



On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Lt. John Solan

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Illegal Ivory—New York County

As part of a large investigation into the booming business of ivory smuggling in New York City, Lt. John Fitzpatrick, ECO Timothy Machnica and ECO Gregory Maneeley recently assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the seizure of a large quantity of elephant ivory from a posh residence on Central Park West in Manhattan. Officers seized 132 pieces of ivory, ranging from small statues to large tusks, valued at more than \$40,000. ECOs in the city have been working with the USFWS since December 2008 to identify and apprehend individuals involved in this illegal ivory trade.

"Quick" Getaway—Ulster County

During an evening patrol in December, ECO Myles Schillinger responded to a complaint of shots fired near several residences in the Town of Plattekill. The complainant, a DEC Sportsman Education Instructor, saw a man shoot a deer in the field next to his home and went to confront the shooter. The panicked man hurriedly loaded the deer in his pickup truck, hoping for a quick getaway. Unfortunately, he had locked his keys in the truck. Desperate to get away, the shooter broke a window with the butt of his rifle, but he wasn't quick enough—the DEC Instructor had plenty of time to get a good look at the man and jot down his license plate. ECO Schillinger arrested the man at his residence a short time later and ticketed him for discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a residence, as well as taking a deer after legal hunting hours.

The New 6C—St. Lawrence County

After receiving a complaint about someone illegally taking deer in the Town of Canton, ECOs Bret Canary and Scott Atwood visited the subject and asked to see inside a large outdoor, walk-in freezer located on the property. In the freezer were three deer, one of which had a tag for wildlife management unit (WMU) 8C in the ear. Closer inspection revealed the tag had been altered to make it look like a tag for WMU 6C. While ECO Atwood examined the deer, ECO Canary found a full meat-processing station in the garage, with deer tags from the previous five years displayed on the wall. For each prior hunting season, tags for WMU 8C were used, even though the property was in WMU 6C. The property owner admitted to using the wrong tags, stating that 8C tags were "much easier to get" and simply altered to look like 6C tags. Several tickets were issued for the current violations, as well as for previous violations that could still be prosecuted.

Timber Thief Deported—Suffolk County

Recently, a sportsman issued a complaint concerning the theft of trees at the Peconic River Headwaters Fresh Pond State Land Unit. The complainant stated an individual in a Chevy Silverado pickup truck removed evergreen trees from the property. The property was put under surveillance and approximately a week later, Ranger Bryan Gallagher observed a man with two trees loaded onto his truck and four additional shrubs beside the vehicle. When questioned, the subject admitted he took four trees, said he was sorry, and that Ranger Gallagher would never see him again. Ranger Gallagher called Rangers Michael Thompson and Kevin Slade for assistance in the collection of evidence. The suspect was arrested and taken into custody at Riverhead Police Department to await his arraignment. It turns out the subject also had an outstanding warrant with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for his deportation. He was detained after his arraignment until ICE picked him up for federal processing.

Ask the ECO

Q: I use a store-bought, pop-up style shanty for ice fishing rather than the traditional homemade style you normally see. Since I take it home with me after each outing, do I have to mark it with my name and address for it to be legal?

A: NYS Navigation Law states that "any person who places any structure upon the ice shall have placed thereon, with paint or in some other permanent manner, the owner's full name and address in letters at least three inches high in a contrasting color to the surrounding structure." When written, this law was really geared toward identifying shanties that are left out on the ice for days or weeks at a time. Pop-up style shanties are becoming more popular with ice fishermen and are rarely left out on the ice, so your question is a good one. However, since the definition of "structure" does apply to a pop-up shanty, you should mark your pop-up as indicated in the above law.