



Rodney F
Krischke/WY/APHIS/USDA
01/21/2009 10:27 AM

To dominic_domenici@fws.gov
cc
bcc
Subject WS eagles

Two golden eagles were taken last week in snares in Sweetwater County. Attached is a report from District Supervisor Rod Merrell. I waited until today to report because I knew you were out of the office until today.

Rod Krischke
State Director
Wyoming Wildlife Services
307 261-5336

Democracy must be something more than 2 wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.
James Bouvard 1994

----- Forwarded by Rodney F Krischke/WY/APHIS/USDA on 01/20/2009 02:35 PM -----

Rod J
Merrell/WY/APHIS/USDA
01/16/2009 01:13 PM

To Rodney F Krischke/WY/APHIS/USDA
cc
Subject

Rod, here is the letter concerning the snared eagles in Sweetwater county.



Rod M. Eagle letter.doc



May 24, 2011

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Wildlife
Services
Western Region

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To Interested Parties,

On Monday, Jan. 12, 2009, Wyoming Game & Fish Warden Dave Hays contacted me and told me that hunters along Little Bitter Creek, south west of Rock Springs in Sweetwater County had reported two dead Golden Eagles near the creek. One of them had a snare on it. Dave investigated and found the eagles and the snare was tagged by USDA/Wildlife Services. I contacted the Wildlife Specialist that works that area and he said he had set snares along Little Bitter Creek. Myself and the Specialist met with Warden Hays at our office. Warden Hays showed us the snare that had held the eagle and our Specialist identified it as one of his. We discussed the situation and all of us felt that the oddity of the situation occurred as a result of several factors. Sustained high winds over the last two weeks have kept the eagles from hunting from the air as is their normal habit and they have been walking through the tall brush scavenging. Coyote carcasses left from predator management for the benefit of the sheep that will be there in the next couple of weeks acted as a draw for scavenging eagles. Also Warden Hays mentioned that the available rabbit population in that area was on the decline and that hunters had left a lot of offal from rabbits on the ground near the snares, also acting as a draw. He said that none of the coyote carcasses were close enough to the snares to violate state law and WS policy of setting traps and snares closer than 30 feet from a bait, and that all the coyote carcasses were at least 25-30 yards from any of the snares. While the second eagle had been killed by a snare, the snare had been removed by some one other than the Warden or the Specialist.

We decided that in the future, to avoid the possibility of capturing an eagle we will pull the coyote carcasses away from the site for a distance of 150 to 200 yards. Warden Hays agreed that would probably help.

Rod J. Merrell
District Supervisor
USDA/APHIS/WS
Southwestern District
307-362-7238



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Avoidance of unintentionally trapping eagles in mammalian predator traps

While eagles can prey on a wide variety of species, it is more common to find them feeding on carrion or taking kills from other predators. Other eagles and raptors, magpies, ravens, red fox and coyotes can tip an eagle off to available food, above and beyond them running across it themselves, and they quickly learn where to look and then repeat successful behaviors.

Looking at "typical" eagle behavior gives techniques that can be used to minimize the chance of trapping one. The typical eagle will be facing and moving into the wind or sitting in an elevated position facing the wind, watching for potential prey or for the activity of other animals advertizing potential food. When they are interested in food they didn't kill, they most often land close to the food or fly past it to check it out ahead of circling back downwind and coming back up to land on or near it. Their largest threat is other eagles attacking them while they feed, most of the time they don't blindly fly in, their approach will be to come into the wind and land downwind of the food. The distance can be anywhere from several feet to a hundred yards if they are shy about confronting another eagle or even feeding coyotes. Once an eagle feeds, it remembers that location and returns to search for food, even if the food was completely consumed during the previous visit they have learned the conditions that previously provided food will increase the chance of a repeat. For example, animals caught in fence get them to work fence lines, and locations where sheep have their lambs become a good place to look for orphans, still born lambs, dead sheep.

Since the typical eagle approaches from downwind of the food anything previously taken out of a snare should be disposed of downwind and crosswind of the trap or snare set, thus an eagle won't have the set between it and any food, or food scraps. Downwind keeps the food between the eagle and the set, and offsetting it crosswind from the set keeps the food from ending back at the set. For example, while eagles like to land into the wind, they also take off into the wind, and an eagle with a scrap of food may very well fly straight into the wind and land on a fence post, right above the very snare that caught the original food. That scrap, maybe a rabbit leg or piece of hide, could be dropped while the eagle is facing the wind (remember they try to face the wind most of the time), so the scrap would drop, on the opposite side of the fence, putting the food between the set and the next eagle. That second eagle could come into the wind, land short of the fence, (especially if an eagle was sitting on the fence), then and walk up to the scrap by going through the set.

In summary, remove as much evidence of food that can be reasonably removed, and take carcasses and scraps down and crosswind to the prevailing wind from the set. And remember, eagles will make a return visit which increases the risk by bringing it back to the vicinity of your set.