

# Hunting challenges demand hunter honesty

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Ever made an honest mistake while hunting and fishing?

Anyone who has spent a good bit of time in the outdoors probably has.

After reading Wyoming Game and Fish Department public information officer Jeff Obrecht's recent piece concerning "honest hunting mistakes," it's worthwhile considering how to react to such situations.

Obrecht explains that game wardens are usually hunters themselves and ordinarily will recognize the difference between honest mistakes and those where someone is trying to get away with something. That's the difference between getting a warning and a full-blown violation.

His examples of honest mistakes are hitting two big game animals with one shot or not properly identifying a buck pronghorn or a spike deer or elk in low light in antlerless doe- and cow-only areas. Rather than trying to get a friend to tag the second kill or leaving the accidentally shot animal to rot, which moves you into the realm of a serious violation, consider reporting such mistakes to Game and Fish immediately. Take care of the matter before it leads to a ruinous penalty.

## Learn from your mistakes

Some such challenges that require reporting include shooting a hen pheasant or turkey instead of a rooster or a tom, discovering that you have hunted before the season opens or after it has closed, mistakenly exceeding a game limit, having a bullet pass through an animal in heavy cover and killing an additional animal you couldn't see, catching a mountain lion, deer, eagle, etc., in a snare or predator trap.

It's easy for me to preach or suggest that people indict themselves by following a recommended procedure and calling the Stop Poaching hotline, 877-WGFD-TIP or the 24-hour Jackson Game and Fish answering system, 733-2321. However, recognizing the usual excitement that follows any hunting incident, taking a leap of faith and reporting your mistake still requires strong character. And unfortunately not all game wardens or policemen I've met are as intuitive and reasonable as Joe Pickett, the hero in C. J. Box's novels.

Obrecht includes one aspect that veteran hunters know and those newer to the field may unhappily learn: Living with a hunting mistake such as missing a target and downing the wrong animal grows into a self-inflicted wound that remains with some for a long time. A salient shooting error during a blacktail deer

hunt 45 years ago in California lives vividly in my memories. From that incident I evolved into a more careful hunter.

### **Beating the system?**

Back in September, Game and Fish reported its long-standing list of the five most common Wyoming hunting violations.

Topping the roster is the failure to tag a big game or trophy game animal followed by two old favorites: shooting from a vehicle and shooting from a public highway or road.

Failing to retain proof of an animal's sex is another frequent violation. The final top ticket collector is trespassing — hunting or fishing on private land without written landowner or representative permission.

When I first hunted in Wyoming my friends drilled into me the importance of immediately dating and signing my hunting coupon. I always carry a ballpoint pen, so once I remember this task the rest is easy. Otherwise it's fun to watch hunters try to turn a 130-grain Remington soft-point bullet into a pen.

Shooting from a truck (except where legal for handicapped hunters) and stepping onto a road to take an easy shot are long-standing mistakes. Old-time wardens helped eager hunters repent from such bad habits by setting up silhouettes of deer and elk within comfortable range of popular hunting roadways. Early-morning and late-evening road hunters couldn't resist blasting such easy targets. Usually a large circular saw blade was inside the fake animal. At the shot, a loud clang resounded. Then the smiling warden stepped out to present the lawbreaker with a ticket and congratulate him on a fine but expensive shot.

### **Loaded guns in vehicles**

Unfortunately one of the most dangerous aspects enhanced by the excitement of going hunting is packing a loaded rifle or shotgun in a vehicle. Nothing good ever comes from such reckless behavior. When I was a youngster I was on a Florida deer stand when a pickup truck raced up. In his haste to jump out and cut me off, the driver sent a 3-inch load of 12-gauge 00 buckshot through his truck roof. Ouch!

Trespassing and not hunting in the correct antelope, elk or deer area are fears I'll always have. I'm still upset after a long-ago incident with a bullying female rancher, Mamie Ball, who disagreed with our definitive Bureau of Land Management map about a popular antelope area. While she threatened Jay Buchner, Keith DeBeer and me with eternal Big Piney jail time for trespassing, Keith and I missed out on two of the biggest pronghorns we'd ever seen.

“You must have been right about the property where you were,” chuckled then game warden Chuck Thornton during a later visit, “because I didn't see you around the jail recently.”

What a delight to notice that Wyoming hunters with GPS units may now buy a micro SD chip (developed

by HuntingGPSmaps.com) from Game and Fish that shows land status and hunter location. Call 307-777-4600 for information.

Whether Bruun could understand such obvious GPS information is another story.

### **Friday night ‘Waypoints’**

The new film “Waypoints” from fishing travel agency maestro-promoter Jim Klug (Yellow Dog Fly Fishing Adventures) rolls out worldwide on Friday evening at the Pink Garter Theatre. This is Jim’s fourth Bozeman, Mont., Confluence Films fish porn-a-log.

The doors to the Pink Garter Theatre open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$12 at the door or online at the Pink Garter website.

American Rivers, a vigorous nationwide organization that has 300 members from the greater Jackson area, is sponsoring the event. Scott Bosse, AR’s irrepressible regional representative, is even abandoning Bozangeles for the Jackson emcee job.

“We’re always shilling for more members dedicated to protecting our free-flowing resources, which are under increasing pressures from all directions,” Bosse said. “We’ve had excellent support from Jackson, and we’re hoping to expand on that theme.”

### **Fish films now like ski flicks**

Like Klug’s previous jaw-dropping films, “Drift,” “Rise” and “Connect,” “Waypoints” uses Warren Miller and Dick Barrymore staccato ski film-like imagery to showcase screaming fly reels and bent rods in exotic locations such as St. Brandon’s Atoll in the Indian Ocean, Patagonia Chilean trout hotspots and southeastern Alaska short-stream steelhead runs.

Jackson-Victor angling star and perennial Yellow Dog trip host Jeff Currier will again be featured when the serious rodwork turns to India. Currier’s presence will be missed at the Garter, however, since he’s currently dodging crocs and murderous army ants while hosting a South African tigerfish trip.

A frothy finale from Venezuela’s unique jungle dwelling dental-work freak show, the payara, will beckon even hardcore snowboarders to stay inside to watch this wintertime tropical entertainment.

Bosse will haul along some succulent raffle items, including a Glenn Brackett-designed two-piece Sweetgrass Rod Co. Mantra Series 7.5-foot bamboo fly rod. This Twin Bridges, Mont., creation is definitely worth seeing in person.