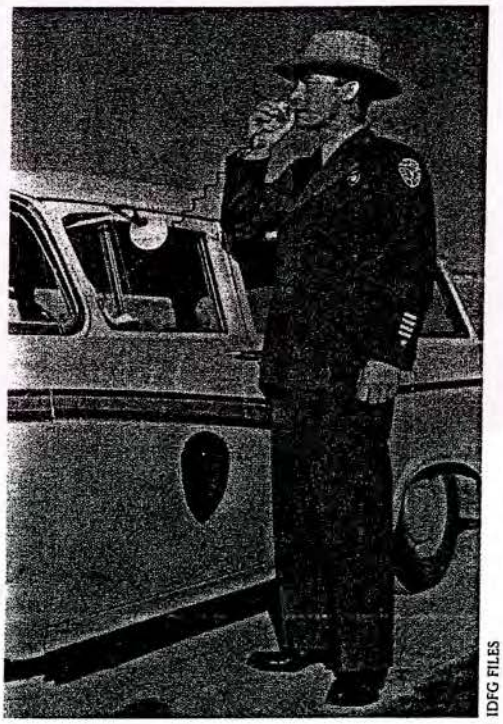
From Warden to Officer

The Evolution of Wildlife Enforcement in Idaho



IDFG FILES

Under Commission direction, professionalism grew wildlife enforcement. Uniforms, first issued in 194 improved in this 1950s version, gave officers recognition. Marked cars with two-way radios mad them more functional in the field.

While Idaho was still a territory, our forebears recognized the need for some type of control to insure its wildlife would prosper. In 1863, when the first Idaho Legislative Assembly met in Lewiston to draft the "Laws of the Territory of Idaho," the first statutes limiting the killing of big game were established.

The Department was created in 1889 and the first game warden (and Department head) was hired. He had a salary and an operating budget but his deputies did not. They worked for a pittance: half of the fine monies, if they were lucky enough to get violators to court. To do so, they had to have eye-witnesses willing to testify. It was slim pickin's to get a relative or neighbor to squeal, even if they wanted to. They cherished their lives.

The game warden was out to stop the illegal sale of fish and wildlife, often sold in open markets or shipped out of state. In the early 1900s, a warden found commercial fish-holding facilities in the Island Park/Henry's Lake area. He stopped traffic of 75 tons of trout a year, earmarked for Butte, Salt Lake and elsewhere.

Soon there were deputy game wardens stationed in all counties except Ada, Custer and Shoshone, where no one would take the job. In the early years, not many jobs were permanent. Extra help was hired for hunting and fishing seasons and then let go.

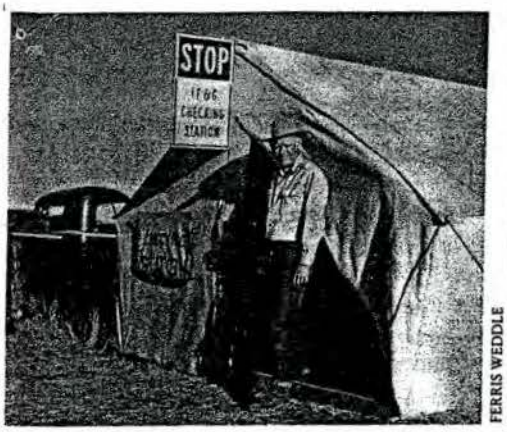
After the Initiative passed, hiring standards were set. In 1939, an applicant had to be between 23 and 50 years old; 5 feet, 5 inches or taller; have an eighth grade education and pass a written exam in order to get on the Conservation Officer hiring register. If he had more schooling, he was lucky – he got an additional credit for each unit of higher education. Among the first officers hired under this new civil service procedure was Wendell Twitchell. His entrance salary, as a C.O. grade 2, was $125 a month – $8 less than a C.O. grade 1. (See "Recollections of C.O.," page 33.)

When a new officer reported for duty, he got a copy of the state hunting and fishing regulation brochure and was to to buy a car, find a place to live in a to he had never heard of, and go to work he was single, as Twitchell was, he cou expect to be transferred often.

