

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division Quarterly Report: 1st Quarter 2019

California's hunting, fishing, and outdoor communities are primarily comprised of law-abiding citizens, a small percentage within those groups however are violators. Wildlife Officers assure public safety and enforce all laws of the state as they serve their primary duty of protecting habitat, water, wildlife, and aquatic life from the abuse and misuse of poaching and pollution. The following stories are a small sample of Wildlife Officer activities from January through March, 2019.

HIGHLIGHT STORY: Environment/Habitat- Fire Response

Wildlife officers continued their commitment to provide assistance to the communities plagued by the harsh fire incidences of the past year. Wildlife officers, in these events not only perform first responder activities, but as formally trained hazardous response specialists they also assess the environmental threats and responses related to catastrophic incidents. Officers continued active deployment status for ongoing efforts and cleanup to the Camp fire and the Woolsey fire.



WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT:



A **wildlife officer** on patrol was flagged down by a rancher exclaiming three subjects were attempted to poach geese from his property. The officer saw the subjects further down the highway and watched as they shot from the roadway and across a fence onto the private property, unlawfully killing four geese. The officer cited the subjects for hunter trespass and shooting from roadway.

A **wildlife officer** contacted two subjects on a utility vehicle as they were leaving the field from waterfowl hunting. The driver advised they had 15 ducks in possession but alleged one of the ducks was found and brought in by their dog as they were leaving, his way of attempting to explain why they were in excess of the 14-bird maximum. As the officer began inspecting their equipment and gear the driver began trying to distract the officer. The officer stayed on task, inspecting the subject's backpacks where he located ten additional undisclosed ducks. The driver admitted to shooting an over limit in the morning and returning for a limit in the evening with his buddy. The subjects were cited for the over-limits.



Wildlife Officers served a search warrant on the residence of an individual suspected of killing two collared mountain lions. Officers seized seven firearms, two of which were believed to be used in the crime. They collected miscellaneous evidence items for testing through the CDFW Wildlife Forensics Laboratory. The officers seized ten bobcat pelts killed in Oregon and brought into California without declaration.

Wildlife Officers, along with assisting agencies, served a search warrant related to intimidating a witness of a pending fish and wildlife case and making threats toward a wildlife officer. The search warrant yielded several fish and wildlife violations related to deer tag issues, illegal taxidermy, and unlawful possession of game.



FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT:

Freshwater-

A **wildlife officer** conducted focused patrols targeting subjects retaining “trophy” trout within a “catch and release” section of the river. The officer watched as a subject caught and retained two trophy trout. Two nearby fly fishermen also saw the subject commit the violation. Upon contact, the subject stated he intended to release the fish before he left, despite the fact both fish lay motionless along the shoreline. The two fisherman who witnessed the event, thanked the officer for his efforts and exclaimed the relief they felt when the officer arrived and contacted the violator.



A **wildlife officer** saw a subject fishing who appeared nervously on lookout, continually looking upstream, downstream, and behind him as though constantly scanning the area. The officer saw the subject catch and retain a “trophy” trout within a “catch and release” section of river. The officer watched as the subject wrapped the fish in a plastic bag and concealed it in a nearby backpack. Upon contact, the officer demanded to see the subjects fish, however the subject denied catching any fish all day. Upon inspection, the officer located two unlawfully retained trophy trout in the subject’s backpack. The subject admitted knowledge of the area’s special restrictions. The officer cited the subject and successfully revived and released one of the two.



Marine-

Wildlife officers received information regarding a social media post involving a group of eight shark seekers who landed a White Shark. Through follow-up, the officers contacted the suspect and seized the shark, only to find its pectoral and dorsal fins removed, tail removed, and it was fully gutted. The severed parts were discarded into the ocean before the officers arrived. Forensic samples were sent to CDFW biologist and the wildlife forensic laboratory for testing to confirm the species was a White Shark. The subjects face multiple charges ranging from unlawful take and possession, waste of fish, and destruction of evidence.



