

On Patrol

Carl Heilman II

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Lt. John Solan

Hide and Seek—St. Lawrence County

While on ATV patrol, ECO Scott Atwood located a tree stand overlooking an area baited with corn, apples and acorns. ECO Atwood and ECO Munn patrolled the area again on opening morning of deer season three days later and found an ATV parked on the trail near the stand. The ECOs also saw fresh footprints and a bag of gear at the base of the tree. They also saw fresh footprints heading away. ECO Atwood and Munn followed the prints and found a man hiding behind a large pine tree. When asked what he was doing, the man replied, "Nothing, just standing here." After being questioned, the man admitted to hunting over the baited area and said he left the tree stand when he heard the approaching ATVs. He was ticketed for hunting deer with the aid of a bait pile, and failure to carry his hunting license and tags while hunting.

Off-Duty, but On the Ball—Orange County

While on a November vacation at Stewart State Forest, ECO James Davey was preparing to waterfowl hunt when several shots rang out. It seemed someone was starting early. As the morning progressed, the off-duty ECO watched a group of hunters shoot at anything with wings, including songbirds, which are protected by federal law. As Davey packed up for the morning, he saw the group shoot a great blue heron—another protected species—as it flew low over the marsh. ECO Davey contacted Ray Brook Dispatch, explained what was taking place, and requested a uniformed ECO. In his canoe, Davey approached the group, identified himself, and collected hunting licenses. The group denied doing the shooting, blaming it instead on other hunters who had already left. Davey paddled around the area, located three teal ducks, one out-of-season woodcock and the heron all within fifteen yards of their position. He ordered the group to pack up and return to their truck. ECOs Kristina Shephard and Mike Buckley then arrived and issued the men tickets for shooting before legal hunting hours, taking woodcock out of season, and taking a protected bird.

Marijuana Peddlers—Suffolk County

Recently, Forest Rangers Michael Thompson and Kevin Slade were on patrol in the Peconic River Headwaters Natural Resource Management Area when they observed an individual riding a bicycle into an unusual area of the interior of the property. The rangers followed the subject on foot and observed him meet with another bicyclist waiting along the trail. Rangers Thompson and Slade waited for the subjects to leave the woods, and after about forty minutes, the rangers stopped the bicyclists and interviewed them. They discovered one of the two was growing marijuana plants in the woods. He was arrested and all eleven plants were confiscated and secured.

ASK THE ECO

Q: Can I hunt on property that is not posted?

A: Just because you don't see any posted signs, don't assume that you can hunt on the property. As specified in the Environmental Conservation Law, posted signs can legally be as far as 660 feet apart (that's over two football fields). Some signs might fall off or be torn down, so you may not see them. According to the law, property is still posted for a period of one year even if the signs are torn down by unauthorized persons. Even in the absence of any posting, a hunter may be liable for trespass as it is defined in the Penal Law. It's your responsibility as an ethical hunter to find out who owns the property and ask permission to hunt, whether the property is posted or not. Check out www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8371.html for more information.



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