

California wardens bag more poachers

By Phillip Reese and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The road to the Lassen County town of Herlong is wide, dusty and usually deserted. Most days, motorists using it won't see anything interesting, much less a bloodbath.

Feb. 24, 2009, was different. On that cloudy, crisp afternoon, a poacher plying his trade near the road picked off antelope one by one with a small-caliber rifle.

The hunter had tallied several kills when something in the distance apparently spooked him, causing him to flee. Game wardens arrived shortly afterward. They found four antelope dead. They euthanized a fifth that had been badly wounded. Two of the dead antelope were pregnant with three calves between them.

"In a matter of seconds, the poacher took eight antelope out of the population," investigating warden Carol Growdon said at the time.

The issue of illegal hunting received an unusual burst of public attention last month when rock star and celebrity hunter Ted Nugent pleaded no contest to two misdemeanor hunting violations in Yuba Superior Court: illegally baiting a deer, and failing to have a deer tag signed by a government official after a kill.

He had broadcast the violations on his own Outdoor Channel hunting show. The Feb. 9 episode showed Nugent killing a young male deer with bow and arrow near the El Dorado County town of Somerset. The charges were filed in Yuba County because Nugent was accompanied by a guide and cameraman on the hunt, and that is where they live.

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