

On Patrol

Carl Heilman II

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Greedy Crabbers— Suffolk County

Lt. Frank Carbone and ECOs Alena Lawston, Jeremy Eastwood and Brian Farrish conducted patrols focusing on horseshoe crab harvesting in Riverhead and Southampton. At Westhampton Beach, ECO Eastwood and Lt. Carbone—who had concealed themselves behind some reeds—watched as a van and a pickup pulled into the parking lot. After the drivers got out, they began collecting horseshoe crabs near the bridge. Eastwood and Carbone overheard the men repeatedly warn each other to, “Keep a lookout for the DEC.” Eventually, the men put their harvest into the van, and the driver stated he would be stopping at a local convenience store. ECO Lawston followed the men to the store, pulled up behind the van and questioned the driver. As the store’s curious customers looked on, the ECOs began counting the crabs in the van. The total was 230—more than twice the legal limit of 100—and the men were ticketed.

ECOs Rescue Boaters— Erie County

ECOs Michael Phelps, Carlton Gill and Scott Marshall were patrolling the Buffalo River when a passing boater flagged them down. He believed another boat in the vicinity was having trouble, and the ECOs quickly found a disabled vessel taking on water. Within minutes, the boat had a foot of water in it, and the situation continued to deteriorate. Chilly water pooled around the passengers’ legs, one of whom was pregnant and had an injured back. Phelps, Gill and Marshall removed most of the passengers, but the pregnant woman was unable to jump aboard the patrol boat. ECO Gill struggled to keep the sterns of both vessels together in the choppy water, and ECOs Phelps and Marshall boarded the sinking boat to quickly help the

woman onto their vessel. The ECOs then towed the disabled boat to a nearby dock and requested medical attention for the woman, keeping her comfortable until EMS arrived.

“Buck” Bests Burglar— Sullivan County

ECO Scott Steingart, accompanied by K9 “Buck,” was checking anglers at a public fishing access site along the Neversink River when he noticed a man wearing a backpack sneak around a gravel bank and disappear from sight. The man was heading toward summer homes that had recently been burglarized. ECO Steingart called the Fallsburg PD for assistance, and then he and Buck followed the man’s tracks. Buck pursued the man through some brush in the direction of the houses, but suddenly the dog took a sharp right turn. Within seconds, Buck discovered the nervous man hiding in shrubbery. The man tried to convince Steingart that he was hiking, but a search of his backpack revealed wire cutters, a pillow case and binoculars. The suspect was taken into custody, and the investigation continues.

Dangerous Leap— Greene County

Recently, Ranger Chris DiCintio overheard a Greene County 911 dispatch of an injured swimmer in the area along Kaaterskill Creek known as “Fawn’s Leap.” According to eyewitness accounts, the subject had been drinking and, after making a 50-foot jump into the swimming hole, slipped and fell while attempting to climb back up the narrow ledges. He hit several rocks on the way down and fell onto more rocks in a shallow end of the swimming area. A companion was able to retrieve and bring him to shore, and a passing motorist called for assistance. Rescue Squad and Greene County paramedic personnel treated the man for injuries to the head, back, abdomen

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry

and legs. Ranger DiCintio helped prepare him for transport to a landing zone established by the Kiskatom Fire Department at the former Friar Tuck Inn parking lot. The subject was then flown by a medevac helicopter to the Albany Medical Center for treatment.

ASK THE ECO

Q: I have a raccoon living in my attic. Will DEC remove it for me? Can I do it myself?

A: DEC does not remove nuisance wild animals from homes, but the department’s Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources will refer you to a nuisance-wildlife trapper who can help. These licensed professionals, who charge for their services, also can be found online or in your phone book. Rules exist regarding the trapping or killing of nuisance wildlife. Call your DEC regional office for more information, or visit DEC’s website at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7005.html if you want to remove the raccoon yourself.

Bill Banaszewski



professionally trapped raccoon