

WCO Diary

by WCO
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Don't think for a minute that only you can have a really bad day. Just ask the angler I encountered at Glade Run Lake.

Game Commission Deputy Mike Turley and I walked the shoreline to a gentleman who had a nice trout on his stringer, but I noticed he did not have a trout/salmon stamp affixed to his fishing license. The angler said that another fisherman gave him the trout and that he hadn't caught any. I explained that since he was in possession of a trout, he needed to have purchased a trout/salmon permit.

I asked him to hand me his fishing license, which was pinned to his shirt, and to produce his identification. His hands shook as he fumbled with the plastic license holder. He explained that he did not have identification. A close examination of the license revealed that this person's name was, let's say, "John Doe" with a birth year of 1979. That would have been just fine, except that John Doe looked much older than 25. In fact, he looked more like 55 years old!

"Now wait a minute here," I said. "You're either the oldest 25-year-old man I've ever seen or you're not 25—which is it?" Before John Doe could answer, a much younger fellow fishing next to us gave me a quick, nervous look. Out of curiosity I asked to see his license as well. Guess what? This guy's name was also John Doe. Not junior, not senior, just "John Doe." And the most coincidental part of this whole thing was that John Doe #2 had the exact same birthdate, address, eye color, height and signature as John Doe! In fact, the licenses were nearly identical, with one minor difference that wasn't so minor: The younger man's license had "Replacement" written along its side.

Now it all made sense. The nephew, John Doe #2, had purchased a fishing license without a trout stamp sometime in March. When his Uncle, John Doe #1, wanted to go fishing with him, he went to another issuing agent and claimed he had lost his original fishing license. The agent had John Doe #2 fill out an affidavit of loss, which he signed,

attesting to the fact that he actually lost his original license. John Doe #2 then bought a replacement license at the bargain-basement price of \$5 and also purchased a trout stamp for good measure. He then gave his original license to his Uncle (John Doe #1) and used the replacement license. Of course, the idea here is that John Doe #1 would fish for \$5 instead of \$17 plus \$5.50 for a trout stamp, like the rest of us.

I escorted both John Does to my patrol vehicle so we could work on Uncle Doe's identification. Strangely, the uncle just couldn't remember the last four digits of his social security number.

A quick radio call to the Game Commission dispatch in Franklin confirmed our suspicions. Allegheny County Court had issued a bench warrant for Uncle Doe's arrest. He hadn't paid his fines for drunk driving.

In compliance with the court's order, I advised the uncle that he was under arrest and placed him in handcuffs. I advised the township police of the situation and asked them to respond to take custody of the uncle.

While we waited for their arrival, I prepared citations for the "Doe" family members. For the nephew's fishing license switch-a-roo, I issued citations for loaning a fishing license and making fraudulent statements on an application. I cited the uncle for fishing without a license and borrowing a fishing license. By the way, he was unable to sign his citations because he was already in the back of a police car awaiting transportation to Butler County jail, where he stayed for the remainder of the weekend.

Imagine you are Uncle Doe. You're enjoying a pleasant afternoon at the lake, but before the day is through, two conservation officers nab you on a fishing license violation and place you in jail on an Allegheny County bench warrant.

And you thought that only you had really bad days? ☹

In addition to your fishing license, be sure to carry identification, like a driver's license, school ID card or work ID card.



photo: Art Michaels