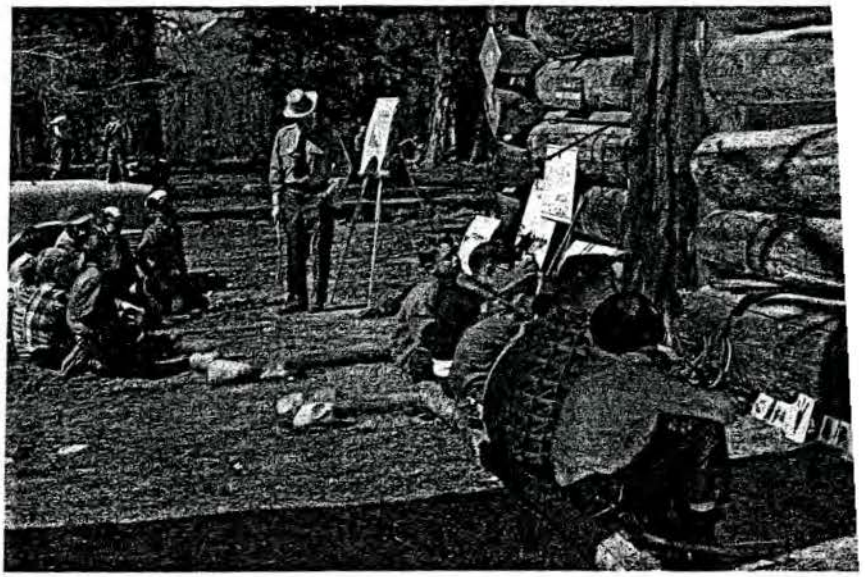
Once at his post, he cranked up his second-hand car and headed out of to a ways to set up a check station – with lights, no signs, no help. A few hours later, more likely than not, he hauled ir the town's most prominent citizen, wh didn't have a hunting license but did h an out-of-season elk. His enthusiasm ended when the Justice of the Peace threw the case out and apologized to M Good Citizen for any inconvenience. M Game Officer was told to leave town i knew what was good for him. The offi saw the need for educating the public about wildlife conservation.

As today, the old-time game warden was a unique fella. He had to be dedicated to the resource and willing t

BY LORRIE SPIKER



FERRIS WEDDLE



C.O.s do a lot more than set up check stations (above, c. 1949). Educating the public makes enforcement easier. For example, in 1951 C.O. Phil Swanstrum taught tracking skills to Boy Scouts at their Featherville camp.

get the job done, regardless of personal sacrifice. He was a rugged guy who loved a campfire and knew how to survive in the wild. He furnished his own car, bought his own gas, wore out his own boots. As the years rolled by, he was issued a pickup, skis and snowshoes, boots, tents, sleeping bags, saddle, pack horse and trailer, but still furnished his own camping gear.

It became evident that, to get recognition and respect, the officer needed a uniform. The first one was issued in 1942. Replacement and repair were at the officer's expense. The uniform was improved – full-dress garb in the '50s boasted bars and stars on the sleeve, denoting years of service.

Duties increased steadily. Soon the officer was not only enforcing laws and regulations, but helping transplant wildlife, worrying over beaver and predators, planting fish, winter feeding, salting the range and educating the public by speaking to sportsmen's organizations, civic clubs and schoolchildren. He also found himself sponsoring a scout troop.

Other people had different ideas of what the officer did. A violator who had just gotten a stiff fine probably would tell you the C.O. rides around looking for innocent people to arrest. A successful hunter or fisherman might praise him for keeping track of all the wildlife in his area and thank him for sharing the information. The officer's wife would say he was gone most weekends and that when HIS hunting dog broke loose, got VERY acquainted with the neighbor's pedigree and ended up in the pound, he was clear out of the country!

When World War II came along, the Commission vowed that although activities had to be drastically trimmed, the resource would not be allowed to decline. Knowing that big game hunting had increased more than 50 percent after World War I, the Commission began to prepare for a similar jump after WWII.

As predicted, postwar license sales rocketed. So did concern about the number of hunters and anglers afield and how long wildlife could meet the increasing demand. A sharp rise in violations led to new recruits to the 54-man force.

After the war, the Department advanced into professional, scientific wildlife management. Officers were in step. They were heard on the radio, seen on television and met with still more youth groups, sportsmen organizations and others interested in wildlife conservation. They worked closedly with state, federal and private agencies and other Department employees. Their expertise was sought in setting seasons, regulations and management priorities.

