

# Arizona crowns youth sporting clays champions

More than 150 young shooters from across Arizona competed at the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) Commissioner's Cup state sporting clays championships on March 31.

The competition, held at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility in Phoenix, featured some of the state's top young shooters in varsity, junior varsity, intermediate and rookie divisions.

Squads from the Ben Avery Clay Crushers team from the north/central part of the Valley took first place in the varsity and rookie divisions, while squads from the Red Mountain Target Terminators team from the East Valley won the junior varsity and intermediate divisions.

"We had a great turnout," said Ashley Lynch, shooting sports coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "Young shooters came from several different parts of the state, including metro Phoenix, Tucson, Sierra Vista, Casa Grande, Yuma, Wickenburg, Apache County and the White Mountains."

Winning teams are eligible to compete at the national SCTP sporting clays championships held July 13-15 at the National Shooting Complex in San Antonio. The best of these young shooters could be selected to attend an Olympic development camp in August in Colorado Springs.

The sporting clays championships are the first leg of Arizona's Commissioners' Cup championships. Separate competitions will be held in skeet and trap.

SCTP is a youth development program that teaches trap, skeet and sporting clays to students in grades 12 and under. Arizona's program is sponsored by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission and administered by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, in partnership with the National Shooting Sports Foundation. More than 600 kids compete in Arizona's SCTP. Nationally, about 10,000 youngsters compete in 40 states. For a list of results from the

Commissioners' Cup sporting clays championships, or to learn more about Arizona's Scholastic Clay Target Program, visit [azgfd.gov/shootingsports](http://azgfd.gov/shootingsports).

## Observant couple helps nab pronghorn poachers

Thanks to keen attention and prompt reporting by a Navajo County couple, Arizona Game and Fish Department officers were able to make a successful antelope poaching case against two people from the Phoenix area. The couple reported a suspicious incident they had just observed and got a cooperative, timely response from the Snowflake-Taylor Police Department and a Navajo County deputy sheriff, as well as Game and Fish.

As the couple drove a paved county road into Snowflake last June, they saw individuals in a vehicle aiming rifles at a doe antelope standing off the road. The witnesses immediately went to the Snowflake-Taylor Police Department to report the incident, whereupon police officials contacted Paul Greer, wildlife manager in Game Management Unit 3A, who was about 45 minutes from the scene.

Greer says, "During my response time, a police officer was able to stop and detain a vehicle that matched the description given by the witnesses. Had the witnesses not acted so promptly and been observant enough to memorize the vehicle and suspect descriptions, it's likely we would not have been able to make this case."

The officers' investigation of the poaching site found the suspects had shot at the doe several times. They then drove a quarter-mile down the road where they off-loaded their ATVs. Driving cross-country back to the antelope, they took photos of themselves with the doe. They left the animal where it lay and were leaving the area when they were stopped.

Investigation of the doe carcass showed it was lactating when it was killed, indicating it was nursing one or more fawns. Although the officers searched the area for several hours, they were unable to find a fawn, which likely died due to loss of the mother.

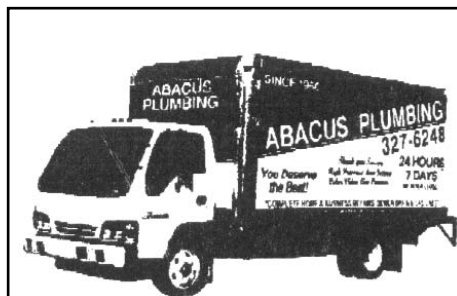
Greer's background investigation found the suspects had applied for several years for antelope permits in Arizona. "This is a heinous act," he says. "These people were very much aware of antelope seasons and the state's hunting regulations."

The Snowflake Justice Court found the two guilty of taking big game during a closed season and waste of game meat. The two paid a combined criminal fine of \$2,292.

In the coming months, the two suspects will have a hearing before the Arizona Game and Fish Commission for possible civil assessments of \$750 each and up to a 5-year revocation of their hunting, fishing and trapping privileges.

"Had it not been for the actions taken by the witnesses that day, these individuals may well have repeated their acts of blatant disregard for wildlife and Arizona's wildlife laws," Greer notes. "This is an excellent example of how the public can be the eyes and ears of the department, and can help us maintain the wildlife resources that belong to the citizens of Arizona."

Due to the nature of the offense, the actions taken by the witnesses and their willingness to provide written statements and testify in court, the department paid the couple a reward of \$250.



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