Wildlife officers contacted a commercial lobster fisherman who was hiding a swell shark in a live hold on his vessel. Swell sharks are prohibited bycatch from lobster traps. The subject claimed he caught the swell shark with hook and line, however after interviewing the crew, the captain admitted the swell shark was from his lobster trap. The officers issued a citation for failure to show and take of a prohibited bycatch from the lobster trap.



WILDLIFE DISTRESS:

A **wildlife officer** received a call regarding two subjects who found an ill bear outside a local store in a remote area. The subjects took possession of the bear with plans to deliver it to the department for care. The officer met with the subjects and took possession of the young bear cub found to be in very poor condition. The officer transported the bear to a wildlife rehabilitation facility for treatment.

A **wildlife officer** responded to an elephant seal trapped in a cattle pasture across the highway from the coast side. With assistance from multiple local allied agencies the officers were able to herd the seal through two fences, across the highway, and back to the ocean.



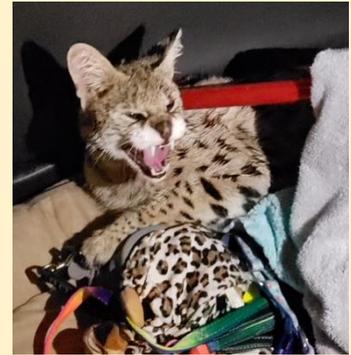
A **wildlife officer** responded to a report of a small buck entangled in a rope swing. The officer requested the assistance of a department biologist who responded to tranquilize and immobilize the deer. The efforts were successful and the deer, who had been swinging from the rope for at least a day, was set free and released back to the wild.



A **wildlife officer** observed a dog in the middle of a major highway. The officer noticed the dog had been hit by a vehicle and was badly injured with multiple broken limbs. Due to the time of night, the dog had to be transported to an emergency veterinary clinic where the officer left the dog for treatment. The clinic updated the officer and explained they were able to locate the dog's owner who was very thankful for the care given to their companion. The dog underwent several surgeries but was experiencing a good recovery. The vet credited the dog's survival to the officer's actions that evening.

WILDLIFE CONFLICT:

A **wildlife officer** was monitoring a social media page where neighbors reported seeing a 30+lb. spotted cat roaming the neighborhood. Curious of the unusual description, which seemed inconsistent with domestic house cats, the officer responded to the area. The officer found an African Serval hunched down in the bushes near the reporting persons doorstep. The officer, using some chicken and a catch pole, was able to quickly secure the cat and safely transport it to the nearby Zoo.



Wildlife officers received a report of a subject mauled by a bear in the yard of his home. Responding officer determined through their investigation, the victim let his dogs out late at night after they persistently barked at the front door. A sow (mother) possibly with two cubs or yearlings were outside when the dogs were released and engaged the bears. The victim, upon hearing the commotion, ran out to secure his dogs and was attacked by the female bear. The subject suffered lacerations to his face and stomach as he fought to defend himself from the bear. The bears disengaged and left the area. The victim called a friend who took him to the hospital. DNA was recovered from the victim's clothes and one of the dogs involved in the melee. The DNA confirmed a female bear was the animal involved in the attack. The property was a rural property littered with garbage and debris including open dumpsters with food and numerous unsecured trash cans also filled with food. The condition of the property was a likely contributor to the bears presence and the subsequent attack.

A **wildlife officer** received a call of a mountain lion in the front yard of a residence. When the officer arrived at the residence, he discovered the lion hiding underneath a bush in the front yard. With assistance from multiple allied agencies, the lion was successfully tranquilized, transported, and released in suitable habitat.



Wildlife officers responded to a mountain lion that was found in a residential neighborhood. The officers successfully darted the 60lb female lion, fitted it with a tag and radio collar, then successfully transported and released it in suitable habitat.

