

On Patrol

Carl Heilman II

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Contributed by ECO Lt. Liza Bobseine and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry



Peregrine Falcon Rescued— Westchester County

ECO Tom Koepf received a call from wildlife photographer Kerri Voges about a juvenile peregrine falcon stranded on the shore of the Kensico Reservoir in the Town of North Castle, Westchester County. It had fallen or leapt from its nest under a bridge that crosses the reservoir and landed on the shore. Because the young bird could not yet fly, it was vulnerable to predation. With help from Voges, Officer Koepf captured and transported the falcon to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, who will rehabilitate and release it back into the wild.

Hiker Lost in Wintry Wilderness— Essex County

At 6:30 p.m. one winter day, Ray Brook Dispatch received a call about a hiker who had lost the trail on Pitchoff Mountain. Leaving the north summit, the 56-year-old male lost the trail due to deep, unbroken and windblown snow. After obtaining coordinates, Forest Rangers Kevin Burns, Chris Kostoss, Rob Mecus, Rob Prackajlo, David Russell and Scott VanLaer responded. Because of the snow pack and temperatures at or

below zero at higher elevations, they were able to travel only one-half mile per hour. At 11:15 p.m., rangers located the hiker and escorted him back to the trailhead. By 1:25 a.m., everyone had exited the woods.

Bad Shellfish—Kings County

ECOs Jeffery Krueger, Paul Pasciak and other DEC staff conducted a shellfish inspection in Brooklyn's Chinatown in Sunset Park. The officers checked markets for illegal shellfish that could threaten the health of consumers. They discovered frozen blocks of freshwater clams and a seafood mix containing uncooked clams from China, which is not a FDA-certified importer. Officers Krueger and Pasciak issued a warning and took samples to be tested for bacteria. At another market, they found a forged copy of a shellfish tag and issued a summons. All suspected shellfish products were destroyed.

Tipsy Angler Charged with Illegal Tip-Ups— St. Lawrence County

ECO Scott Atwood was conducting fishing checks just before dark on Horseshoe Lake in the Town of Piercefield when he saw a group of anglers on the lake. They went back to their camp, leaving several tip-ups unattended. Officer Atwood heard a pickup heading his way and signaled for the driver to stop. From the man's slurred speech and alcohol on his breath, the ECO realized the driver was intoxicated. Officer Atwood told the man to exit the vehicle, but when a passenger in the truck distracted the ECO, the driver began to run away. The officer quickly caught and arrested him. Officer Atwood and a trooper then returned to the lake to check on the tip-ups. Eight had been left unattended, and five were not marked with a name or address. The officer issued tickets to another man and to the truck driver, who was charged with driving while intoxicated, refusing a breath test, resisting arrest, and operating unattended tip-ups. The case is pending in Piercefield Town Court.

Ask the ECO

Q: Spring Turkey Season runs from May 1-31. What rules should I know about turkey hunting?

A: There are several things you should remember about hunting turkeys in the spring: Only bearded turkeys may be taken; legal hunting hours are ½-hour before sunrise until noon; only one bird per day may be taken, for a total of two birds for the entire season; and it is illegal to use bait or electronic calls to hunt turkeys. Any suspected violations should be reported to DEC's Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1-844-DEC-ECOS.