As the public became more mobile, officers learned to use motor boats, jet boats, 4-wheel drive vehicles, trail machines and snowmachines. They were trained in scuba diving, kayak boating and search-and-rescue. Airplane and pilot service for enforcement patrol, game surveys and reconnaissance became available as these needs arose. Two-way radios were added to the officer's inventory.

A Conservation Officers Manual was developed. It detailed procedures for arrests, investigations, search and seizure and court hearings. To handle increasingly complex legal matters, a part-time attorney came on board ir A full-time deputy attorney ger assigned to the Department in 1 an assistant was added in 1979.

From the 1970s on, public aw the effects of environmental deg on fish and wildlife has grown. officer's job has expanded to inc advising on sewage disposal plan dredge mining and sawmill activ Although some problems have b solved, they have been replaced b such as toxic spills and misuse of agricultural chemicals.

Since 1981, the Enforcement B had hundreds of additional pairs watching out for poachers. Citize Against Poaching (CAP), a nonpr private organization, was formed reward money for people who rep wildlife violations. Much of the r money comes from a checkoff or controlled hunt permits that allov unsuccessful applicants to donate all of the fee to CAP. Anyone can toll-free number at any time to rep suspected violation; callers may re anonymous. They are eligible for when a citation is written or an ar made, not upon conviction.

Stiffer penalties have helped enforcement efforts, too. Since 19 penalties have been assessed upon conviction for illegally killing or w fish or game. Depending on the sp this can cost the lawbreaker $100 t

In January 1981, Idaho lost two conservation officers when Bill Po and Conley Elms were gunned dow Claude Dallas in the remote Owyh County desert. Dallas is serving a 3 prison sentence for the crime.

Today, all conservation officers receive POST Academy training and have full peace officer status. They spend about half their time on enforcement, their primary responsibility. Their backgrounds include undergraduate and advanced degrees in Wildlife, Fisheries or Natural Resource management or Forestry. Since 1982, Idaho's C.O. ranks have been co-ed, as women have become interested in this many-faceted profession. In addition to POST and their formal education, C.O.s receive training in interpersonal relations, physical fitness and a variety of other topics as part of their job.

The modern C.O. makes it harder than ever for poachers. He or she is trained to tell how long an animal has been dead, establish its sex or age (even if it is dressed), and determine whether it was killed with an arrow or bullet. Evidence workups by Department laboratory technicians can reveal forensic information or the species of animal killed from a blood or hair sample. Since 1983, the IDFG special operations force has worked undercover and in cooperation with other wildlife agencies to bring major lawbreakers to justice.

One thing that has not changed, however, is the officer's dedication to the resource. When people finally decide it is not smart, funny or "fooling the Game Warden" to kill extra birds, exceed the creel limit on trout or take game during closed season, the purpose of fish and game laws will be served. Enforcement always has been a tool of management programs, which would be wasted without it. Officers have been and will be judged not by the number of arrests made but by their contribution to the overall mission of the Department.

Lorrie Spiker, bureau secretary in the Enforcement Bureau at IDFG Headquarters, Boise, began her career with the Department in 1963.

IDFG FILES

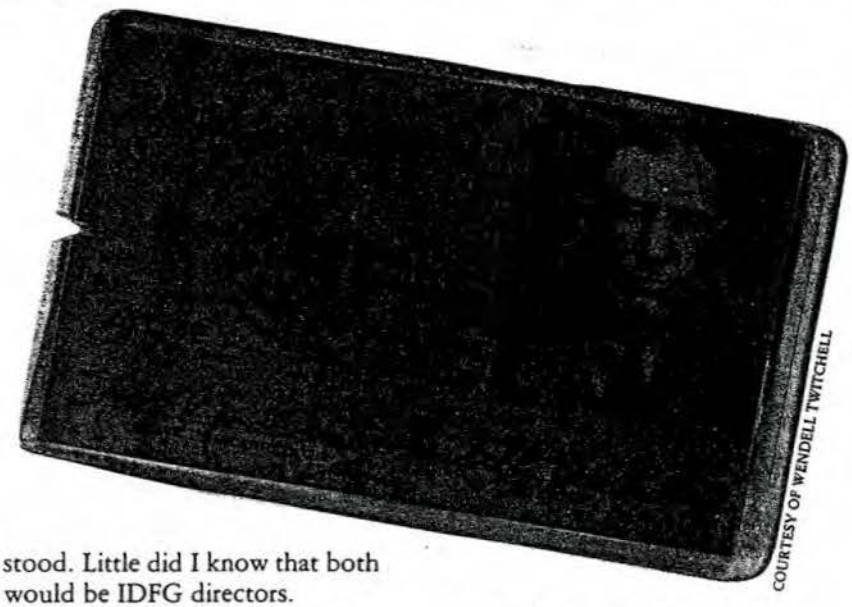
"Citizens Against Poaching," a nonprofit group established in 1981, raises money to pay for tips on suspected lawbreakers. Calls come in on a hot-line direct to IDFG Headquarters for immediate relay to officers in the field.