HABITAT:

A **wildlife officer** responded to an airplane crash where the pilot and passenger did not survive the crash; however, the pilot's Chocolate Lab did. The airplane crashed into a private pond which was later



determined to be connected to waters of the State. The Field Response Team observed a heavy sheen in the water and noted a strong odor of jet A fuel emitting from the location of the airplane. The officer worked to facilitate recovery of leaked fuel, through various techniques including boom deployment. The airplane was removed by a private contractor.



A **wildlife officer** observed a full-size pickup truck loaded with garbage and yard waste stopped along a roadway. The officer observed the subjects dumping onto the roadway. Upon contact, both occupants were cited for dumping, the driver was cited for driving on a suspended license, and the vehicle was towed for registration issues.



Wildlife officers responded to a 9,000-gallon gasoline tanker explosion. Two people were injured when the tank exploded. Lit gasoline entered the storm drain causing a few manholes covers to displace and break. About 40 people were evacuated while the fire was extinguished, and clean-up began. The quick action and response spared impact to the nearby creek. The spill was largely contained in the storm drain and mostly consumed by the fire.



GENERAL ENFORCEMENT:

Wildlife officers contacted an occupied vehicle parked behind locked gates on department property. One of the vehicle occupants was found to have an active, no bail felony arrest warrant related to narcotic charges. Upon further investigation, the individual was also found to be in possession of heroin and other paraphernalia associated with heroin and methamphetamine use. The individual was taken into custody and booked into jail.

Wildlife officers, while on patrol early one morning, observed a vehicle driving with no headlights. They conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle which revealed additional suspicion the driver may be under the influence. The suspicion of DUI was confirmed, and the driver was arrested for a blood alcohol content nearly three times the legal limit.

A **wildlife officer** apprehended a subject who was operating a stolen motorcycle without a valid driver's license. During the contact, the officer discovered the driver was also in possession of methamphetamine. The subject was arrested and booked on the violations.

A **wildlife officer** observed a vehicle at 1:00am swerving, braking excessively, and driving on the shoulder. The officer initiated a traffic stop and observed multiple open containers in the vehicle. Further testing determined the driver was driving under the influence and was subsequently arrested for the violation.



A **wildlife officer and his department K9** assisted USFS in pursuit of a felon who assaulted an officer and fled apprehension. The wildlife officer checked the area and soon located the subject, who immediately fled into the nearby river. After a K-9 announcement the subject gave up, later stating he didn't want to be bit by the dog.



PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Wildlife officers participated in various annual sports and outdoors shows throughout the state, where they answered numerous hunting, fishing, and recruitment questions. These events have proven to be great opportunities to meet and engage with department constituents and the general public in a non-enforcement setting.



Wildlife officers throughout the state continued their commitment to public outreach by visiting various classrooms where they conduct presentations, share details of the job, and answering questions. These are great opportunities for kids to interact with law enforcement officers in fun and exciting ways.



Wildlife officers participated in numerous trout stocking and kid fishing events where they met with many volunteers and youth to share officer specific knowledge and experiences of the outdoors. These events have proven positive ways to engage and recruit new outdoor enthusiasts and to pass-on the outdoor traditions.



RESCUE EFFORTS:

A **wildlife officer** was flagged down by a driver who reported seeing a vehicle veer off the highway and into a drainage ditch. The officer responded promptly and found the driver had self-extracted from the vehicle and the waterway and was standing upon the highway in apparent shock. The officer attended to the victim while calling for additional medical assistance. Medical personnel arrived on scene shortly after and helped the victim recover.

A **wildlife officer** was on patrol when he overheard a medical call of an unresponsive male in a vehicle parked along the highway and having difficulty breathing. The officer arrived and contacted a male subject who was in medical distress with no pulse and not breathing. The officer removed the subject from the vehicle and performed CPR for nearly 15 minutes until medical personnel arrived.

