

# On Patrol

*Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field*

Contributed by ECO Lt. Ken Didion and Forest Ranger Lt. John Solan

## Expensive Fish Dinner—Oswego County

While working along the Salmon River in September, DEC Region 7 ECO Gary Wilson received a complaint of a fisherman snatching salmon in the area known as the “Pulaski ball fields.” The suspect had blatantly ignored warnings and even bragged about the success of his methods. Working in plain clothes, ECO Wilson located the suspect and started fishing near him. It didn’t take long before the suspect’s illegal snagging methods foul-hooked a fish. As he played the coho salmon past ECO Wilson, he was heard saying, “This would be a great one to eat.” The suspect landed the fish and placed it on a stringer. Still squatting over the fish when confronted by the officer, the subject looked up and said, “I know, I kept a foul-hooked fish. Can’t you give me a break?” The man was charged with illegally taking fish by snatching and possessing a foul-hooked fish. He was transported to Richland Town Court for arraignment, where his “fish dinner” cost him \$200.

## Nabbed at the Border—Erie County

ECO Scott Marshall recently assisted U.S. Fish & Wildlife Agent Randy Cottrell with the apprehension of two Chinese men engaged in a smuggling operation. The two men had attempted to smuggle eight Arrowana, also known as dragon fish, across the Canadian border at Buffalo, en route for sale in New York City. The Arrowana is a federally listed endangered species native to Asia and the Amazonian region of South America. They are highly valued in the Chinese practice of “feng shui,” believed to bring order and good fortune. On the black market, these fish are valued at more than \$5,000 each, making the total value of the seizure more than \$40,000. The two smugglers were subsequently remanded to jail, pending trial in U.S. Federal Court.

## Bear Baiter—Sullivan County

In October, ECO Robert Higgins received information from a Town of Highland Constable that a large black bear was taken over the weekend in the Town of Lumberland, and that the hunter has been known to bait bears. That same day, ECO Higgins received information from a Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer that a large black bear head and hide was at a taxidermist in Pennsylvania and that it came from Lumberland, New York. ECOs located the area where the hunter

took the bear and found an automatic deer feeder, several piles of donuts and bagels, 24 bluefish carcasses, and a barrel of molasses near the hunter’s tree stand. After the ECOs had all the evidence they needed, they located and questioned the hunter. He confessed to baiting the bear and taking it on the second day of archery season. The poacher was arraigned on charges of taking a bear with the aid of bait and illegally transporting protected wildlife. He agreed to pay \$1,500 in penalties and his hunting license is subject to revocation in New York and in the 22 other states that belong to the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. The trophy bear weighed approximately 617 pounds.

## Timber Theft—St. Lawrence County

Veteran DEC Forest Ranger Wayne LaBaff observed evidence of an unexplained motor vehicle intrusion on the Whites Hill State Forest, in the town of Parishville. Upon further investigation, Ranger LaBaff identified several black cherry trees that had been illegally removed from state land by tractor. Ranger LaBaff also found that several trees had been removed from an adjacent private property, and later determined that they had been removed without landowner consent. ECO Bassford was contacted to investigate the private land timber theft with Ranger LaBaff. The stolen logs were located at a local veneer mill and seized as evidence. Further investigation revealed the identity of two subjects who sold the logs to the mill. Both suspects were arrested and then arraigned and held on \$1,000 bail. They are awaiting prosecution.

## Ask the ECO

**Q:** If I wound a deer and it runs onto posted property, can I track it onto that property?

**A:** Only if you have the property owner’s permission. Wounding a deer that later travels onto posted property does not give a hunter any special rights. It is illegal to enter posted property without the owner’s permission. Most landowners understand that pursuing a wounded animal is the humane and ethical thing to do and are generally willing to provide permission to hunters for that purpose.