



**MAJ.  
SANDY DARES**

## Update

by Maj. Sandy Dares, Region 11 Representative

This year the legislative session is “fiscal,” and besides financial matters, legislators may submit only five other bills each. Bills submitted for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries include bills to correct the shrimp boundaries (made necessary because of coastal erosion), to change the way monies from the lifetime license endowment fund are spent and to correct a problem with the boundary line for hoop netting.

In other news, the academy class graduated and those agents are now working on their field training. There have also been several agents promoted to lieutenant and sergeant. The colonel is considering another academy for the fall, as we still have a number of vacant positions.

Money problems continue to affect our operations. We have had to mandate fuel-saving plans, including doubling up in

trucks, reducing travel and requiring agents to “sit and listen” more and ride less. While these measures sometimes reduce our visibility over a large area, they do increase our visibility in certain “hot” spots.

We continue to emphasize DWI and litter enforcement. We believe these initiatives contribute not only to public safety but also to the general appearance of our state. We hope that our efforts will raise public awareness and deter people from driving while impaired. We are blessed with abundant natural resources, and it is indeed sad that some people so cavalierly trash our state. Our agents remain at the forefront of litter and dumping enforcement.

As you begin to prepare for the hunting seasons, please spend some time on safety and survival gear. Be sure to carry a 12-volt charger and cigarette lighter plug adapter

for your cell phone. File a float plan, or let someone trustworthy know where you will be and when you will return. Doing these simple things can help us to help you when you need assistance.

Finally, we deeply appreciate the support we receive from the public. Sponsors make this magazine possible and allow us to do the “I Got Caught Wearing My Life Jacket” T-shirt giveaway. We receive strong backing for our gun raffle and the sale of Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association merchandise. But most of all, it is in the public arena—where your peer pressure causes outlaws to think twice—when you teach young folks the “right” way to hunt and fish and when you support us in the courthouse and legislature—that our teamwork really pays off to the benefit of our natural resources.

From all of us to all of you, thanks—we appreciate you! 🐾

### REGION 11

Col. Winton Vidrine  
Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze  
Lt. Col. Brian Spillman

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Jack Burt  
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Clair Town  
Oliver Jenkins  
Patti Shumake

### PHOTO GALLERY



Jed Angelle, representing the Deep South Racing Association, presents Col. Winton Vidrine with a plaque in appreciation of the support of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division. DSRA holds four boat races each year in Louisiana, three of which are held on state-regulated waterways and operated under a marine event permit issued by the Enforcement Division. Agents are on hand at these events to regulate the recreational boat traffic and make sure the event is safe. Proceeds from these events always go to a local charity.

## Excuses, Lies and Didn't Knows— Oh, the Tales We Are Told

by Maj. Sandy Dares

The average citizen supports law enforcement and makes every effort to obey the law. Law-abiding citizens often have trouble comprehending how someone can commit the crimes they read about in news releases and newspaper articles. But sometimes violations are committed by these very same, average, everyday law-abiding types who, in conversation, decry lawbreakers.

Often their violations are simply oversights, mistakes made in a busy life. Mistakes can and do happen to any of us. For instance, a dad is in so much of a hurry to take his children fishing after a hard week of work that he forgets to buy his fishing license or to make sure he has life jackets on his boat. These relatively minor violations fall into the "I forgot" category, and the fines are usually minimal.

On other occasions, the violation is the result of misplaced trust. You take another person's word that a season is open, a fish is legal or that permission was granted to hunt the area. When the law enforcement officer arrives, you learn that the season is in fact closed, the fish is undersized or that you are trespass-

ing. While it may be that you were given bad information, it is still your responsibility to know and obey the law. If not, most scofflaws would have a ready-made excuse.

One of the more common scenarios occurs during dove hunts. Hunters are invited to a field and do not realize that the burden is on them to make sure that the field is not baited. The law requires them to ask those responsible how the field was prepared, and to make a visual inspection of the area to look for bait. Of course, when the agents approach, everyone denies knowing that the field was baited, and they further deny asking about the field's preparation or even looking to see if it was baited. Sometimes these denials are ludicrous, such as when the hunter has a pile of cracked corn surrounding the immediate hunting area. Often, these cases involve wealthy individuals, politicians and even judges and law enforcement officials. But the federal courts have established precedents that hunters must ask and look, so these excuses do not often fly.

Sometimes we do things that we have never thought of as wrong. Just recently, an elderly retiree was cited for littering

when he carelessly threw a can from his moving car. When stopped, he said that he had been doing this all of this life and really did not consider it littering, because he was sure someone would come along and pick up the can to recycle it. So in his mind, he was not littering; he was merely helping poor people in their recycling efforts. Isn't it amazing how we humans seek to justify our behaviors?

Another aspect of litter is when we find bags of trash and look through them for evidence of where they originated. Sometimes when we track down the owners, they claim that they paid someone to haul away their trash and never intended for it to be deposited in a bayou or alongside a highway. Sometimes investigators are able to verify that the dumpers did so at their own discretion, but sometimes they learn that the owners dumped the trash there.

Which brings up lying. Rookie law enforcement officers are often amazed, but after a few encounters should not be surprised, by the lies people tell. You don't know whether to laugh, to be angry or to cry when people steadfastly deny doing exactly what you just saw them do. Unfortunately, this practice is not confined to low-lives. Over the course of their law enforcement career, police officers and wildlife agents are lied to by people from just about every walk of life.

