

METHODS USED IN KENTUCKY ON COMBATING THE HUNTING OF DEER AT NIGHT

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In the beginning let me say that we have not yet found a highly successful method for stopping the night poaching of deer in Kentucky. We have made progress, yes, in the never ceasing battle to bring to justice this unsavory violator. Perhaps, one of the biggest factors that could bring better control of the poacher is the use of two-way radios, which the state does not yet have, but which are being considered by the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Due to the terrain of the areas where deer are found, a highly successful poacher control method will not be formulated until the radio system is set up. There are 18,000 square miles of timberlands in Kentucky, and of this, there are 214,000 acres that are in the big game management areas, located for the most part in the mountainous sections of Eastern, Northeastern and South-eastern Kentucky. It is in these sections that the greater concentrations of deer are found and quite naturally where most of the poaching has been found. To patrol that huge area would be impossible with the number of conservation officers that the Department now has. Patrol is made doubly difficult because of the few all weather roads through these sections.

Another deterrent to enforcement in these areas is the attitude of a great many people who live there. Many of them uphold the killing of deer by such methods, and it is almost impossible to get help in convicting a violator. This feeling even extends into the courts in some instances.

Kentucky's laws were woefully weak in convicting a deer poacher until they were changed in 1956. Up until that time, a conservation officer must actually see the accused man kill a deer, or find him with the carcass of a deer in his possession. The change in the laws makes it unlawful for any person to cast the rays of a light on any highway or field, or forest, upon any deer or rabbit with intention of taking such game while having in his possession a firearm or other implement by which such deer or rabbit could be killed. This law also empowers conservation officers to kill on sight any dog found to be chasing deer.

In enforcing the poaching law, the Department attempted to use portable radios. This proved to be inadequate because of the extremely limited range in the mountainous areas. The State Police officers were highly cooperative on other occasions. By the use of their radio-equipped cars violators, hunting from cars, were stopped and the violators apprehended.

Different methods had to be devised for the various sections. For instance, in some of these mountainous areas, plateaus were gathering places for the deer herds. This land had once been farmed and the deer were found to use these areas for feeding. Prior to the open season the herds were located by officers. They then hid themselves in these sections and waited for the poachers to arrive. They had very little success in this manner because they were unable to cover much ground, and when hearing a shot, or seeing the flash of a light they were unable to approach or reach the violator before he had sped away. Later they concealed the cars and watched over a greater area. When a shot was heard they rapidly approached the area and on some occasions, by using several cars were able to obtain the license number even if the car should get away. By this method some were caught red-handed.

On one occasion, when cars were used, they heard a shot after spotting the flashing light. The offenders let some of the men out of the car, and while they bled the deer, the car continued to drive up and down the road. By using the state police radio system information was obtained about the owner of the car. Within 45 minutes they had four cars and 12 men at the home of the owner of the car. The deer was found at the home and the violators were convicted.

Another method that worked fairly well for awhile was the placing of one car at the head of a ravine. Another was placed at a high place at the entrance

of the ravine. In this manner often a carload of poachers was trapped between the two cars. It didn't take the violators long to overcome this, however. They did not act until they had located the lookout car. Then they went to a more isolated spot to practice their violations.

Often the poachers will use several cars in their work. They, in this manner, confuse the enforcement officers, since these officers will not know which car they will use in killing the deer. While following one car, another probably will be bagging the deer.

Due to the grapevine, activities of the conservation officers are pretty well known to the violators. A stakeout often netted nothing but a long wait. The violators had heard previously that the stakeout had been planned. They knew where, when and how many men would be concentrated there. They simply did not show up on the given night. When the officers were forced to leave the area they knew that too, and then would proceed with their slaughtering.

We believe that most of the methods used by the Department would have been successful, had the officers been equipped with a radio system. A whole county could have been covered with a few lookout cars, and by working as a team, information could have been relayed that undoubtedly would have brought more of the violators to justice.

Until the people of a given area become educated to the necessity of laws protecting deer herds, the trapping of poachers is going to be a difficult problem. As it takes several years and maybe a new generation to bring about that educational program, the best method of enforcing this poaching law will be with a radio set-up and with a court which favors the law enforcement officers over the violators.

THE METHODS USED IN LOUISIANA IN COMBATING THE HUNTING OF DEER AT NIGHT

By B. C. DAHLEN

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It is indeed unfortunate that limitations of any kind must be used in dealing with our American hunting and fishing public. In a country such as ours, in which fish and game was once so bountiful and in which our citizens had grown so accustomed to harvesting this same fish and game in such plentiful numbers, it is rather difficult to explain to some of these same people the necessity for either wildlife conservation or wildlife management.

Both you and I are aware of the heavy inroads that have been made by our advancing civilization into our wildlife habitat areas. We are also aware of the fact that since World War II our hunter-public has increased at least 10 fold and continues to increase each year. The end results of these two facts is that our hunters are finding themselves with smaller and smaller areas in which to pursue their favorite form of recreation each year.

Another unfortunate situation in which we find ourselves is in the enforcement of our fish and our game laws. In this great land of ours in which we like to refer to our hunters and fishermen as sportsmen there would seemingly be no necessity for law enforcement. Many of our "sportsmen" have been heard to say that they engage in the sport for the sport alone but occasionally they may be found with hunting bags that are too heavy. Occasionally some of them may be found using means of taking fish and game that are not considered in keeping with good conservation practices. These exceptions occur in such numbers as to necessitate the use of enforcement personnel by the fish and game agencies of the various states.

We of the Enforcement Division of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission realize that enforcement of our laws is not the full answer to this problem. However, until such time as our hunters and our fishermen have been educated to the necessity for wildlife conservation, enforcement will be the major tool in combatting law violations along these lines.