

We have two-way radios in most of our patrol cars, when we are patrolling for night hunters. We work two men to the car and also use two or more radio cars in the same area when possible. No two cases are alike, therefore no set pattern can be used in apprehending night hunters. Most of our night hunting occurs on highways and well traveled dirt roads that run through areas where we have a heavy concentration of deer. About 75 percent of the night hunters use only the headlights of their car for hunting deer.

One of the best methods we have found is to park our patrol car off the highway or road where it can't be seen by passing automobiles and where night hunting is most apt to occur. Wait until a suspicious looking car comes by, then follow the suspect with our lights off and see what he does. Sometimes we may follow a car for 15 or 20 miles before he shoots a deer or does something that indicates he is night hunting.

I would like to point out that when we follow an automobile driving in an unusual manner in deer area, such as driving extremely slow, hitting his brakes on deer crossing and zig-zagging where his light will shine into the woods, on stopping this automobile and finding a loaded gun or evidence to show the gun was loaded at the time he was driving in this unusual manner, we make an arrest and can usually get a conviction. We don't have to catch a night hunter with a deer to convict him. Our law in the State of Alabama clearly states: "Attempt to kill or capture bird or animal protected by law at night."

I will give you an example: One cold, rainy night two of our conservation officers were on patrol duty, parked just off a farm to market road where passing automobiles could not see them, when an automobile came by driving about 15 miles per hour. The two officers followed in the patrol car for about four or five miles observing the unusual manner in which the automobile was being operated. Then an oncoming car appeared, the officers pulled off the road. The lights of the oncoming car shined on the patrol car. The car they were following left at a high rate of speed. The two officers followed in hot pursuit with speed over 100 miles an hour. They called another patrol car in that area by two-way radio, who set up a roadblock about 15 miles away. On searching the automobile, officers found a fresh fired buckshot shell, a head light, nine buckshot shells and a jammed gun loaded with buckshot. The two prisoners spent the rest of the night in the county jail.

All of you may not agree with me on this, but when we apprehend a night hunter we usually take him to the county jail, question him, take down all of his statements, then book him and let him make bond with the sheriff.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO FIGHT OR PREVENT HEADLIGHTING

By J. A. McQUERRY, SR.

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Gentlemen, I do not pretend to have the answer to this problem, but can only give you a rundown on some of the means we have employed. When I think of the sleep we have lost, the miles traveled, the gas burned, I am reminded of the young couple that tried for several years to raise a family without any visible results. They had tried physical check-ups, various vitamin aids, physical culture, sought the advice of their family doctor and close friends—still no blessed event! After a consultation between themselves, looking back over their years of efforts, and in view of the fact that they had—shall we say—rather enjoyed the whole program—that they would just keep on trying! So, in spite of the fact that our efforts have not been very rewarding, I guess we shall just keep on trying!

Seriously, gentlemen, I know that in our state this is a major conservation problem and one not easily dealt with. If any of you have the answer to it, we have the time to sit and listen, as I feel we could learn a lot on this subject.

It has been our experience that a hit and miss or one night stand in any location is not very effective. In most cases four to seven nights have been

necessary as violators seldom work any location more often than once a week. The violator having the choice of the time and place makes this problem anything but easy, and a sustained effort is always hard to arrange, as we have so many other duties that must be taken care of.

These people seem to be the most active at the start of hunting season in our state and, of course, this is always a very busy time for all of us. We have been able to devote more time just after hunting season, and, have had much better results. We find that a good many of these offenders work pretty hard at headlighting twelve months in the year, causing a problem that is always with us. Some of them have become very proficient with light and gun. Such was the case of the fellow that we found operating with a powerful light fastened to his gun barrel. It was fastened in such a way that when he spotted a deer, all he had to do was pull the trigger. The sights were lined up with the beam of light.

We have tried using from four to sixteen radio-equipped units stationed at strategic points. And sometimes men with walkie-talkies, as they are easier to conceal than automobile units. We work out locations for each unit according to the number of roads and area to be covered.

The first problem is to locate the violator. As you know in our time with good roads and fast transportation, the subject generally covers a wide area. He may operate in a location that you have received a report on last night, and tomorrow night be working in location some fifty or one hundred miles away. In fact, he is quite often a very elusive character. The harder you press him the more educated he becomes. A good many of ours, I am sure by now have B.A. degrees, and, if you have ever chased one on a dusty, gravel road at night, you know he is not too easy to catch after you have located him. Up to this time we have found that it is best to use as many radio equipped units as possible. Take these units into the area to be worked before dark and conceal them. If the offender is spotted, the unit nearest him will call other units nearby to block the area of operation. Then, he will proceed to try to apprehend the violator.

In addition to this plan, we have found that the use of a slow flying plane is very helpful. The observer in a plane can spot a headlight from a long way and can cover a large area quickly. The plane radio equipped, can call in ground units to block roads. If the violator eludes the units that attempt to block him, the plane stays with him and calls in other nearby units.

In spite of all these efforts and others, we still have too, too much headlighting. But the psychology of using the plane with ground units has been about the best method employed so far in fighting and preventing headlighting.

FACTORS AFFECTING AND METHODS USED IN COMBATING THE NIGHT HUNTING OF DEER IN FLORIDA

By DAVID E. SWINDELL

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In approaching this subject, it is first necessary to consider a number of factors which bear upon the problem of the night hunting of deer. First of all, I'd like to establish my use of the term "fire hunting" since it is so widely used in Florida. It arises from the practice of earlier days of using a fire pan on a pole as the source of light. The terms "night hunting," "jack lighting," and "spot lighting" are rarely used in Florida.

Fire hunting is relatively widespread over the State, and almost every area where deer occur in any appreciable quantity is troubled with the problem to some degree. The diversity of habitat situations is responsible for a variety of different hunting techniques.

In the pineland areas, the efforts at reforestation and fire prevention have resulted in the establishment of a rather dense undergrowth; and openings