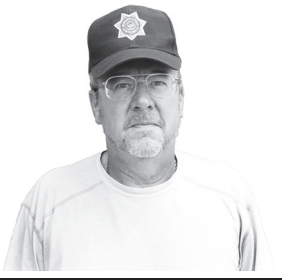


When game animals get the last word



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

A decade ago, I decided to expand my hunting career to add dangerous game. I have travelled three continents and a dozen countries in this pursuit and so far, am still around to write about it. There is a special kind of excitement hunting game that can make you a star in one of those “this happened to my late friend stories.”

My career choices have often left me to face dangerous game with two legs, so adding hunting dangerous critters with a leg in each corner, came as no surprise to my wife of many years. She has always been convinced I ride the short bus but at least had enough sense to remain on the tax rolls.

Alas, this brings us to the type of outdoor activities normal folks take part in, like hunting and fishing in the “regular sense. As you will see, I wish to submit for your approval several tales about some very unfortunate outdoor hunters and fishers who, in the course of their recreating, fate pulled a switchblade on them, leaving them to no longer be bothered by those pesky life insurance premiums.

The first tale involves a man in Zimbabwe, hunting a cull elephant in an area greatly overpopulated with the giant mammals. The Zimbabwe government issued the man a tag to remove a beast that had been raising havoc at a nearby village, including stamping out one of the villagers who happened to not get out of the way.

Several days into the hunt, the man and his crew located the maraud-



On a trip last summer to the Matetsi region of Zimbabwe, we stumbled into this group of male lions. There are three in this picture. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

ing bull, and moved in tight, to finish the deal. The man expertly shot the bull, who collapsed immediately, directly on top of the hunter, leaving him no possible escape. With 12,000 pounds on top of the man, it took several hours to even find his remains. I wish I could say it was a rare occurrence, but not for people who hunt the largest land animal on earth.

Lester Harvey was hunting bear with several friends in Virginia. The group tracked a bear up into a tree. The group retreated from the tree before shooting the bear. Lester did not move far enough back, and the bear fell on him. Four days later, Lester died from his wounds. The bear definitely had the last word in this encounter.

There is the story of the deer hunter who collected a nice buck with his 30/30 rifle. He approached the deer, laid his rifle across the prone buck, and began to take some pictures. The buck must have been

camera shy, because he jumped up, and caught the rifle by the sling in his antlers and immediately left the scene for parts unknown. The man lived to tell the embarrassing incident to his friends but had to make a trip to the sporting goods store for a new rifle, because they never found the old one. I guess the buck was camera shy.

For some folks, deep sea fishing is a bucket list item. One gentleman chose a marlin trip out of Islamorada, Florida for his big trip. He went alone, with the captain and first mate, 30 miles offshore, looking for big blue. The trio hooked up with an estimated 400-pound blue marlin, and the client, wearing a fighting harness clipped to the 50 Penn International reel and large trolling rod, got into the fight.

The captain was up in the tower, running the boat, with the mate assisting the angler in the cockpit with the dream

battle. The angler needed to get out of the fighting chair because his back, and probably other parts of his anatomy, were cramping up from the long fight. The mate told him to stay safely attached to the fighting chair until he returned from inside the boat cabin with a safety line. This line would attach the harness angler to the boat, thereby keeping him in the boat.

The mate went below for the harness, and the angle, defying the mate's order, unsnapped himself from the chair. The blue marlin chose that exact moment to make a dive for the bottom, in an attempt to free himself, taking the unattached angler with him. The silence from the cockpit was deafening. An extensive search was unable to locate the man or his remains, which is no surprise, considering they were in 2500 feet of water. Nature wins again.

There was the case of Thomas Alexander, hunting deer in Arkansas. He

shot a buck, and watched it collapse immediately. He walked up to check on the buck he collected, when the deer decided he wanted to strike back. The deer stood up, and attack the hunter, stabbing him with his antlers. Rescuers tried CPR but the hunter had succumbed to his wounds, and the deer is still on the missing list.

