



On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

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Bathtub Dumpers All Wet—Warren County

In early July, ECO Steve Stubing received a tip that an old claw-foot bathtub was dumped in Lake George near Turtle Island in Bolton. A park ranger witnessed the incident, which occurred just after dark. As the ranger watched from a distance, three men in a small Boston Whaler dumped the tub overboard and then went back to their camp. The next day, ECO Stubing went to the camp where renovations were being done, but nobody was home. After running the vessel registration numbers and checking who owned the property, Stubing finally tracked down the dumpers. He contacted one of them by phone who agreed to meet the ECO at the camp the following day. As Stubing approached the camp, the three men came to the dock looking nervous. ECO Stubing admonished them, saying, "What you did wasn't very smart," whereupon one immediately put his hands in the air and said, "We're sorry, we're sorry!" Stubing ticketed all three for illegal dumping. The men removed the tub from the lake the next day and were later fined \$750 in Bolton Town Court.

Eye Spy—St. Lawrence County

ECO Bret Canary was watching anglers on the Oswegatchie River in Ogdensburg. Canary hid in thick cover and used binoculars to observe the anglers. He watched one man catch two bass, put them on a stringer, and then hide them underneath a bush along the shore. The officer approached the man and asked him how the fishing was going. The man replied, "Horrible, I haven't caught a thing." Canary then pulled the two illegal bass from the bush. The man said, "Wow! Where did those come from? Some jerk probably left them there. You should come around more often; people take bass here all the time." When ECO Canary showed the man his binoculars, the man hung his head and asked, "You saw everything with those, didn't you?" The man was issued tickets for fishing without a license and taking bass out of season.

Only 12 Gallons?—Westchester County

Recently, ECO James Davey responded to a complaint that an individual in Elmsford had allegedly drained oil from three home heating fuel tanks into a storm drain. Upon arriving at the scene,

the ECO saw the three tanks in an upright position on a large trailer. Davey interviewed the man, who admitted drilling several small holes in all three tanks in order to empty them into the storm drain. Amazingly, the man didn't think it was a big deal. In his words, "Only 12 gallons or so went into the storm drain." He was arrested and held on \$2,500 bail. In addition to a hefty fine, the judge ordered him to pay to clean up the spill.

Facebook Sleuthing—Herkimer County

A concerned hiker complained to Ray Brook dispatch about spray paint vandalism on the trail to Rondaxe Mountain, in the Fulton Chain Wild Forest. Ranger Coscomb hiked the trail and took photos of several locations where individuals used orange spray paint to inscribe their names and other graffiti on rock faces and outcrops. Armed only with the names written in graffiti and a trail register, forest rangers and Ray Brook dispatchers used Facebook to identify the individuals responsible. Rangers Coscomb and Pickett then tracked the individuals to their homes, two counties away. When questioned, the two were extremely apologetic and remorseful, but were also amazed they had been located. Signed confessions, an extensive "elbow grease" cleanup, along with a substantial fine should teach the pair to keep their artwork off the Forest Preserve.

ASK THE ECO

Q: I have quite a few deer that routinely pass through my backyard. My family and I enjoy watching them and would like to put out food for them. Is this legal?

A: No. Feeding wild deer is prohibited in New York. Feeding deer can unnaturally concentrate deer and lead to the spread of disease, habitat damage, increased social conflict among deer, habituation to humans, and alteration of deer movement patterns. See www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74763.html for more information about why feeding wildlife can do more harm than good.