

Oregon man guilty of poaching near Crater Lake

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An Oregon man was sentenced Friday for illegally poaching a trophy bull elk in Crater Lake National Park, a violation of the Lacey Act.

Adrian Duane Wood, 44, of White City, was sentenced to three years' federal probation, including a six-month stay at a reentry center, along with a \$42,500 fine, a lifetime ban from Oregon's only national park and a ban on hunting during his probation, U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said.

In addition to the elk, Wood is also suspected of killing several other deer and elk within the park by baiting them into a meadow with rock salt, police said. At one point he bragged about having killed as many as 24 elk, officials said.

Officials also said Wood brought his son along on poaching trips and "bragged about his criminal behavior to others," Williams said.

"Our nation's environmental laws are in place to protect vulnerable wildlife populations and ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy these animals as we do today," Williams said. "Mr. Wood preyed on elk and deer who were unaccustomed to being hunted and thus uniquely vulnerable to poaching. Thanks to the hard work of federal and state investigators, justice has been served and Mr. Wood has been permanently banned from Crater Lake."

James Ashburner, special agent in charge of the investigation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said Wood's "blatant disregard for the law caused great harm to the elk herd in the park."

This is how the investigation played out, according to court documents from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon State Police:

In July 2014, the three agencies began a multi-year investigation into Wood's illegal hunting activities based on reports that he was poaching wildlife in Crater Lake National Park. At least two sources stated that Wood had killed several deer and elk on the west side of the park after baiting them into a meadow with rock salt. OSP received further reports that Wood was illegally poaching wildlife at night.

On August 31, 2014, an OSP trooper observed Wood and his son leaving the national park after dark. When the trooper approached him, Wood hurried toward his vehicle and acted as if he were trying to hide something. After speaking with Wood, the trooper located a loaded AR-15 semi-automatic rifle outfitted with night optics beneath his truck. Wood initially claimed the rifle was for bear hunting, but after the trooper pointed out that the rifle was not lawfully equipped to hunt any wildlife, Wood then claimed it was for personal protection. The trooper cited Wood for being a felon in possession of a firearm and seized the rifle. Wood was convicted in state court of the charge and placed on probation.

Throughout 2015, NPS and OSP continued receiving reports of Wood's illegal poaching. NPS rangers found carcasses and piles of rock salt in an area of the park frequented by Wood. In Octo-



An Oregon man was convinced of poaching an elk at Crater Lake National Park. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

ber 2015, an NPS ranger found an elk skull, jaw, and vertebrae in the national park. The remains were determined to be near a custom track log found on Wood's GPS unit. Investigators later learned Wood entered and won second or third place in a Sportsman's Warehouse Big Bull elk hunting contest.

In August and September 2016, Wood engaged in several incriminating text conversations. On August 28, 2016, Wood texted his wife about his attempt to locate a bleeding elk he had shot. A photo later discovered on Wood's phone, taken on August 28, appeared to depict a trail of blood. Investigators also found a custom waypoint named "Hit" on Wood's GPS device created the same morning as the date-stamped photo. The "Hit" location was within the boundaries of the national park.

On September 7, 2016, Wood texted another individual, bragging about his hunting activities: "I've been in the elk since opening season and passed up 5 last Sunday because I have a problem shooting a small 5 point when there is a monster 50 yards away screaming at me...I'm pretty good at finding elk around here, I've killed 24 and get one every year."

On September 22, 2016, OSP contacted Wood in his vehicle as he was pulling a horse trailer near the boundary of the national park. Although Wood stated he had not been hunting in 2016, the trooper observed blood on Wood's hands and clothing. Wood then gave the trooper a partially validated Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) archery elk

tag, which also had blood on it. The next day, an OSP trooper returned to the area where they had contacted Wood, walked a short distance into the national park, and discovered a freshly killed and partially butchered elk. The carcass was in the same meadow wherein Wood was previously reported to have hunted elk. The trooper noted that the elk's head was sawed off and some meat was removed. Shortly thereafter, Wood texted photos of himself posing with the elk. OSP obtained the photos and matched them to the carcass.

On October 4, 2016, FWS agents executed a federal search warrant on Wood's residence. They located multiple firearms, assorted ammunition, and several wildlife specimens. FWS special agents later searched Wood's GPS units and confirmed he was in the national park when he killed the bull elk on September 22 and had marked the location of the kill. They further confirmed that the majority of his GPS hunting waypoints and track logs between 2011 and 2016 were within the boundaries of the national park.

Forensic scientists at the FWS National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab, conducted forensic examinations and genetic analyses of the wildlife specimens taken from Wood's residence and compared them to animal remains recovered in the national park. DNA analyses revealed that Wood possessed parts of at least 13 elk, 12 deer, and one black bear, and the blood found on Wood's ODFW archery tag matched the DNA of the elk poached on September

22. A forensic pathologist further determined the elk killed on September 22 had been killed by a gunshot. In total, investigators definitively linked six seized specimens to elk or deer poached by Wood in the national park in 2015 and 2016.

