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

Contributed by ECO Lt. Ken Didion
and Forest Ranger Chris Liebelt

Expensive Venison—Delaware County

ECOs received a tip about a button buck that had been shot from a vehicle with the aid of a spotlight during the early morning hours. The deer was reportedly stashed behind a barn in Hardenburgh. ECOs Vern Bauer and Lt. Larry DiDonato conducted surveillance of the area from a distance.

As darkness fell, the ECOs watched a white Cadillac Escalade stop a short distance from the barn. A passenger got out and ran behind the barn, and the Escalade continued down the road. ECO Bauer followed the path the person had taken past the barn and found him field-dressing an illegally taken deer. The man attempted to flee, but was quickly subdued by the officers. Within a few minutes, the Escalade returned. It was being driven by the father of the man in custody, and he was also arrested. The son provided a full account of the deer jacking that had occurred earlier that day. The two men were fined \$4,000 and ordered to forfeit their rifle. Their hunting privileges are being revoked.

Algonquin Rescue—Essex County

Forest Ranger Dispatch in Ray Brook received a report that a 25-year-old woman had injured her knee during a fall on a steep section of trail below the summit of Algonquin Mountain. She was immobile and unable to descend.

A rescue team led by Forest Ranger Charlie Platt located the woman, placed her in a litter, and began the slow descent down the steep and rugged terrain. After a short time, rangers located an open area that could facilitate a helicopter hoist extraction. The injured hiker was successfully lifted into a helicopter by Forest Ranger Kevin Burns, who was on board the helicopter to aid in the rescue. The hiker was flown to the hospital, where she was treated and later released.

Searcher Found—Hamilton County

Forest Ranger John Seifts was contacted by the caretaker of the Little Sand Point Campground in Arietta. The caretaker reported that a 15-year-old girl was missing. When Ranger Seifts arrived at the campground, the missing teenager was already back at her site, eating and warming up by the fire. After a few questions, Ranger Seifts realized that the teenager's father had left earlier to look for his daughter, and had not returned. He was dressed in a t-shirt, shorts and moccasins. Strong thunderstorms and heavy rain were pounding the area. Ranger Seifts called for assistance and rangers began searching the area.

At 1:30 A.M., rangers located the subject on the trail. He was soaked and shivering. Rangers gave him rain gear and escorted him on the three-hour hike back to his camp where he was reunited with his family.

Cheating Trawler—Queens County

Lt. John Fitzpatrick received a tip that the captain of a commercial fishing trawler was fishing for striped bass without a commercial license and was committing numerous violations of the Environmental Conservation Law. Lt. Fitzpatrick contacted ECOs Matthew LaCroix and Jamie Powers and set up a surveillance detail. While ECO LaCroix surveilled the vessel's dock, ECOs Powers and James Davey conducted surveillance at sea.

When the trawler returned to dock, all the fish and crustacea aboard the vessel were inventoried. Assisted by ECOs Tim Card and Darcie Dougherty, the inventory uncovered 872 pounds of striped bass, 32.5 pounds of fluke, two Atlantic sturgeon and 27 egg-bearing sponge crabs. All were taken in violation of the Environmental Conservation Law. The captain was arrested for felony-level illegal commercialization of wildlife. Charges are pending.