Operation Talon

By Jason DeCoskey Chief, Enforcement Division Bureau of Wildlife Protection

POACHING? That doesn't happen anymore. People who shoot deer out of season need the meat, they can't afford to pay for beef at the grocery store. I have heard all of these statements and remarks before as people try to justify the actions of others. Unfortunately, truth is that most poachers are driving 40 thousand dollar vehicles and using thousand dollar rifles.

During a short period of time in October, close to 500 officers participated in a statewide nighttime saturation patrol called "Operation Talon."

Involved were officers from the Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission, State Police, US Fish and Wildlife Service and DCNR, 500 officers in all.

The main focus of Operation Talon was Friday and Saturday nights during a 2-week period. Historical violation data was used when planning the operation and choosing the locations and dates.

During the operation, officers made contact with 313 individuals, and in the process, issued 94 written or verbal warnings and 192 citations. Citations were issued for: unlawful devices or methods, unlawful lights while hunting, restrictions on recreational spotlighting, unlawful killing or taking of big game, loaded firearms in vehicles, unlawful acts concerning licenses, control of property, permit violations, shooting on or across highways, damage to property, unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife, and littering and restrictions on vehicles.

5 DUIs, 2 felons not to possess firearms, 1 loaded concealed handgun without a permit, and possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia were turned over to either the State Police or the local municipal police departments. Two DCNR closed road violations were turned over to DCNR.

The state police were not just on the ground supporting the operation, but were flying as well. Troopers flew a helicopter in support of Operation Talon in the Northwest and flew a fixed wing aircraft in the Southeast and Southcentral regions. The overwhelming support from the PA State Police was more then appreciated by our officers. This operation is viewed not only as a successful law enforcement detail, but also a success in cooperation between state agencies.