On May 1, 2019, Wood was indicted by a federal grand jury in Medford, Oregon for violating the Lacey Act by unlawfully taking and transporting a trophy bull elk from Crater Lake National Park and illegally possessing ammunition as a convicted felon. On August 17, 2020, Wood pleaded guilty to the Lacey Act charge and agreed to pay restitution to NPS for the wildlife illegally taken from the national park.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, National Park Service, and the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division. It was prosecuted by Adam E. Delph, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for protecting America's wildlife from poaching, illegal commercialization, and other kinds of wildlife crime. If you have information related to a wildlife crime, please call 1-844-FWS-TIPS (1-844-397-8477) or email fws_tips@fws.gov.

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Simple tips to improve your finances in big ways

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One of the common misconceptions about achieving financial success is that it requires complexity, sophistication and intricate effort. Sure, you might want to construct a detailed analysis of investment allocations, debt-payback schedules or whatever, but you probably don't need to.

Sometimes, just a handful of straightforward guidelines, consistently followed, can do the trick.

People use mental shortcuts all the time elsewhere in their lives to achieve goals such as losing weight, eating better, exercising more and so on. You can also successfully apply rules of thumb to money matters such as saving more, investing better and keeping debts under control.

"Good rules are really simple ones," said Ryan Murphy, head of decision sciences for Morningstar Investment Management. "They can be just a couple of words."

He and Samantha Lamas, a Morningstar behavioral researcher, set out to determine which rules people view as most important, which they actually use and which are more closely correlated or associated with financial well-being.

For that latter part, their report looked at which rules of thumbs are favored by successful individuals compared to those who are struggling, based on a 10-question financial well-being survey developed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and viewable at consumerfinance.gov.

Follow these highly effective shortcuts

Murphy and Lamas gleaned responses from 867 adults about their use and perception of financial rules of thumb. Several rules were deemed both popular and relatively effective. These include goals to:

- Pay down debts in full, when possible.
- Pay more than the minimum (especially on credit-card balances).
- Save as much as you can.
- Separate spending from savings (an element of budgeting).
- Keep an emergency fund equal to 3 to 6 months of expenses.
- Diversify your assets.
- Try to save 10% to 30% of your income each month.
- Invest in line with your risk tolerance.

Others rules didn't fare as well. Among them: avoid borrowing money from a 401(k) plan (if available), take advantage of matching funds on retirement accounts and organize your finances frequently. These are all smart ideas, but they didn't resonate as much with respondents.

In a few cases, the researchers noticed that sound rules were followed more by people who described themselves as not well off (according to their responses to the CFPB survey).

These included "paying yourself first" and "trying to find ways to earn extra money."

Another rule of thumb embraced relatively more by struggling individuals was the notion of investing a percentage equal to 115 minus your age in stocks and stock funds, with the rest in more stable

bonds or cash. (For example, if you're 40 years old, you would strive to hold 75% of your assets in stocks/stock funds, as 115 minus 40 equals 75.)

Again, that's not a bad general idea, but more affluent individuals said they didn't follow them as much.

Focus on what works for you

The researchers didn't explain why people with less financial success tended to use various guidelines more often. But some rules, such as paying yourself first, might be too vague, they said.

"Good rules are specific enough to be actionable but not too specific," Murphy said in an interview.

Some rules also might be too complex, such as the one about investing a percentage equal to 115 minus your age in the stock market.

Some financial rules are neither applicable nor practical, according to the report.

For example, the notion of investing as early as possible wasn't deemed especially useful or valuable by respondents. The idea is a sound one — people who start investing in their 20s or early 30s often will wind up well ahead of friends or colleagues who start later in life.

But it might not be practical, Lamas said, for people who must prioritize other objectives such as paying down student debts first. And for those who have gotten a late investment start, it's a moot point anyway.

And sometimes, rules of thumb and the goals they seek to achieve are limited by various factors, such as insufficient income. But usually, people can control some or most of the factors that

affect their financial decisions.

How to turn rules into habits

The researchers emphasized that financial rules of thumb are most effective when they become second nature from habitual use, and when they are easy to remember.

Various tips can help you build them into habits.

For example, if your objective is to save more for large purchases, you could learn to set aside money as soon as you get paid. You could then reward yourself for good behavior with a coffee drink after you complete the transfer to your savings account, Lamas said.

The point here is to associate the good behavior with something that makes you happy, thus encouraging you to keep it up.

Other tips for building good habits, though not discussed in the study, include sticking with a routine for at least a month, enlisting a buddy keep you on track and writing down and posting your goals on a bathroom mirror or refrigerator, to keep them front and center.

Often, people must make financial decisions despite obstacles such as time constraints or a lack of experience or information. But that's also a reason for following rules of thumb in the first place — they're simple, easy to apply and don't require much analysis or deliberation.

"Each person is different, and the rules (to be effective) must fit into our lives," Lamas said.

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