

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Illegal possession of elk antlers

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Elk once roamed the southern Appalachian Mountains and the eastern United States before over-harvesting extirpated them from the area in the late 1700's. The experimental release of elk into the Great Smoky Mountains, which began in 2001 with a population of 25 elk, has been successful. To this point, the population has been growing and the park has been monitoring the herd with the assistance of radio collars.

However, in an investigation by state and federal law enforcement officers, three North Carolina men recently paid fines in relation to charges of knowingly acquiring elk antlers on Pisgah National Forest. The three men, two of Canton, and one of Waynesville, each paid a \$500 fine and a \$25 processing fee for the illegal possession of elk antlers in Pisgah National Forest. The possession of parts from a specially regulated species such as elk is a violation of the Federal Lacey Act as well as North Carolina State Wildlife Law.

In a separate incident this May, three elk were shot and found lying in the Mt. Sterling area near Great Smoky Mountains National Park. A \$20,000 reward is offered by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible for the elks' deaths.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.