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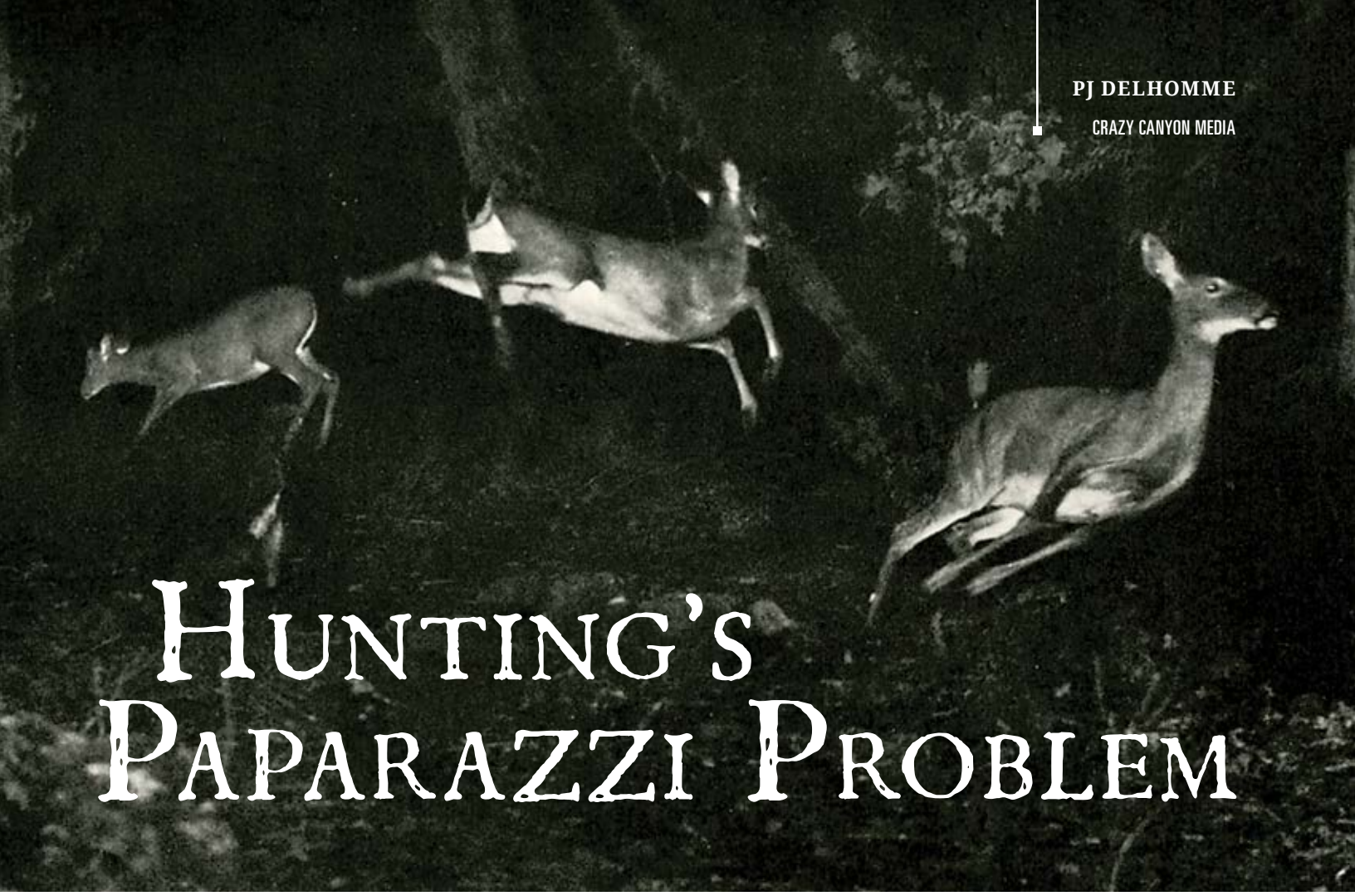

Hunting's Paparazzi Problem

This animated night picture was obtained by having the cord so arranged that, when touched, it fired a blank cartridge and immediately afterward the flashlight which photographed the animals as they leaped away in alarm. Photo taken in 1893. From *Hunting Wild Life with Camera and Flashlight* by George Shiras III.