Sometimes the liars are

very convincing. One agent recently dealt with a trespasser who drove his jacked-up, four-wheel-drive truck over saplings, past posted signs and through a mud hole to get around an 8-foot-tall fence surrounding a piece of private property. Three shots were heard from the area he accessed. An empty gun case was found in the bed of his truck. When he came out unarmed, he denied *on the heads of his children* that he was hunting, denied that he had shot a gun and denied even having a gun with him. A search of the area led to the discovery of a loaded (one in the chamber, three in the magazine with a capacity of six) scoped .30-30. He then admitted to the gun, but continued to deny shooting or hunting. Even if you do not believe that swearing on your children may result in misfortune, this was a pretty big lie.

Some violations are crimes of opportunity, when otherwise law-abiding citizens become so caught up in the moment that they throw discretion to the wind. This often happens with size and daily possession limits, when hunters or fishermen are finally in the right place at the right time and just cannot stop when they should. One of the common justifications in these cases is the claim that they were just trying to make up for all of their previous bad hunting trips. But as we all know, limits are not cumulative over time. The slate is wiped

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clean every day. If not, in a 60-day six-duck season, you would be allowed 360 birds on any day! But under the violators' logic, this is exactly how it should work!

It takes time for law enforcement officers to learn all of the tricks, lies, excuses and other ploys used by outlaws. It is often difficult to discern the truthful from the dishonest, to determine if a break is deserved or if the suspect is simply manipulative. We know

there are times when a violation is an honest mistake, but we cannot always make that determination in the field. That is why judges are given the power to decide.

We do know that criminal-minded types, those described by psychologists as sociopaths, do not have the usual inhibitions most of us do about lying. They believe that any lie is justified to avoid trouble. They feel no guilt, have no conscience and profess with

great earnestness to be honest and law-abiding.

While we do our best to use our discretion properly, the public should also understand that there are times when it is just not possible to determine the truth. As we all learn the hard way, sometimes even the most honest-appearing person is in fact a con man. If you believe in your heart that the officer is mistaken, then you can have your day in court, but the best course of action in the

field is to simply cooperate.

As we go through our careers, we meet thousands of people. Most are honest, good citizens. Some are just lazy or involved in a mistake. A significant number are criminal-minded. We cannot always tell the difference, so don't be offended when we don't take your word at face value. Just give us the same break and consideration you expect, let us do our job, and things will be less stressful for all of us. 🐾

## Litter Reminders: Casual Litter, Careless Litter and Intentional Dumping

by Maj. Sandy Dares

**W**hen we drive around and observe the trash that litters our environment, it is clear that there are many factors contributing to the litter problem and a number of different sources and types of litter. It is also clear, from the types and locations of litter, that there are a variety of ways in which litter occurs. Another fact, which is undeniable, is that litter is the product of human beings—we can blame only our fellow man and ourselves.

- Careless litter can be characterized as the unintentional deposit of trash. This most commonly occurs when something blows out of a truck or boat. While the driver did not intend to litter, his careless disregard for the possibility of litter is the cause of the problem. Careless litter, though unintentional, poses the same environmental harm as casual litter, and can result in a citation.

- Casual litter can be defined as the intentional deposit of a small amount of trash. It is most commonly seen when a pedestrian or driver throws a soft drink can, cigarette butt or carton, fast-food bag or other debris into the environment. This is the most common form of littering, and is an intentional illegal act. It is clear evidence of a total disregard for the cleanliness of the area. While one butt, can or wrapper may not constitute an environmental crisis, it is the cumulative impact of thousands of tons of trash per day deposited in this manner that leads to unsightly highways and waterways, clogged storm drains and drainage ditches, pollution of our land and water and threats to animals which encounter the trash.

- Intentional dumping is the most serious form of littering and occurs when someone makes a conscious decision to unload trash into the environment. We often see major appliances, construction trash and roofing materials dumped onto remote areas and even

Wildlife Management Areas. Another common item is bags of household trash. We sometimes make cases by going through the trash and discovering documents that lead us back to the origin of the trash. The owners are responsible, even if they did not actually dump the trash.

There are some things that people can do to minimize litter. First must come the awareness that litter is a problem, which may lead to a person simply deciding not to litter. Although government agencies and citizen organizations have spent millions of dollars on anti-litter education campaigns, the practice continues. Many times we hear justifications like "Everyone else does it" or "It is just one little piece of paper—what can it hurt?"

Another area of awareness is the common-sense realization that objects in trucks and boats will blow or fall out at highway speeds. We see ice chests, plastic buckets, fiberglass and aluminum ladders, boxes, pallets and even winch handles from 18-wheelers littering the roadways. All of this is avoidable if the drivers would simply secure these items before driving.

In our position as stewards of the environment, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries agents are taking a very active role in enforcing anti-litter laws. When we participate in hunter and boater education classes, as well as other public relations events, we stress the importance of keeping a clean environment. Our agents issue many citations, and also initiate and pursue investigations. We use the same surveillance techniques to catch litterbugs that we employ for wildlife and fish violations.

We believe that these efforts will eventually result in a change of attitude, and we hope that we will one day look back and be able to talk about the bad old days when littering was commonplace. 🐾