

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 Capt. Stephen Scherry



Smelt Poachers Pinched—Niagara County

An angler contacted ECO Jason Powers to relay that a group of six men were keeping more than their legal limit of smelt on the Lower Niagara River. When ECO Powers arrived, he watched the group dip for smelt. After the men finished and began to leave, ECO Powers approached them and found they had roughly 40 gallons of smelt. The legal limit for smelt is two gallons per person. ECO Powers also discovered one man had no fishing license, which meant the group's total legal limit of smelt was only 10 gallons. He issued tickets to the men for having 30 gallons of smelt above the daily limit.

Don't Drink and...Shoot! — Dutchess County

The City of Beacon Police contacted ECO Deo Read regarding a tip about several men who were target shooting inside an abandoned factory. When ECO Read arrived, he saw the men had placed targets and

bottles against a wall and done quite a bit of shooting while drinking alcohol. The factory is located within 500 feet of two schools, several houses, a church, and an apartment building. More than 50 bullets had exited through the building's thin walls, traveling across the street and into a park. ECO Read issued tickets to the men for discharging firearms within 500 feet of schools and residences, and for discharging a firearm across a public highway. Beacon Police added a few charges of its own.

Radioactive Basement—Saratoga County

Acting on an anonymous tip, T/Sgt. Walt Maloney and ECOs went to a house in the Town of Halfmoon, where a retired medical/nuclear physicist had illegally disposed of a significant quantity of Cesium, a radioactive material. Because the physicist knew the Cesium was dangerous, he dug a hole in his basement floor and sealed it under cement. In time, it could have found its way into the local water table. After a search warrant was

executed, the material was safely removed. A criminal investigation is ongoing in conjunction with the Saratoga County District Attorney's Office.

Day Hike becomes Nightmare—Ulster County

Late last year, the New York State Police at Kingston contacted rangers, requesting assistance for a couple who had begun hiking late the previous day. "Erin and Mike" mistakenly thought they were on a loop trail that would return them to the Slide Mountain trailhead by sundown. They were not properly equipped, and it began raining heavily that evening. Lt. Stephen Scherry asked Rangers Kenneth Gierloff, Robert Mecus and Jacob DesLauriers to respond to the Slide Mountain Wilderness to look for the couple. Eventually, the searchers found Erin and Mike at a primitive campsite occupied by John Vanasco and a partner. When the cold, wet couple came upon Vanasco's tent, he and his partner encouraged them to use their tent and sleeping bag and remained outside next to the campfire, before going for help. When rangers arrived, they provided Erin and Mike with clothing and rain gear from a winter survival kit. After the couple warmed up and had something to eat and drink, rangers escorted them back to their vehicle. Had it not been for the selflessness of Mr. Vanasco and his partner, this rescue might have had a tragic outcome.

ASK THE ECO

Q: My canoe has a small motor on it. Do I need to register it with the Department of Motor Vehicles?

A: Yes. Any motorized vessel, including a canoe, must be registered with the DMV and display the registration numbers.