

NEWS FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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DNREC Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police unveil new Operation Game Theft mobile outreach unit

Gov. Markell declares Sept. 26 National Hunting & Fishing Day in Delaware

DOVER (Sept. 24, 2015) – DNREC Secretary David Small and Division of Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police Chief Robert Legates, along with NRP officers, today unveiled their new mobile multimedia outreach unit for Operation Game Theft, a program which encourages the public to assist natural resources police officers in apprehending and convicting Delaware game law violators. The 27-foot-long display trailer, which includes more than 100 weapons (all inoperable) and items confiscated from poachers and other game law violators, is available for outreach at community events.



“Protecting and conserving Delaware’s wildlife resources is a key part of DNREC’s mission,” said Secretary Small. “In addition to enforcing our wildlife laws and regulations, DNREC’s Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police are charged with educating the public about these laws. This new mobile Operation Game Theft display is a high-visibility tool for conducting this important public outreach and education.”

“Typically, we receive about 250 calls a year to Operation Game Theft. While not all calls lead to an arrest and conviction, we investigate all the information we receive,” said Chief Legates. “We appreciate and welcome the public’s assistance with our work, and we are confident the new outreach unit will help promote Operation Game Theft and encourage the public to share information with us that they have about game law violations.”

Operation Game Theft has been in effect for 35 years. In 1980, the Delaware General Assembly established the Wildlife Theft Prevention Fund for Operation Game Theft, consisting of fines levied from violations of game laws plus donations from various sources. The Legislature delegated authority to the Division of Fish & Wildlife to designate offenses for which rewards are paid and the amount of the reward.

Rewards up to \$1,000 are paid for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of a game law violator or violators, as follows:

- Rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 for information about: Killing an endangered or threatened species; commercialization of wildlife (selling wildlife or wildlife parts including some taxidermy specimens); any violation in which a Fish & Wildlife officer is assaulted; and violators fleeing to avoid prosecution for a wildlife violation.
- Rewards of \$100 to \$500 for information about: Poisoning wildlife; destruction of state wildlife areas or equipment; gross over-the-limit harvest of wildlife; illegally hunting black ducks, canvasbacks, turkeys or Canada geese; illegally hunting waterfowl or white-tailed deer on designated state game refuges; willful obstruction of lawful hunting; illegally hunting or trapping out-of-season or at night; hunting with a revoked license; and possession, tending or setting killer traps with a jaw spread in excess of 5 inches.
- Rewards up to \$100 for information about: Fraudulent use of a hunting license and/or fraudulently obtaining a hunting license; illegally hunting with a rifle; and dumping trash on state wildlife areas.

An additional \$100 reward will be paid by the Delaware Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone illegally killing a wild turkey in Delaware.

“We strongly encourage anyone who witnesses or has information about a game law violation to report the violator as soon as possible so we can investigate immediately,” said Cpl. John McDerby, Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police. “The longer the delay in getting information to an officer, the smaller the chances of making an arrest and getting a conviction.”

To report game law violators, call the Division of Fish & Wildlife’s Operation Game Theft 24-hour hotline at 800-292-3030. Callers will be given a case number and an officer will return the call or be dispatched to investigate; the officer will take the caller’s name and pay the reward in cash if an arrest and conviction results. Identity of all callers is kept confidential.

To request Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police outreach for community and public events, including the Operation Game Theft trailer, please contact Cpl. John McDerby, DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police, at 302-739-9913.

Saturday, Sept. 26 declared National Hunting and Fishing Day in Delaware

On behalf of Governor Jack Markell, Secretary Small read a proclamation declaring Saturday, Sept. 26 as National Hunting & Fishing Day in Delaware.

“Delawareans and visitors are encouraged to enjoy our state’s many outdoor activities and to celebrate our hunting and fishing heritage and the conservation of our wildlife and fish resources, not just on National Hunting and Fishing Day, but every day of the year,” said Division of Fish & Wildlife Director David Saveikis.

Established in 1972, National Hunting and Fishing Day is celebrated annually on the last Saturday of September to recognize the contributions of hunters and anglers to conservation. For more information, visit www.nhfd.org.

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife recognizes and thanks the majority of anglers, hunters and boaters who comply with and support Delaware's fishing, hunting and boating laws and regulations. Citizens are encouraged to report fish and wildlife and boating violations to the Delaware Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police by calling 302-739-4580. Wildlife violations may also be reported anonymously to Operation Game Theft by calling 800-292-3030 or online at www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Hunting/Pages/OpGameTheft.aspx.

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