

# Wolf shot by hiker on Rathdrum Mountain

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Courtesy photo

Posted: Wednesday, January 14, 2015 6:30 am | Updated: 8:59 am, Wed Jan 14, 2015.

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**RATHDRUM** — A man who was walking his dogs on Rathdrum Mountain shot and killed a wolf.

Forrest Mize, who lives high on the south side of the mountain off West Hidden Valley Road, said that on Dec. 30 he and his three female Labs were walking along an old logging road on the mountain when they crossed paths with the roughly 100-pound male wolf.

"I walk these logging roads every day with my dogs," Mize said Tuesday.

## Rathdrum wolf

Forrest Mize crouches down next to a wolf he shot Dec. 30 on Rathdrum Mountain.

Mize, 53, who retired from the U.S. Navy in 2009 as a lieutenant commander, said the wolf was on the north side of the logging road and his dogs were on the south side when he saw the wolf crouched down like it was preparing to strike.

"I dropped him in his tracks — right in the heart," he said. He had been carrying a .22 Hornet for protection.

Mize has 20 chickens on his property and has regularly lost some to bobcats and coyotes.

As a duck and quail hunter, he said he is better with a shotgun than a rifle.

"I got lucky this time," he said.

Not too lucky, however.

"I got a court date now," he said.

He didn't have a wolf tag when he shot the wolf.

"I went and bought a tag so that I could legally take the wolf to a tanner and have him skinned," he said.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game ticketed him for possessing an untagged wolf and then seized the pelt.

Mize said he was trying to do the right thing under the circumstances, and believes he wouldn't be in any trouble if he had simply thrown the wolf in a Dumpster or buried it in the woods and never spoke about the incident.

"I have a clean record of 53 years, not even a parking ticket," he said. "It's kind of discouraging to get this harassment from (Fish and Game)."

Craig Walker, a regional conservation officer for Fish and Game, said the agency can't comment on the case because it's still open. It is a misdemeanor infraction, he said.

Speaking generally and not about Mize's case, Walker said it's a requirement to possess a tag before killing a wolf.

In any case, Walker said, the investigating officers have discretion in determining whether a defensive shooting is justified. Two officers investigated Mize's case.

"If a person is faced with that kind of a situation, it's important that they immediately contact authorities," Walker said.

Phil Cooper, a spokesman for Fish and Game, said if someone shoots an animal in self defense — before a tag is purchased — they aren't permitted to then go and get a tag to keep the animal. Even, he said, in cases where an investigation shows the shooting was justified.

Cooper said Tuesday that Fish and Game had received reports that a wolf had been spotted on Rathdrum Mountain prior to this shooting. Nothing was confirmed, however.

"There had not and have not yet been reports of sightings of more than a single wolf at a time in the area," Cooper said.