

# On Patrol

*Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field*

Carl Heilman II

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

During the course of their work, DEC environmental conservation officers and forest rangers perform a variety of duties. Some are extreme tasks, carried out in harsh environments or in dangerous circumstances. Last year, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee ravaged the east coast, affecting the lives of many New Yorkers. Environmental conservation officers and forest rangers rose to the occasion to help those in need. The following are just a few of the many stories that resulted from last August and September.

Keene resident Marcy Neville and her family were among multiple victims overtaken by the AuSable River during flash flooding. State Police contacted DEC's Ray Brook Dispatch stating that two adults and three dogs were trapped in the home with waters rising quickly. Forest Rangers Scott VanLaer and James Giglinto attempted to reach the Neville home with a cataraft (a raft consisting of two hulls connected by a frame) but were hampered by strong river currents. Rangers then attempted the rescue using an airboat. Mark St. Claire, Glen Bronson, James Giglinto and Robert Prackajlo had just reached the Neville home when the airboat had a major mechanical failure, forcing them to evacuate the family by the cataraft and another boat. Once safely on higher ground, the Nevilles were taken to a neighbor's home.

A Town of Windham resident was stranded in his trailer, surrounded by rushing, muddy water. The trailer began to take on water when ECOs launched a 16-foot aluminum boat to perform a rescue. The officers managed to maneuver the boat 50 yards across the dangerous current to reach the man, load him into the boat and carry him back to dry land.

Rapidly rising flood waters trapped people in the bungalows at the Aladdin Hotel and bungalow colony in Sullivan County, causing the Fallsburg police to request the assistance of ECOs in evacuating the property. Officers Ricky Wood and Captain Richard Martin waded to stranded people and carried approximately ten children to dry ground. Shortly after, the Woodbourne Fire Department arrived with boats, and ECOs helped rescue the remaining children and adults from the last flooded bungalows.

Joan Oldroyd



With catastrophic flooding along the Susquehanna River, forest rangers had to use special airboats to rescue people stranded by swiftly rising waters in Nanticoke and Conklin. A day later, rangers used the airboats once again to carry: 62 people to safety from their flooded homes in Johnson City; 15 people and two dogs from a flooded neighborhood in Chenango; and 35 people and two dogs from Apalachin in Tioga County. At the request of local officials, airboat crews also checked on the welfare of residents who remained in the flooded areas, specifically focusing on people with special medical needs.