Recollections of a C.O.

BY WENDELL TWITCHELL

I went to work for the Idaho Fish and Game Department on Aug. 19, 1939, as the coordinator for the beaver live-trapping program in eastern Idaho. Ted Trueblood had the same position in western and northern Idaho.

Owen W. Morris was the Director. I had gotten acquainted with "Ole" in 1937, when I was working on rodent control for the old Biological Survey (now U.S. Fish and Wildlife Predator Control). He ran the regional Survey from Idaho Falls and Tom Murray was the state head. I was cutting posts for the new wildlife refuge at Hamer when both men came into camp. I made coffee for the crew and Mr. Murray criticised it. This was his way of testing employees to see if they would stand up and fight to let him know where they stood. Little did I know that both men would be IDFG directors.



COURTESY OF WENDELL TWITCHELL

In June 1939, I took the exam for Conservation Officer, Grade 2. I understand 2,000 people put in for the test and 600 passed and were put on the roster. About 38 politically appointed game wardens, as they were called, took the exams. Of these, 11 were placed on the list and some were appointed Conservation Officer, Grade 1. Their salary started at $133 a month; mine at $125. I believe I was the first officer hire off the roster other than the old politic appointees.

My training consisted of working w

some federal men for a few days around Boise on pre-season shooting of pheasants and ducks. Then I stayed with a Survey trapper and went around his trap lines with him several times. One day we caught 13 coyotes, which was just a fair day.

My first arrest was a teenage boy near Glenns Ferry for shooting Hungarian partridge out of season. I hated to see this youngster go to court, but I had to enforce the law because we were getting a lot of complaints about shooting in the evening. I cited the boy to the local Justice of the Peace. Later than night, the boy's stepfather came to me and wanted his gun back. In those days, all equipment used in a violation was confiscated and sold at public auction. I explained the law to the fellow but he was hard to convince. He said if he didn't get his gun back, he would charge the boy with stealing it because he had taken it without his permission. A couple of days later, I was transferred to my first permanent station. I learned that the stepfather carried out his threat and charged the boy with stealing the gun – and it caused a divorce.

My first assignment was in Preston. I took the old political game warden's place on the opening day of deer season. We (the Director and me) met over a cup of coffee with the president of the local Rod and Gun Club, Lynn Hale. He politely told the Director that they already had their man picked and they didn't want me. Director Morris told him HE was running the Department. He said he would hire their man, since he was on the roster, but he couldn't stay in Preston. The eligible man refused to move.

The Director left me on the corner of Main and First streets in Preston with a flashlight, a sleeping bag and no car. I was on my own. I bought a used 1937 Chev from the local garage and drove to the mouth of Cub River to set up a checking station. Just me, with no lights, no signs and some very belligerent people. The next day, waterfowl season opened. I made 10 cases that day for fishing without a license and waterfowl violations. The fishing excuses were that they were just after carp or suckers and the old game warden wouldn't have bothered them for fishing for trash fish. One man even threatened to whip me, and he was a big rascal. Turned out he was the Justice of the Peace's son. (All these people became pretty good friends later on.) The judge didn't know how to handle waterfowl cases. He said they were federal. I had him call Boise to verify that he could take them in his court. He fined each violator a whopping $2.50 plus $3 court costs.

At this time, we had to accompany commercial fishermen each day they went out. In my area, it was on Bear River, usually one or two times a week. They sold their suckers and carp from the back of pickups on the streets of Preston and Logan, Utah, for 25 cents each and the loads didn't last long.

In 1939, our fishing and hunting licenses carried a synopsis of all the fish and game laws on the license. It could be folded and carried in the billfold very easily. Today a person would have to carry a briefcase. I recall one of the laws said it was "illegal to fish from the back of a horse, while in the stream."

