

TIP Leads to Overlimit Conviction

On October 26, 2010, Afton Game Warden Todd Graham received a report from persons wishing to remain anonymous regarding illegal hunting activity. According to the reporting party, Troy J. Mitchell shot several times from the Greys River Road at two branched antlered bull elk, hitting both of them, in closed elk hunt area 89 just before dark that day. The reporting party also stated Mitchell had already harvested a five point bull elk a day or two prior to that.

The next afternoon, Warden Graham and Alpine Game Warden James Hobbs located a dead five point bull elk in the area where Mitchell had shot at the elk. The elk had been shot with a large caliber rifle and was located in hunt area 89 which had closed to hunting on October 24th. Believing that Mitchell had become scared after seeing Game and Fish trucks in the area, the decision was made to see if he would return that night for the elk.

Warden Hobbs returned to the area after dark that night, just missing Mitchell who had ridden the area on his horse trying to find the elk but was unable to do so in the dark.

On the evening of October 28th, the two wardens contacted Mitchell at his residence in Alpine, WY. Mitchell admitted to shooting a five point bull elk on October 24th and properly tagging it, then shooting another bull elk on October 26th after the season had closed. Mitchell stated he was trying to fill his son's unused tag. Mitchell had also failed to retrieve the backstraps and tenderloins from the first five point bull.



On November 23, 2010, Mitchell was charged by formal complaint in Lincoln County Circuit Court with taking an antlered elk without the proper license (23-3-102(d)) and waste of edible portions of an elk. Mitchell failed to appear on this summons and was arrested on a warrant. Mitchell spent three days in jail over the 2011 New Year's holiday. On March 9, 2011, Mitchell pleaded guilty to intentionally taking an antlered elk without the proper license and during a closed season. The waste charge was dismissed. Circuit Court Judge Frank Zebre sentenced Mitchell to 180 days in jail, 170 of those suspended with credit for 3 days served. Mitchell was placed on one year unsupervised probation and ordered to pay \$5,040 in fines and court costs. In addition to being ordered not to commit any similar game and fish offenses, high misdemeanors or felonies, Mitchell's sentence also stated he could not possess a firearm in the field during hunting season for the probationary period. All of Mitchell's Game and Fish privileges were suspended for 5 years, 2011 through 2015.

Recognizing that this man would have most likely gotten away with this crime without the confidential tip, the reporting party received a \$1,000 reward from the Wyoming Wildlife Protectors Association for reporting this wildlife crime.