run to test cardiorespiratory fitness. Candidates who receive a conditional offer for a game warden job undergo a thorough background investigation and must successfully graduate from the 14-week, 639-hour Peace Officer Basic (POB) course at WLEA prior to working as a Department law enforcement officer. Individuals who successfully complete this hiring process can

take great pride in achieving the high standards required to become a Wyoming game warden.

In 2025:

110 people submitted applications for game warden positions (65 met education qualifications based on transcripts)

65 online interviews were conducted

21 attended in-person interviews

5 candidates received conditional offers of employment

5 candidates were hired into entry-level game warden positions

Game Warden Training

To maintain their status as Wyoming peace officers, game wardens must meet training requirements established by the Wyoming Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST). All officers must qualify with their duty handguns, rifles, and shotguns twice a year. Officers must also demonstrate proficiency with non-deadly force weapons and skills used for self-defense and controlling suspects, such as handcuffing and takedown techniques. Officers take additional online and in-person courses to complete training and legal updates necessary to maintain their POST certification. Whenever possible, Wyoming game wardens participate in training with officers from other law enforcement agencies,

including wildlife officers from other states. Some of these training topics include specialized investigation techniques, active shooter training, interview and interrogation, leadership skills, and other courses. These

combined training courses allow agencies to pool resources and share costs while benefiting many jurisdictions at the same time.



Game warden at multi-agency active shooter training

New game wardens attend three main training sessions after completing their basic training at the WLEA. Training topics during spring training include watercraft incident investigation techniques, watercraft patrol, BUI detection, fishing

enforcement, and watercraft/fishing statutes and regulations. They receive practical training



BUI Training

in officer water survival, cold-water immersion, boat handling, and patrol scenarios. Wardens attend a late summer training session to

prepare for the fall hunting seasons. Training topics include a review of Game and Fish statutes and regulations, patrol techniques, interstate game tag guidelines and issuance, game check stations, the Access Yes Program, general wildlife law enforcement, evidence collection, crime scene investigation, and various other game warden duties. During the winter training, the new game wardens are introduced to a wide variety of topics, including the Hunter Education program, media training, courtroom procedures, trophy game conflict resolution, wildlife damage evaluation and mitigation techniques, furbearers and trapping enforcement, snowmobile operations and maintenance, landowner relations, the hunting season setting process, winter survival and ice safety, and social media and cell phone search warrants. In addition to these intensive training sessions, new game wardens spend considerable time in their respective regions receiving on-the-job mentoring from other Department employees.

Stop Poaching Program

In 1980, the Stop Poaching Hotline was created to give the public an easier avenue to report suspected wildlife crimes in Wyoming. The hotline is answered 24/7 by dispatchers in a statewide law enforcement communications center in Cheyenne. In addition to the toll-free phone hotline, the public can report suspected violations via the Department website and a text tip line. The Stop Poaching Program is an excellent and necessary tool to aid game wardens in identifying and apprehending wildlife violators. People providing information regarding possible violations can remain anonymous.



In 2025, game wardens were dispatched to and followed up on 285 tips received from members of the public. In many cases, no violations could be determined. However, tips from the public were instrumental in identifying several specific violations and possible suspects. These tips led to 58 citations and 22 warnings being issued to violators. Defendants charged due to Stop Poaching tips were ordered to pay \$24,000 in fines and restitution for this year, with 30 cases still under investigation or pending court disposition. Without the public's help and support, game wardens would have a much more difficult job.

Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association

To encourage reporting of wildlife violations by the public, the Department has partnered with the Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association (WWPA). The WWPA was started in 1983 as a registered non-profit organization. The sole purpose of the WWPA is to manage a reward account and provide monetary rewards to citizens who provide information leading to the apprehension and conviction of wildlife violators. The WWPA is funded by restitution payments as ordered by the courts at the sentencing of wildlife violators and from private donations.



Many of the successful investigations and prosecutions of wildlife violators in Wyoming would not have been possible without information provided by concerned citizens. Many informants show genuine concern for Wyoming's wildlife by turning in friends or family members. Department enforcement officers may submit a reward recommendation to the WWPA when a violator has been successfully prosecuted. In 2025, \$10,000 in rewards was paid to eight individuals who provided the information leading to the conviction of wildlife violators.

