

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

Carl Heilman II

Mini Penguin?—Suffolk County

This winter, ECO Kaitlin Grady received a complaint of an injured bird hopping around a lawn in Bay Shore. The complainant could not identify the bird, but described it as “a tiny penguin.” Hoping to identify the animal and notify the proper rehabilitator, ECO Grady responded to the scene and found a small black and white bird with webbed feet that did, indeed, look like a penguin. The bird was identified as a dovekie, a native of Greenland that winters in the Atlantic Ocean and is sometimes spotted in New England, but rarely on Long Island. ECO Grady brought the distressed dovekie to the Selden Animal Emergency Hospital for treatment. After being rehabilitated by a specialist, it was released back into the wild along with several other dovekies recovered by the rescue organization, Star Foundation. Biologists theorized that strong winds and stormy conditions blew the small birds off course.



Luke Ormond

Not Your Typical Car Repair—Orleans County

Recently, ECO Rick Rauscher received a 4:00 a.m. call from deputies asking for assistance with a disabled vehicle. ECO Rauscher met the deputies and saw two rifles, spent shell casings, a spotlight, and three freshly killed deer inside the vehicle. The person who reported the vehicle indicated they saw three people in camouflage clothing walking away from the car. Officers could not locate the people or the registered owner, so the vehicle was towed. After a license check, ECO Rauscher contacted the car's owner who said she had left her vehicle at an auto repair shop the previous day and had not given anyone permission to drive it. Following a full confession from the repairman, he and his two accomplices received tickets including taking deer with the aid of an artificial light, possessing loaded firearms in a motor vehicle, discharging a firearm over a public highway, and taking deer with a rifle during archery season.

Important Message—Greene County

On a Friday in March, dispatchers contacted Forest Ranger Jeff Breigle about two lost hikers in the northern Catskills. The area had been recently blanketed by more than five feet of snow, and was forecast to be hit by another storm. Rangers left amid poor visibility and extreme conditions in search of the hikers. By working through a cell phone service provider and Ray Brook Dispatch, rangers finally located one of the subjects near the summit of Blackhead Mtn. on Sunday night. He was hypothermic and unable to hike out, so rangers brought in an extreme weather kit containing equipment to sustain the subject and rangers overnight. More rangers and volunteers were called (a total of thirty-three rangers and thirty personnel from fire, police and volunteer search organizations were involved), and by Monday morning the first subject was successfully brought off the mountain. Unfortunately the second hiker had already succumbed to hypothermia by the time rescuers located him. Upon review of the event, rescue personnel discovered that the hikers had made a series of mistakes which led to the disaster, including leaving their backpacks and gear at a lean-to, not carrying a flashlight, and separating from each other. The unfortunate outcome serves as a strong reminder of the need for hikers to always be cautious and prepared for weather and surroundings.

ASK THE ECO

Q: I would like to use my bow to fish for carp. Are there any special restrictions? Am I exempt from the “discharge within 500 feet of a residence” law?

A: You may take carp by longbow from May 15th through September 30th from any waters of NYS where fishing is permitted. With the exception of carp, all other taking of fish by bow is prohibited in New York waters. Also, you must possess either a small game license or a fishing license to take carp with a bow. There are no restrictions on the size or the number of carp you may take. As to your second question, no, you are not exempt from the prohibition on discharge of a firearm or longbow within 500 feet of a dwelling, house, farm building, school building, school playground, factory or church. The exemption you refer to applies only to waterfowl hunters. It does not apply in any other situation.