Sometimes the fate turns out to be somewhat justified. In 2018, half a dozen poachers entered a lion enclosure in the Sibuya Reserve in South Africa. The poachers went in with an axe, cutters, a rifle, and other supplies, with the obvious intent of poaching a large male rhino.

The poachers were long on courage, but short on brains, as they walked straight into a pride of six lions, who thought the poachers were nothing more than a blue plate special. Talk about entering the wrong cage. The authorities recovered the scant remains of the poachers the following

day. The lions were uninjured, except for indigestion from overeating.

These hunting stories make you think that fishing is the safe sport to engage in but best do some research first. About 100,000 people die worldwide annually. These deaths include commercial fishing, and include falling overboard, drowning, health reasons, and even a few fish attacks.

You don't have to hunt animals to get yourself removed from the tax rolls. Annually in the U.S., some 700 people are killed by wildlife in non-hunting situations. Dangerous game on the African continent is another story, as most game there has an attitude. Crocodiles kill 1,000 people a year, elephants take 500, hippos kill 500, and the cape buffalo kills 200. The all-time champion of killing human beings is the lowly mosquito. Because of the diseases they transfer, mosquitoes kill around 1 million people annually.

I am going to keep on doing what I am doing, until I can no longer do it. I have had a few close encounters with dangerous game, hunting and fishing, several times. The calls were close enough that I quickly remembered the words to the Hail Mary, but I remained unscathed. I'm not necessarily afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens.

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Join CPW for guided tours during the 2026 Monte Vista Crane Festival

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

MONTE VISTA, Colo. – From the iconic sounds to the spectacle of seeing thousands of greater sandhill cranes taking flight, the Monte Vista Crane Festival has left wildlife watchers in awe for more than four decades. The incredible wildlife viewing event returns this weekend.

More than 20,000 greater sandhill cranes are in the midst of their annual spring migration and are stopping over in southern Colorado's San Luis Valley as they transition from winter habitat to northern breeding grounds.

An estimated 12,000 sandhill cranes were on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge on Tuesday morning with hundreds more spread in areas throughout the valley. In addition to cranes, bird watchers revel at various waterfowl species using the grain fields and wetlands this time of year. Colorado Parks and



An estimated 12,000 sandhill cranes were on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge earlier this week, with hundreds more spread in areas throughout the valley. (Courtesy photo/CPW)

Wildlife staff and volunteers will be on hand at viewing sites as well as an educational booth inside the Ski Hi Complex on March 6-8 during the 43rd Monte Vista Crane Festival. Tickets are available for two tours guided by CPW personnel along with the festival's morning and evening bus tours of the Monte Vista National

Wildlife Refuge.

“We look forward to participating in this event every year,” said CPW Southwest Region Education Coordinator Cathy Dolder. “Our staff provide wonderful learning opportunities for those visiting the festival, whether you are new to birding or an experienced birder sharpening your

skills.”

Facility Manager Ricardo Romero will lead a two-hour tour of the J.W. Mumma Native Aquatic Species Research Facility starting at 10:45 a.m. Friday at the facility in Alamosa. This two-hour interactive tour will showcase the unique work being done to protect and propagate



More than 20,000 greater sandhill cranes are in the midst of their annual spring migration and are stopping over in southern Colorado's San Luis Valley as they transition from winter habitat to northern breeding grounds. (Courtesy photo/CPW)

more than a dozen native aquatic species, including endangered fish and amphibians such as the boreal toad. After the tour, attendees are welcome to a self-guided exploration of the adjacent Playa Blanca State Wildlife Area for opportunities to spot sandhill cranes and other wildlife.

CPW will also lead a bus tour from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday. This tour will focus on waterfowl of the San Luis Valley with the opportu-

nity to learn more about duck identification, geese and other waterfowl with information about their behaviors and seasonal patterns.

CPW staff and volunteers will support outdoor sandhill crane viewing sites with scopes available for the public to use. They will be on hand to help answer questions and provide educational information related to the daily activity of cranes.

See CPW page B3