OUTDOORS

Poachers don't make it easy for ethical hunters



Tips from the Posse By Mark Rackay

Growing up, I did not have anyone to take me hunting. Raised by grandparents, my grandfather did not hunt anymore, claiming he was "too old." Because Colorado was, and still is, a hunting paradise, just about everyone in rural areas hunted. Except for me.

After many years of begging, whining and pleading, I was finally handed off to a pair of old men who were long time friends of the family. These men took this young buck under their wing and taught him about survival, outdoors, guns, gun safety, ethics, whiskey, campfires and a few other things that my grandmother would have preferred I never learned.

The special gripe in life these gentlemen had was anyone who was a road hunter. Everyone understood that road hunting was the most despicable, low life; bottom feeding activity anyone could ever take part in. These old men felt that if a person grew up to be a pickpocket, sneak thief, or even a golfer, it was far better than being a road hunter.

A road hunter is someone who has their rear end permanently attached to the seat of their car. That person drives around roads in the mountains, searching for a deer that is standing by the side of the road. The road hunter's boots never touch the ground.

Looking back, I have decided that there is something worse than road hunting, and that is a poacher. Ethical hunting means caring for the game you seek, never wasting it, practicing only safe methods of take, and above all, respecting the animals. Poachers do none of this and give all ethical hunters a bad name.

Poaching is considered the illegal taking of game and any other violations of the laws and regulations committed during the process. Basically, there are three reasons people poach game and that includes money, ego and thrill killing.

There are a small percentage of people who just get off on killing animals. These people probably have deeper psychotic issues than I want to know about. The thrill killer will kill an elk and leave the entire animal on the ground to rot. license, takes the animal. Their motivation is to have the biggest trophy, or many trophies on the wall, and stroke their ego.

Believe it or not, most people who poach remain very quiet about it. You would think that they would want to brag about their exploits, but that is usually not the case. In the hunting community, the worse thing you can be is a poacher (even worse than a road hunter). The poacher does not want that negative stigma attached to them.

Another reason poachers kill animals is for money. Animals have a dollar value, some more than others, and poachers look to gain financial rewards for their evil deeds. Some cultures place a high value on bears, for example. Bear paw is an exotic food dating back thousands of years.

For decades, Africa has been struggling with a poaching crisis that has resulted in declines in iconic large mammals such as elephants, rhinos, zebras and gorillas. Some 26,000 elephants, three-quarters of the elephant population in the Ruaha-Rungwa region of Tanzania were killed for their ivory in a five-year period.

The various governments in Africa have taken a hard line against poaching because the loss of animals costs so much in lost revenue from legitimate paying hunters who visit the countries. Camouflage clothing is illegal in most countries on the Dark Continent because it is associated with poachers. I recently read of one government that ordered anyone seen wearing camouflage was to be considered a poacher and shot on site. That should reduce the poacher population.

I received some information from Bob Thompson, the head of Law Enforcement for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) regarding wildlife violations statistics for the State.

In 2017, there were 3,175 citations issued across the state. Of those, 66% were either found guilty or paid the fine. Another 22% were issued a warning citation at the discretion of the wildlife officer. Seven percent of the offenders were found not guilty and 5% still had cases pending at the time of the report.

If you wanted to break it down to just unlawful possession of Colorado's big game species, in 2017 there were 359 unlawful big game possession charges. Over a ten-year period, there were 3,707 unlawful possessions of big game animals citations issued.

Colorado takes a firm stand against wildlife violations. Thompson provided the following example to show the potential value of an elk, represented by the fines imposed.



Ethical, fair chase hunting is what the outdoors is all about for me. Unfortunately, there is an element that consider poaching to be sport. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

potential breakdown of a possible fine.Unlawful possession of an elk=

\$1,000 fine

• Unlawful possession of a 6-point bull =additional \$10,000 fine

• Unlawful use of artificial light = \$200 fine

• Hunting outside of lawful season = \$1685 fine

• Unlawful hunting without a valid elk license = \$1685 fine

cense = \$1685 fine This equates to a total fine of \$14.570 and wildlife parts may be as high as 34 billion dollars a year.

The old men who taught me hunting are long gone now. I think of them in a fond way every time I head afield. They would be happy to know that I did not grow up to be a road hunter or a poacher.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves

The second group of poachers does it for their ego. This group sees a trophy animal and, without regard for season or Let's say a poacher shoots a 6-point bull elk at night, using an artificial light outside of an established season, without a proper and valid license. Each of these elements is a separate crime and here is a for killing that elk. I would say that Colorado does put a value on their wildlife.

The poaching problem is probably not going to go away anytime soon. Most western states post similar numbers annually. The Wildlife Traffic Institute estimates that the illegal trade in wildlife as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@icloud.com.

GARDENING

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years! (I hope my kids will want my bulbs.)

I think a lot of people must think amaryllis are pretty great Christmas plants because the U.S. imports more than 10 million amaryllis bulbs every year. Most of these come from Holland or South Africa. With that said, be aware that amaryllis are considered poisonous to pets. If ingested, pets may vomit, appear depressed, or show signs of a painful abdomen and a loss of appetite, so keep them out of reach from your pets as well as small children.

With more than 600 named varieties of amaryllis I bet you can find one that will be a perfect fit for your Christmas décor. You know what? I think this has put me in the mood for Christmas. Is it too early to start wishing for a white Christmas?

Linda Corwine McIntosh, licensed commercial pesticide applicator, ISA Certified Arborist, advanced master gardener

FOYAN FROM PAGE A12

Giving a young person responsibilities regarding your pet's care promotes their sense of leadership, asks them to think about the needs of the dog in addition to their own, and helps them learn to focus on a specific task over a long period of time, and even as other things are happening. All of these traits are very beneficial to their healthy development into responsible and thoughtful adults, and the best part is that they're just having fun — hiking with the family pet, not even realizing the important lessons they're learning in the process.

So pick out a fun, dog-friendly hike, saddle up your fury best friend, and give your kids some specific, caring roles to accomplish — it will be fun for everyone.

For more outdoor safety tips, trail game ideas, and hiking trails, visit the Friends of Youth and Nature (FOYAN) website at friendsofyouthandnature.org. FOYAN is a non-profit that promotes opportunities for youth and families to go outside, experiencing outdoor activities and exploring nature.