A **wildlife officer** on patrol overheard radio traffic on the sheriff's office channel regarding an active search for two lost hikers. The officer assisted deputies and Forest Service in their efforts. With the help of aircraft and good Samaritans on horseback, the hikers were found, one with only minor health concerns

A **wildlife officer** on patrol encountered a two-vehicle collision. The officer immediately called for additional officer support and medical assistance, while tending to the victims of the collision by applying first aid treatment for lacerations and shock. The victims were treated by EMS and the scene was turned over to the local police agency.

A **wildlife officer** encountered a subject standing in the roadway in a rural part of the county. The subject was waving a large branch in the air shouting at passing vehicles. The subject at one point dropped to his knees in front of a moving vehicle asking to be ran over, which caused the vehicle to swerve off the road. The officer requested additional officer support while trying to talk through the event with the subject and to get him out of the road. The man picked up a sharp piece of glass and held it to his throat while shouting, "I just want to die, I'm going to kill myself." Multiple responding agency officers arrived while the wildlife officer continued to engage in talks with the subject. After multiple personnel arrived on scene, the subject finally dropped the weapon and surrendered without further incident.

A **wildlife officer** observed a vehicle stopped on the side of the road in a closed area. The officer approached the vehicle and contacted the elderly female driver who was complaining of severe chest

pain and light headedness. The officer called for additional medical personnel response while monitoring the driver's vitals. Once additional aid arrived the driver was transported to a local hospital and fully recovered.



A **wildlife officer** heard a call for service on the sheriff's dispatch channel regarding a vehicle into a creek. The officer was only about five minutes away and immediately responded. The officer arrived and found an elderly male who tried to cross a swift flowing creek in his sedan. The subject was sitting on top of his vehicle, awaiting assistance. The officer assessed the situation and determined the man and vehicle were stable enough to wait for additional resources. Once fire crews arrived, the wildlife officer assisted with the recovery of the subject, while monitoring the creek for petroleum pollution caused by the vehicle in the water. A local towing company transported the subject and his vehicle to their destination.

DISPOSTIONS:

A **wildlife officer** received disposition of a black abalone case. The subject was found with three black abalone in an area that has been closed to the taking of abalone for well over 20 years. The subject received thirty days in jail, a fine of \$60,000, and three years' probation.

A **wildlife officer** received disposition of great white shark case. The subject received a fine of \$5,000 and three years' probation.

A **wildlife officer** received a disposition of fish trap and boat number violation. The subject pled guilty and received a \$2,500 fine and three years' probation.

A **wildlife officer** received disposition in a case where a subject shot a great white shark caught in his nets. The subject pled guilty and received a \$5,000 fine, two years' probation and was ordered to forfeit his rifle.

A **wildlife officer** appeared in court for a Pismo Clam case involving three subjects. The trio were cited from taking 138 clams and were ordered to pay \$1,500 each for the violation. Another group with two subjects who took 51 clams, received fines of \$1,000 each.

A **wildlife officer** appeared in court for two subjects cited for an over limit of rockfish and take within an MPA. Both subjects received fines of \$400 each.

A **wildlife officer** appeared in court for a streambed alteration and pollution case. The subject pled guilty and received, three years' probation, 100 hours of community service, an order to obtain an agreement with the department and to make remediations, estimated expenses of over \$300,000.

A **wildlife officer** received disposition of a case involving two subjects attempting to trap mountain lions. The subjects pled guilty to using a body-gripping trap, using a trap without a trap number, failing to visit the trap every 24 hours, and feeding big game. Both men received fines of \$2,340, one-year hunting ban, mandatory purchase of a lifetime hunting license, and 40 hours of community service.

A **wildlife officer** received disposition of a case involving pink abalone. The subject pled guilty and received a fine of \$15,000, three years' probation, and lifetime fishing rights revocation.

A **wildlife officer** cited a repeat offender for lobster violations, during which time the subject was awaiting court for previous lobster violations. The cases were combined and the subject pled guilty. The subject received a fine for \$5,235, twenty days public service, and three years' probation.