



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

Raccoons Aren't Pets—Tioga County

Recently, ECO Stan Winnick received an anonymous complaint about a woman with a pet raccoon in Owego. The complainant was concerned for the safety of the woman and her other pets. At least seven cats greeted Winnick when the woman answered the front door, and he saw the raccoon and several more cats inside the house. The officer informed the woman that keeping wild animals as pets is illegal and asked her to put the raccoon in a pet carrier so it could be taken to the local veterinarian. Winnick then stepped outside to make a phone call and when he returned, he saw several deep, bleeding wounds on the woman's forearms—the result of trying to catch the raccoon. He also noticed the raccoon had very little fur. Later, at the Owego Veterinary Hospital, the veterinary tech explained that the animal didn't have much fur because of a bad flea infestation. Fortunately for the woman, the raccoon did not have rabies.

Dull Dumpers—Orange County

In early April, Lieutenant Martin Townley and ECO Michael Buckley were checking anglers at Jay's Lake in Wallkill when two men in a pickup truck filled with garbage drove directly past them and continued up a dirt road that ended at a vacant lot. Evidently the men didn't notice the officers because later they came by again, this time with an empty truck. Lt. Townley and ECO Buckley pulled the truck over and questioned the men. At first, the two swore they didn't do anything wrong and couldn't believe the officers were implying wrongdoing. The two polluters finally admitted to dumping the garbage when Lt. Townley asked what happened to the old tires, carpeting and other garbage that was in the back of the truck. Both men were issued tickets for illegal disposal of solid waste, fined \$1,000 each, and ordered to clean up the area.

Don't Test the ECOs—Suffolk County

Recently, Long Island ECOs teamed up with DEC fisheries staff to help stock freshwater lakes and rivers with trout. In addition to assisting with traffic control for the stocking truck, undercover ECOs fished alongside enthusiastic anglers. ECO Mark Simmons was fishing at Lower Yaphank when he watched one man catch his limit of five trout and place them in the trunk of his car. Instead of calling it a good day, the man continued fishing. Soon he caught another four fish and placed them on a stringer.

ECO Simmons contacted ECO Josh VerHague, who came down to the lake with ECO Chris Lagree. The officers confronted the man, who was stunned they knew about the nine fish. They issued him a summons for possessing more than the daily limit of trout and seized the four extra fish. A short time later, ECO Simmons observed him catch two more trout and hide them in the woods. ECOs VerHague and Lagree issued the man another ticket for possessing more than his limit of trout, told the man to give it a rest, and sent him home.

Intoxicated Campers—Fulton County

At approximately 12:10 a.m. on a Saturday in May, campground staff at the Northampton Beach Campground asked if rangers could quiet down a campsite. Lt. Stephen Preston arrived at the site and informed the occupants of the quiet hour regulations. He indicated that if the noise and obscene language continued, they would be ticketed and evicted. Though this calmed the site for a time, the noise problems continued sporadically throughout the night. Lt. Preston determined an eviction was warranted, but since the occupants were highly intoxicated, it had to wait until morning. When Ranger Art Perryman was carrying out the eviction process the next morning, one camper became belligerent and combative. After a short wrestling match, Ranger Perryman handcuffed and arrested the subject. The man was brought before the Northampton Town Justice where he pleaded not guilty to resisting arrest and was released on his own recognizance, to appear back in court at a later date.

ASK THE ECO

Q: Am I required to have a lifejacket for every person on board my boat? Are children required to wear a lifejacket while on board?

A: There must be one U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (lifejacket) for every person on board any vessel. This includes canoes, kayaks and rowboats. All children under the age of 12 must wear a lifejacket while the vessel is underway (unless they are in a completely enclosed cabin). If the vessel is a personal water craft (PWC), the lifejacket must be worn at all times when the PWC is in operation. From November 1 to May 1, lifejackets must be worn by all persons on all vessels under 21' while they are underway. Visit www.nysparks.com for more information on life-jacket regulations.