Wildlife Violator Compact

Wyoming joined the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (Compact) in 1996. The Compact is a reciprocal agreement between member states to honor suspensions of hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges for convicted wildlife violators.

Individuals suspended in one member state may also have their privileges suspended in the other member states. The Compact serves as an additional deterrent to

violating wildlife laws and strengthens the consequences of illegal hunting, fishing or trapping activities. The Compact is also an effective tool to

ensure that nonresident violators meet their court obligations, as those who fail to do so have their privileges suspended until their case is resolved.

There are 49 member states and the last non-member state, Hawaii, is in the process of joining.

This makes a suspension in one state effectively a nationwide loss of privileges. Nationally, 4,851 new license suspensions were entered into the Compact in 2025, including 36 from Wyoming. Several cases initiated in 2025 are

awaiting court proceedings and may lead to further license suspensions once completed.



**Interstate
Wildlife
Violator
Compact**

New Legislation Affecting Law Enforcement

HB0045 Removing otters as protected animals

Signed into Law by the Governor 2/24/2025

Summary: This bill removes otters from the definition of “protected animal.” River otters are now regulated as nongame wildlife under Commission regulations.

HB0005 Fishing outfitters and guides-registration of fishing boats

Signed into Law by the Governor 2/27/2025

Summary: This act authorizes the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to regulate commercially guided fishing boats. It creates an advisory board to provide recommendations for promulgating rules. The rules shall require registration of boats and payment of an annual fee beginning January 1, 2026.

HB0211 Hunting wildlife from vehicles

Signed into Law by the Governor 3/3/2025

Summary: This bill amends W.S. 23-3-306 to allow hunting wildlife from a vehicle if the wildlife does not require a license or permit to take, is not otherwise protected under Wyoming law, and is not classified as threatened or endangered by federal wildlife regulations.

HB0275 Treatment of animals

Signed into Law by the Governor 3/3/2025

Summary: This bill amends W.S. 23-3-103, 23-3-306, 23-3-103 and 23-3-306 along with sections of Title 6. The bill designates a new offense for cruelty to animals if a person knowingly, and with intent to cause undue suffering, tortures, torments, or mutilates living wildlife, including predatory animals and predacious birds, after taking the wildlife into their possession. This bill clarifies that the immediate killing of wildlife isn’t a violation, and should not be construed to require a snare or trap to be checked earlier than already required under current law and rule. The bill also clarifies that any person who pursues a predatory animal or predacious bird using a vehicle or other conveyance that injures or incapacitates the animal or bird must make a reasonable effort to immediately kill the animal or bird.

Awards and Recognition

2024 Wyoming Game Warden Association Officer of the Year

[REDACTED], Wildlife Investigator

Nominated by their peers, this award honors an officer for the previous year's service based on their law enforcement and wildlife management work ethic, public involvement and relationships, WGWA involvement, professionalism, morale contributions, and other positive attributes.

2025 Shikar-Safari Wildlife Officer of the Year

Jon Desonier, Lander Access Yes Coordinator

Presented annually by Shikar-Safari Club International, this award honors a wildlife officer in each state and Canadian province for outstanding performance and achievements.



Promotions

Aaron Kerr – Law Enforcement Coordinator to Law Enforcement Supervisor

Chris Baird - Fish Culturist to Law Enforcement Coordinator

Kyle Lash – South Jackson game warden to Cody Warden Supervisor

James Hobbs – Afton game warden to Green River Supervisor

Transfers

Chase Ferguson – Lusk to Baggs

Zane Stewart – West Rawlins to Buffalo

Colten Galambas – Lovell to South Jackson

Levi Wood – Saratoga to South Cody



Visit our web page: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/enforcement>

Retirements



Scott Browning
Lander Region Investigator
(35 years of service)



Mike Choma
Law Enforcement Supervisor
(35 years of service)



Todd Graham
Green River Regional Supervisor
(35 years of service)



Scott Werbelow
Cody Region Warden Coordinator
(33 years of service)

Retirements continued



Kim Olson

Baggs Game Warden
(30 years of service)



Andy Countryman

Green River Access Yes Coordinator
(21 years of service)



Allen Deru

Mountain View Game Warden
(14 years of service)



STOP POACHING

1-877-WGFD-TIP



Help protect Wyoming's wildlife

**Call the Stop Poaching Hotline or text TIP411
(Text keyword WGFD and message)**