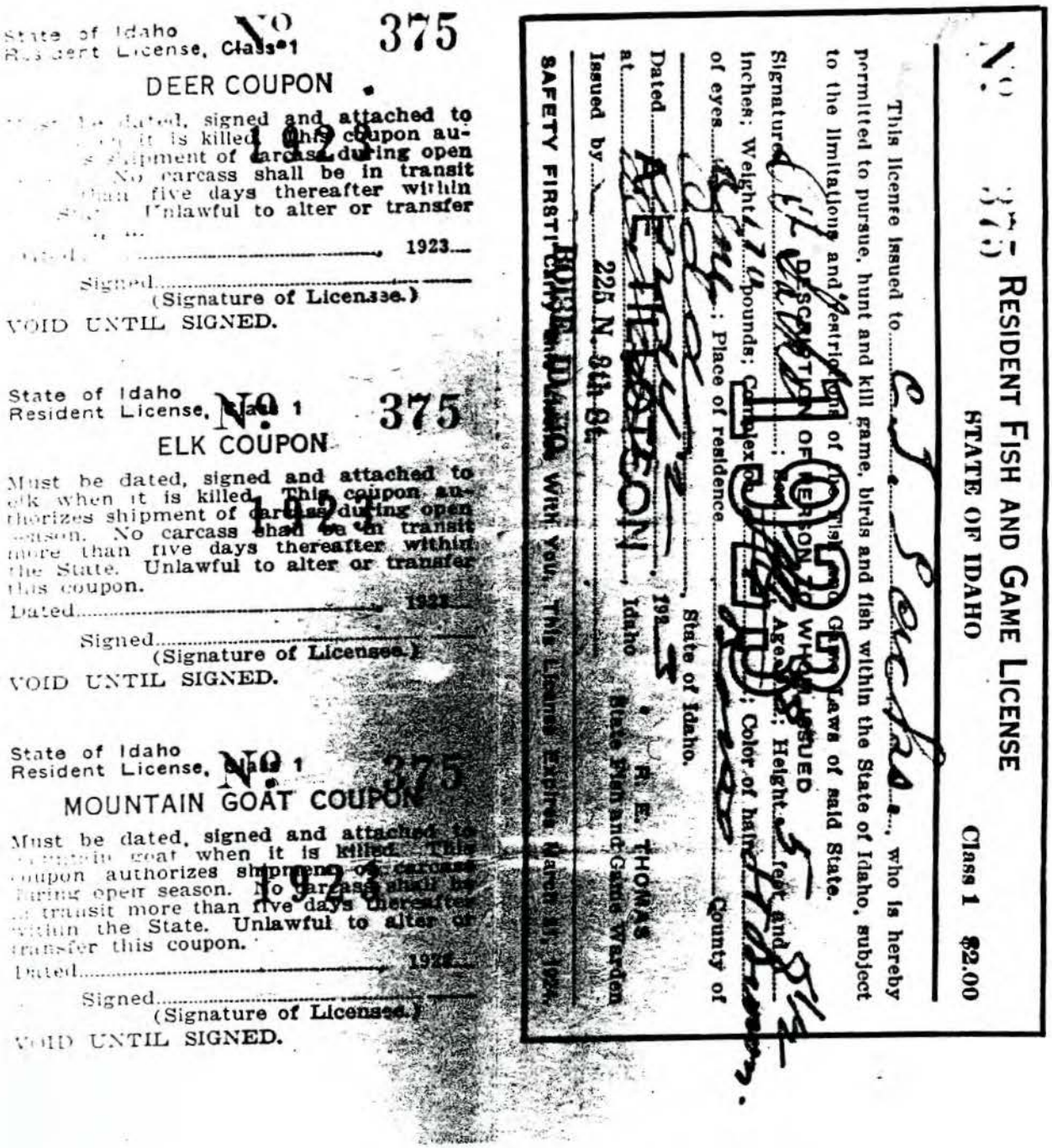
The older political wardens were very reluctant to check a female fishing or hunting. I was riding with an older C.O. once when we came across a woman fishing. He refused to check her and challenged me to do it. She had a license and was very glad to be checked. This was in 1941. I checked very few women my first year on the job.