Trail cameras over water sources pose a threat to the animals that rely on that water to survive, and the debate over using cameras for hunting heats up, especially in the Southwest.

I'll admit. I love checking my trail camera. It gets my kids excited to go with me on a hike because they can see bears, moose, elk, and other animals just minutes from our house. Yet too much of a good thing can be a bad thing, which is why some states such as Arizona, Utah and Nevada have banned or are considering banning those same cameras.

Trail cameras have been around as long as the Boone and Crockett Club. In the late 1800s, Boone and Crockett Club member George Shiras III (yes, the Shiras' moose guy) developed a system to take photos of unsuspecting wildlife in the field. His photos were published in 1906 in *National Geographic*.

Since Shiras' time, trail cameras have become smaller, cheaper, and easier to use. As a result, more people like me can stick one on a tree to see what's lurking on the trail. But there's a big difference between one or two cameras on a game trail and hundreds of cameras in one spot belonging to dozens of hunters, which is exactly what's happening over water sources in southwestern states.

TRAIL CAMERA BANS IN THE SOUTHWEST

In states like Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, wildlife is concentrated where they have access to water, be it natural creeks and springs or human constructed tanks and catchment systems. Hunters know this and have placed trail cameras on these water sources. So, what's the big deal?

"It's not one thing," says Kurt Davis, chairman of the Arizona Fish and Game Commission. "It's a combination of things."

The problem is the cumulative effect of all those cameras, which translates into more hunters coming in at all times of day to change batteries, change SD cards—you name it. All that human activity inhibits wildlife's ability to use the water source. It stacks hunters on top of each other when the season opens, leading to more potential conflict. Plus, there is the question of fair chase.

At a June 11 Arizona Game and Fish Commission meeting, Arizona Game and Fish Department officials recommended one of two actions concerning trail camera use. Option one prohibited the use of all trail cameras for hunting. Option two prohibited placement of cameras within a quarter-mile of any water source and would have put seasonal limitations on using cameras for hunting. The commission voted 5-0 for option one: ban the use of any trail camera for the "purpose of taking or aiding in the take of wildlife." The regulation goes into effect in 2022.

In explaining their votes, commissioners cited not just wildlife security issues and concerns, but read quotes from Theodore Roosevelt and invoked the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The concept of fair chase was mentioned numerous times.

"Years ago, you didn't see them [cameras] everywhere," says Davis. "Now, you do. Part of the issue is our population growth, growing ATV use, which allows people to access these areas by water sources, and cheaper cameras. Since 2010, the number of hunters has increased in Arizona, and the number of applications has increased." The combination of these factors is exacerbated by what Davis calls a generational drought.

Arizona Game and Fish Department employees are hauling tons of water into water catchments for wildlife, says Davis. "And there isn't a water source that isn't easily located on an app," he says. "When it comes to water, these animals don't have second choices. Game cameras are in direct conflict with the tenets of fair chase."

In 2018, the commission voted to ban the use of wireless trail cameras for hunting. In theory, these cameras might help solve the wildlife disturbance concerns. But, Davis explained, Arizona doesn't have the cell coverage needed for these cameras to operate in remote places, which includes most of the state.

To the northeast, the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners cited wildlife security concerns when they voted in 2018 to ban the use of cameras on public land from August 1 to December

GEORGE SHIRAS III
THE FATHER OF WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Ernest Hemingway described him as "the most interesting man I know." Theodore Roosevelt wrote to him urging him to write about his pioneering photography:

"I feel strongly that this country stands much more in need of the work of a great outdoor faunal naturalist than of the work of any number of closet specialists and microscopic tissue-cutters."

George Shiras III was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1859. He was from a family long interested in hunting and the outdoors, as well as law and politics. His father was a U.S. associate Supreme Court justice.

Shiras graduated from Cornell in 1881 and in 1883 received his law degree from Yale. He served as a member of Congress from 1903-1905 during which time he prepared and introduced in the House the now famous Federal Migratory Bird Law. He helped write legislation creating Olympic National Park. He discovered several species of wildlife, including *Alces americana shirasi*, the "Yellowstone" moose.

In his early years, Shiras was an avid hunter, spending his vacation time in Michigan's remote Upper Peninsula. By 1889 he laid aside his gun and picked up a camera, becoming the first to photograph wild animals in daytime from a canoe or blind. He developed pioneering techniques for flash-photographing animals and invented special camera equipment using a specially devised apparatus by which wildfowl could be photographed while flying.

