



On Patrol

Real stories from officers in the field

Compiled by Lt. Ken Didion



EDITOR'S NOTE: *Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) are police officers sworn to uphold the laws of New York State with an emphasis on the Environmental Conservation Law. These are actual accounts.*

Dumb Prank—Livingston County

While on patrol, ECO Brian Wade monitored a 911 call reporting a drive-by shooting. A Time Warner cable installer had just been shot with a pellet gun. The suspects had shot the man while driving around in a Dodge Neon. ECO Wade was patrolling nearby and managed to meet the suspect vehicle at an intersection. The officer followed the Neon until a Village of Geneseo police unit joined him. Using the two police vehicles, the officers made a felony vehicle stop. Upon securing the Neon's occupants, ECO Wade located what appeared to be a military assault rifle. Closer inspection revealed the rifle to be a fully automatic Crosman air rifle. The gun fired hard plastic pellets at a high rate of speed and the red barrel of the gun had been covered with black tape to make it look more realistic. The Time Warner employee identified the individuals in the Neon as the ones who had shot him. He was relatively unhurt, but his back was covered with welts from the pellets. Geneseo police charged the suspects with assault in the 3rd degree, menacing, criminal mischief, and reckless endangerment. ECO Wade issued the individuals a ticket for possession of a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle.

Fishy Felon—Kings County

While monitoring fishing activity along Coney Island Creek in Brooklyn, ECO Matthew LaCroix came upon a fisherman with an undersized striped bass in his bucket. A police database check indicated the fisherman was wanted on an outstanding felony warrant. The man insisted that he was not the person on the warrant, but was taken into custody. Members of the New York Police Department's Brooklyn warrant squad arrived at the precinct with the warrant and

pictures of the defendant. The fisherman was positively identified and arrested for promoting dangerous drugs, a Class B felony. ECO LaCroix also issued the fisherman a ticket for illegal possession of undersized striped bass.

Crab Pot Blues—Westchester County

While patrolling the Hudson River, ECOs Steve Shaw and John Helmeyer encountered a man pulling crab pots near Verplank. Officer Shaw recognized the man and his vessel from previous patrols. The man was suspected of taking crab over the limit and selling crabs commercially without a license. The ECOs watched with binoculars for a time and then followed him to a local marina. At the marina, the fisherman was checked thoroughly and found to be in possession of 275 blue crabs—225 over the daily limit! A number of the crabs he possessed were under the size limit. He admitted to selling the crabs locally for \$6 a dozen. The crabs were seized and the ECOs charged the violator with illegal commercialization of blue crabs, taking blue crabs over the daily limit, and taking undersized blue crabs. He was subsequently fined \$500.

Ask the ECO

Q: Can I carry shotgun shells loaded with bird shot when I am hunting deer?

A: Yes, you may carry bird shot of any size with you when you are hunting deer during the regular season. Conservation Law prohibits you from hunting deer with a shotgun loaded with shells other than shells loaded with a single round ball or a single slug. But there is no law that prohibits you from stopping your hunt for deer when you see small game, unloading your slug(s), loading shotgun shells of your choice, and hunting for small game.