The younger men who had not accumulated anything didn't stay long in one place. My assignments were: Beaver management (Aug-Sep '39); C.O. 2: Preston (Oct '39-Mar '41), Burley (Jun '41-Mar '43), Soda Springs (Mar '43-Dec '43; U.S. Army (1943-1946, England, France); C.O.: Soda Springs and Driggs (Mar '46-Jun '46); leave of absence (Jun '46-May '47); C.O.: Ashton (May '47-Jul '48), Soda Springs (Jul '48-Jul '51); District Supervisor, District 5 (Jul '51-Apr '73); Regional C.O. (Apr '73-Jul '75). I retired after 36 years.

The first piece of equipment we were issued for counting big game was snow shoes – or skis, if one preferred. Many thousands of game animals were counted by these means in the 1940s and early '50s. Then the Army Weasel came into use, followed by the Tucker Sno-Cat, which hauled from two to six to the top of the ridges. The men would walk out on snow shoes, counting game. This was c improvement over walking both the late 1940s, a snow plane was b for game counts and law enforce Clark, Fremont and Teton counti we were introduced to the Tate C other two-wheeled machines, use for law enforcement. The first tim helicopter was flown for big gam counting in eastern Idaho was in the Pocatello Game Preserve and Diamond Creek drainage in Carib County.

When I took the District 5 supe job in 1951 there was no office or space. All tires, batteries, antifreez chains, etc., that were furnished to men were stored in my basement I fixed up an office with a desk an I bought at my own expense.

In 1956, we got our first office i Pocatello. We were accused of spe too much money: $50 a month an did our own janitorial work. Our m move was to the Hong Kong com (which cost $75 a month) and we g first secretary. In 1973, the regional concept and regional managers ca being. A smaller office was rented was put, along with one of the bio The next office was at the old Nav Ordinance Plant. Then we moved Street and rented a too-small offic Clark Real Estate. That's when I re The office next moved to Poplar S When it was outgrown, the Depar shared space with the Idaho State In 1988, a new Fish and Game buil owned by the Department openec took 37 years to advance from the Supervisor's home and make-shift to a multi-thousand-dollar office.



No. 375 — RESIDENT FISH AND GAME LICENSE

STATE OF IDAHO — Class 1 — $2.00

This license issued to ..., who is hereby permitted to pursue, hunt and kill game, birds and fish within the State of Idaho, subject to the limitations and restrictions of the Game Laws of said State.

Signature of Licensee ...; Age ...; Height ... feet and ... Inches; Weight ... pounds; Complexion ...; Color of hair ...; Color of eyes ...; Place of residence ... County of ...

Dated ..., 1923. State of Idaho.

at ... Idaho — R. E. THOMAS, State Fish and Game Warden

Issued by ... 225 N. 8th St.

SAFETY FIRST! BOISE, IDAHO. With you. This License Expires March 31, 1924.

State of Idaho
Resident License, Class 1 — No. 375

DEER COUPON

Must be dated, signed and attached to deer when it is killed. This coupon authorizes shipment of carcass during open season. No carcass shall be in transit more than five days thereafter within State. Unlawful to alter or transfer this coupon.

Dated ..., 1923.

Signed ...
(Signature of Licensee.)

VOID UNTIL SIGNED.

State of Idaho
Resident License, Class 1 — No. 375

ELK COUPON

Must be dated, signed and attached to elk when it is killed. This coupon authorizes shipment of carcass during open season. No carcass shall be in transit more than five days thereafter within the State. Unlawful to alter or transfer this coupon.

Dated ..., 1923.

Signed ...
(Signature of Licensee.)

VOID UNTIL SIGNED.

State of Idaho
Resident License, Class 1 — No. 375

MOUNTAIN GOAT COUPON

Must be dated, signed and attached to mountain goat when it is killed. This coupon authorizes shipment of carcass during open season. No carcass shall be in transit more than five days thereafter within the State. Unlawful to alter or transfer this coupon.

Dated ..., 1923.

Signed ...
(Signature of Licensee.)

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Signature of Person to Whom Issued .....; Age ....; Height .... feet and .... Inches; Weight .... pounds; Complexion ....; Color of hair ....; Color of eyes ....; Place of residence ....., County of ....., State of Idaho.

Dated ....., 192...

at ....., Idaho

Issued by ..... R. E. THOMAS
State Fish and Game Warden

SAFETY FIRST! Carry This With You. This License Expires March 31, 1924.