



## Region 7 Continued

# THE PILLOW MAKER

By Sr. Agent Todd Lewis

In late September we received a complaint through Operation Game Thief wherein the complainant reported that someone was shooting doves in the middle of a business district in Baton Rouge. The complainant told us that the offender was using air rifles with scopes to shoot doves off of power lines behind a particular business.

I made a very brief tour of the area and discovered this was going to be a tough little complaint to work. There were enough people and businesses in the vicinity to make surveillance really tough. There was no way we were going to pull this one off without being seen by someone.

I returned that weekend and took a better look around the area while the local businesses were closed. Viola! I discovered there was bait spread on two areas behind the business that the allegations had been made against. There were also dove decoys on the fence behind the business and a few dove carcasses. My interest was piqued.

I spent several days during the course of the next month attempting to surveil the activity. Several times I got close to "getting the goods" on three or four violators but I was never able to conduct surveillance from a proper vantage point and never saw any of the

violators with a "bird in hand". I'd see them shoot but couldn't see well enough to be able to testify as to what they were shooting at. I could just see myself being questioned in court... Defense Attorney: "So Agent Lewis, were my clients shooting at rats or doves?" Me: "Errrrrrr.... uhhhhhh... errrrrrrr... I dunno. I mean they were hunting over bait and had dove decoys out but yer right Counselor, they might've been shooting at spotted owls, manatees, pictures of Rosie O'Donnell for all I know."



Finally I found a spot where I could conduct decent surveillance. Heck, it was even air-condi-

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## Pillow Makers

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tioned! I say "decent" because it still wasn't "perfect" though the air conditioning sure didn't hurt. I enlisted Sgt. Paul Stuckey to assist with the investigation and set him up in the "decent" surveillance spot. He quickly turned out to be a good luck charm. It seemed that every time he would show up he'd get some good film footage within the first few minutes following his arrival. He got some great footage of various violators leaning on a fence, taking careful aim with scoped air rifles and shooting at doves. He was even able to film feathers flying off the birds a violator shot. We'd see them shoot but we never saw them with a "bird in hand". We couldn't figure out whether they were just really bad shots or whether they were collecting the birds in an area behind the business or what the story was. It was very frustrating.

Rain delayed and interfered with our activity on several days. Three or four times I found myself walking about in the area wearing an ankle-length raincoat and trying to make "golden" observations. Frustrations grew.

Finally, I found a spot where I could conduct surveillance of the rear of the business. I visited the area late one evening while the area

was deserted. I dragged a few pallets, cinder blocks and other things to the rear of a vacant mobile home that was parked at an adjacent building and made what I dubbed as my "urban blind".

That Friday Sgt. Stuckey and I coordinated our efforts. I climbed beneath the trailer and lay in the mud where I was able to observe and film the activity at the back of the building. About an hour later I realized that a nest of about forty guinea wasps was located a mere eighteen inches above my derriere as I lay watching my merry little band of outlaws. Thank heavens it was just cold enough that the wasps were inactive. I shudder to think how my day would have turned out if it had been a mere five or ten degrees warmer.

Sgt. Stuckey made his usual great film: suspects shooting, feathers flying, etc... Meanwhile I was finally able to discover their little secret. After retrieving a downed bird they were putting disposable latex gloves on when they'd rip the breast from the bird. When they had a breast in their gloved hand they'd turn the glove inside out over the breast and put the breast in their pocket. Their secret was revealed! That's why we weren't seeing them with a "bird

in hand".

Lieutenant Bueche joined us in time to observe some shooting and flying feathers and soon after his arrival we made our approach. I crawled out of my little hidey-hole and started walking toward the three outlaws. They laid eyes on me and began quickly walking toward the side entrance of the business where they encountered Sgt. Stuckey and Lieutenant Bueche who were on the side of the building "laying in wait" for them.

Subsequent interviews and a search of the premises revealed: Forty-five dove breast in the freezer; One dove that had not yet been cleaned; One dove breast still in a latex glove; Two .177 caliber air rifles (one marked

with "PILLOW MAKER" on the stock); A bag of bait (corn & sunflower seeds); Three cans of pellets; Three outlaws with big fat federal tickets in their hands.

Many thanks go out to the anonymous citizen who used Operation Game Thief's online complaint form to bring the violations to our attention! Sincere thanks also go out to the several citizens who discovered or were otherwise made aware of our activity in the area and who managed to keep our little secret quiet. Without the help of these citizens we'd have never known what was going on less than one mile from Cortana Mall and never been able to introduce them to the Federal Judge.



47 dove breasts, two .177 caliber air rifles (one marked with "Pillow Maker" on the stock), bag of bait (corn and sunflower seeds) 3 cans of pellets, 1 latex glove with breast enclosed.

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