Shiras was a member of the governing board of the National Geographic Society for 25 years. He contributed much material to *National Geographic* magazine over a period of many years. He finally followed Theodore Roosevelt's admonition and published his observations of North American wildlife along with 950 of his outstanding photographs in the two-volume work *Hunting Wild Life With Camera And Flashlight*, dedicated to his mentor, Theodore Roosevelt.

George Shiras III was a member of the Boone and Crockett Club. On behalf of the Club and several other wildlife organizations, George Bird Grinnell wrote to him regarding his lifelong work:

"It was your genius which discovered the legal distinction between animals that are migratory and those that are sedentary, or local. Through this discovery we owe to you the greatest single accomplishment ever made in wild life protection. No man has rendered a service in this respect so great as yours."

George Shiras III donated all his pioneering negatives and equipment to the National Geographic Society. He died in Marquette, Michigan, in 1942 and was buried in Park Cemetery.

These flashlight photo hunters in 1893 were the pioneers of the sport. The hunting skiff and equipment went out for game with two cameras in the box on the revolving table in the bow. On top was the jacklight which located the game. The flashlight in Shiras' hand was fired by pulling on a trigger. The flashlight apparatus shown was the one used in practically all the author's night pictures of deer and moose taken from a canoe.

IMAGE FROM *HUNTING WILD LIFE WITH CAMERA AND FLASHLIGHT* BY GEORGE SHIRAS III.
EXCERPT FROM BOONE-CROCKETT.ORG

31. In addition, the regulation prohibits the use of cameras at any time if the camera prevents wildlife from accessing or alters an animal's access to a spring or any other water source.

"Saturating all or most available water sources with trail cameras in a hunt unit not only disrupts the animal's ability to obtain water as camera owners come and go from waters that have as many as 25 or more cameras, but also creates hunter congestion and hunter competition issues," wrote the Nevada Department of Wildlife in a statement.

In a memorandum in support of new trail cam regulations, Chief Game Warden Tyler Turnipseed expressed his concern for the sheer number of cameras and camera owners checking on them. "We hear of individuals putting out as many as 300 cameras to cover every water source in a hunt unit, or series of hunt units," wrote Turnipseed. "While this may not be much of a problem in areas with abundant water, Nevada has many dry, desert hunt areas with very few water sources in an entire mountain range." Turnipseed also brought up the issue that some hunters will come into water sources to check their cameras while other hunters are actually hunting during a season.

This year, Utah came close to banning trail cameras during hunting season. In February, HB295 was introduced by Representative Casey Snider. At the time of introduction, the bill contained language that would have prohibited the use of trail cameras during hunting season. Over the next six weeks, the language of the bill was changed and signed by the Governor in March. Those changes did not ban the use of trail cameras during hunting season. Rather, the new language "authorizes and instructs the Wildlife Board to make rules governing the use of trail cameras." In other words, the use of trail cameras for hunting in Utah is still up for debate.

THE CLUB'S TAKE

As for the Boone and Crockett Club, the Club does have a policy on the use of wireless trail cameras, which states, "The use of any technology that delivers real-time data (including photos) to target or guide a hunter to any species or animal in a manner that elicits an immediate (real-time) response by the hunter is not permitted."

"If a hunter uses real-time animal location data from collared game animals, drones, or cell phones to kill an animal, those actions violate the basis of fair chase," says Justin Spring, Boone and Crockett Club's Director of Big Game Records. "Using collar data or trail cam images for scouting purposes is one thing. Yet knowing the exact location of an animal before you even start hunting is another thing altogether."

As for cameras that require hunters to physically check the photos, there is no across-the-board Club policy. Rather, the Boone and Crockett Club recognizes that states are geographically different, and they will have different regulations. What's good for states in the Southwest affected by prolonged drought will have different regulations than states in the Midwest or Southeast where water sources are more abundant.

At the same time, the Club does support state game agencies in their decisions regarding the use of trail cameras. "The Club commends the Arizona Fish and Game Department and commission for working together for the betterment of wildlife management," says Spring. "We certainly appreciate the concern Arizona managers have for the wildlife resource." ■

Numerous trail cameras around a catchment in Arizona. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TOM MACKIN