

Conservation agent wins Pope and Young award

Taking the lead role in one of Missouri's largest-ever deer poaching cases and performing a multitude of other wildlife enforcement duties has earned Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) agent Andy Barnes national recognition.

Barnes, the Lawrence County conservation agent, has been named the Pope and Young Club's Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. The Pope and Young Club is one of North America's leading bowhunting and conservation organizations. Barnes received his award at the organization's biennial convention in April in Omaha.

The award honors what was a very busy – and from an enforcement perspective, very successful – 2018 for Barnes. The highlight of the year came in December when sentencings in Barton County Circuit Court and Lawrence County Associate Court culminated a multiple-year, multiple-state investigation into the poaching activities of one family and their accomplices. Barnes was one of the lead investigators on this case, which was known internally as the “Geronimo Case.” The investigation, which involved the illegal taking of deer and several other wildlife violations, culminated with the filing of more than 300 charges on 14 individuals in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Canada.

In addition to his work on the Geronimo Case, Barnes' 2018 work accomplishments included 1,078 resource contacts, 119 resource violations, 130 other violations, 96 arrests, 52 assisted arrests, 35 written warnings, 25 meetings, 7 radio, television and newspaper articles; 8 exhibits, 1,233 public contacts and 1,604 phone calls. In addition to this, he also certified 62 hunter education students and made six hunter education instructor contacts.

On top of this, Barnes found time to conduct several fishing clinics for the Mount Vernon R-5 School District in Lawrence County, assist with youth fishing clinics in Barton and Jasper counties, present school programs about wildlife to local schools, and assist with the Missouri National Archery in the Schools (MoNASP) state tournament in Branson.

“Andy consistently remains a productive leader in the Southwest Region regarding law enforcement, outreach and education, resource management, and media contacts,” said MDC District Protection Supervisor Scott Burger. “I believe Andy's consistent high volume, top quality, and widely diverse conservation agent work in Lawrence County – along with the once-in-a-lifetime Geronimo Case he began, led, and continues to benefit from – is deserving of the recognition of the Pope and Young Award.”



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