

Wildlife officers rack up convictions in 2013

California Department of Fish and Wildlife had several high profile criminal investigations and convictions in 2013 for resource violations.

In El Dorado County, two men shot, but didn't kill a deer that they then put in their small SUV. The deer woke up and panicked inside the vehicle. The poachers then hacked the deer to death with a machete. They were both convicted and received jail time for poaching and animal cruelty.

In Nevada County, a wildlife officer was able to apprehend two bear poachers through an in-depth investigation that revealed an abundance of criminal activity including drug trafficking, stolen vehicles and violence. The primary suspect, Jason Wilkison, baited and killed a bear out of season with a military style rifle with no tags and no license. Wilkison, a convicted felon, was sentenced to two years in state prison for his part in the crime.

Fourteen people were arrested in Sacramento and the Bay Area for illegally harvesting and selling abalone on the black market. Many of the suspects had previous poaching convictions and are now facing additional charges.

In Southern California, wildlife officers filed several cases of lobster poaching, illegally selling fish directly to restaurants and one case in which a diver attempted to catch fish by squirting rubbing alcohol into the rocks forcing fish into open water where he then netted them. Most of these cases are currently pending.

A Madera County wildlife officer jumped into the cold, swift current of a slough, twice, to save the lives of two small children clinging to a branch. With no equipment, life jacket

or help, he brought each girl safely to shore. In Monterey, a wildlife officer took off his boots to help save a drowning woman in the ocean then gave her the boots so she could walk across rocks to the waiting ambulance. In five separate incidents wildlife officers along with local agencies prevented people from committing suicide.

In a case that brought national attention, wildlife officers and San Bernardino County Sheriff deputies spotted, pursued and exchanged gunfire with former Los Angeles Police Officer and murderer Christopher Dorner.

Other gunfire incidents occurred in three marijuana growing operations in Northern California. In a Shasta County incident, shots were fired during a marijuana raid. Two men were then arrested, both after being apprehended by a CDFW K-9.

More than 350 wildlife officers are responsible for patrolling 1.8 million acres in California.