

Carl Heilman II



On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Contributed by ECO Lt. Ken Didion

TIPPed Off—Suffolk County

ECOs Chrisman Starczek and Erik Dalecki were notified through the 1-800-TIPP-DEC line that a fisherman was taking more than the legal limit of trout at Belmont Lake. The two officers arrived, located the fisherman and watched as the man caught a few trout and put them in a cooler. As the man was opening the trunk of his vehicle, the officers asked the fisherman if he knew what the possession limit was. He replied that he "thought it was five." The officers informed him that the limit was actually three, and asked him why he had three in his hand and another seven in the cooler. He was unable to provide an explanation. He was issued a ticket for possessing seven trout above the legal limit.

Editor's Note: Always check the *NYS Fishing Regulations Guide* before heading out to fish any body of water.

Picked Up—Saratoga County

Last May, ECO Major Scott Florence began a day off with a turkey hunting excursion. Scott's hunting partner Micky Elliot had agreed to call turkeys during the outing, and with each subsequent call, turkeys drew closer and closer to the waiting hunters. As both hunters prepared themselves for the final moments of the hunt, a pickup truck appeared in the field and accelerated toward the turkeys. The hunters watched as the driver slid the truck to a sudden stop and a shotgun barrel appeared from the driver's window. Shots were fired at the turkeys. The poacher then received the surprise of his life. When the gunfire ceased, Major Florence stepped out of the woods and identified himself. The poacher was arrested and had little choice but to plead guilty to all charges in court. He was fined \$1,000 and his Remington 1100 shotgun was forfeited to the state—a high price to pay to prove the old adage that "there is a game warden behind every bush."

Pelted by the Rent—Franklin County

ECO Jorge Sibbert investigated a complaint from the owner of a self storage company in the Town of Malone. Someone had placed a padlock on an unrented storage unit. After several weeks, no one had come forward to pay rent for the space. When the lock was cut off, the owner discovered trapping equipment and six pelts inside, and he called DEC. ECO Sibbert found that four of the pelts did not have department seals attached as required by regulations. ECO Sibbert ticketed the trapper for four counts of possessing unsealed fisher pelts and for trapping out of season. The storage facility owner elected not to press charges for the theft of services.

Ask the ECO

Question: *Can I take bait fish from my pond and use them for fishing in the Allegheny River?*

Answer: No. New regulations are in effect for the use of bait fish in New York waters. These new regulations were prompted by the appearance of a disease in fish called viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS). This disease is highly contagious within fish populations and can cause high mortality when introduced to waters where it is not present. In order to control the spread of this disease, limitations on the use of bait fish have been established.

One of those limitations is that you may only use bait fish in the same waters where the bait fish were collected. You may not transport the bait fish to any other body of water. In all other circumstances, only bait fish that have been certified as free from VHS may be used. Certified bait fish are only available commercially.

If you have questions on these regulations, you should visit the DEC website at www.dec.ny.gov or contact your regional DEC office.