

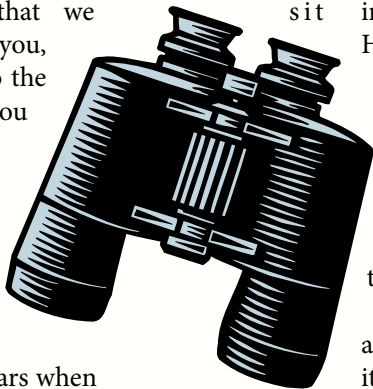
Notes from the Streams



Doing my job

During the spring, Pymatuning Lake and its creeks have a major walleye spawning run. The Linesville Spillway is a major problem area on the Pymatuning Lake. Part of this area is nursery waters and the rest of this area is fishable. Walleye come into the spillway and get trapped. Anglers line up on the spillway wall and fish over the nursery cable. Some anglers will even fish the nursery. One evening, I snuck up behind some anglers at the spillway and watched them for a few minutes. During this time, they were talking about the warden who has been patrolling the spillway every day. One guy said, "He knew how many fish I caught the last time I was fishing." The other guy said, "They are sneaky. They sit up in the woods with binoculars watching you." Another guy said, "The warden should be here now checking us and not at home. He should do his job." If we do our jobs well, you will never know that we

sit behind you, listen to the things you say and watch what you catch. Who needs binoculars when you are 15 feet behind them, in the dark and can hear everything they say?—WCO Matthew J. Visosky, Crawford County.



Lost and found

On a warm day last spring, I checked an angler wearing a distinctive Steelers knit cap. He traveled from the city to fish for trout. Two things really stood out about this guy. First, the Steelers cap was unusual for the warm weather. And, his rod and reel combination was unique. It was bright red in color.

Near lunch time, I passed this angler leaving the parking lot in his car. As I pulled into the only parking space available, I saw his rod and reel combo lying on the ground. He was already out of sight. I picked up the rod and figured I would have to complete an incident report and hold it for safe keeping.

About an hour later, I was bouncing across my district to another waterway and decided to stop at a local convenience store to refuel. As I pulled up beside the gas pump, I noticed the man's vehicle sitting in the corner. He was inside, still wearing the Steelers cap, eating his lunch. He told me he'd lost his fishing rod. I

told him that I found it. When I gave it back to him, he referred to it as priceless. Apparently, the rod and reel combo and the Steelers cap had been given to him as a young boy by someone who had taught him to fish.

He offered me a monetary reward, and I explained I could not accept it. Somewhere during our contact, he mentioned that he volunteered in his community as a basketball coach. I suggested that if he wanted to do something for the Pennsylvania Fish

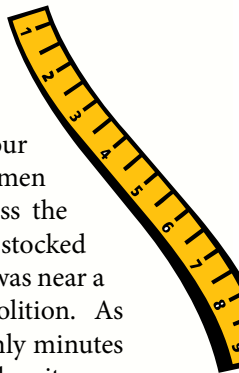
& Boat Commission, he should consider taking kids fishing. He liked the idea and said he would try it. I'm happy to report that I have seen him fishing at least three times with a couple of teenagers.—WCO James M. Vatter, Northern Westmoreland, Southern Indiana and Southern Armstrong Counties.



Northcentral Region Law Enforcement Manager Brian Burger received a phone call from the Pennsylvania State Police. They wanted him to remove this snapping turtle from an SUV that had flipped on its side into a swamp. State Police discovered the turtle after retrieving the SUV. The turtle had crawled into the vehicle through an open window.

A measuring tape, a fishing trip and the truth

I received a call from our region dispatch that two men were stringing a net across the entire width of the recently stocked Yellow Breeches. The site was near a bridge scheduled for demolition. As I arrived at the location only minutes later, the only person at the site was a seasoned fly angler. We spoke for a few minutes. He explained that he was the one who made the call to the region dispatch. He hesitated to tell me what happened. With embarrassment, he said the alleged net was actually a tape measure stretched across the width of the waterway by two engineers measuring the bridge.



We both erupted into laughter as we enjoyed the irony of a measuring tape, a fishing trip and the truth.—WCO Mark A. Sweppenhiser, Northern Dauphin County.

Kayaks

Every new aquatic sport, as it becomes popular, has presented new and unique problems to other waterways users and conservation officers. Be it rowboats, sailboards, personal watercraft or kayaks, they have all generated their fair share of concern. Kayaking is one of the newest fads to sweep the boating scene.

As with past crazes, many people think their sport consists of buy the boat, hit the water. There is a learning curve here as in any sport or activity. Safety is the first step. Kayaks, as defined by the PA Fish & Boat code (Title 30), are watercraft—every description of device used on the water or ice or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water or ice. Therefore, kayaks must have a type I, II, III or IV (if appropriate) life jacket (personal floatation device or PFD) on board for each person that is readily accessible. Readily accessible, as defined by the PA Fish & Boat Code, means stowed where they can easily be reached or out in the open ready for wear. Far too often these lifesaving devices are stowed in compartments or under the deck where they are not easily reached or would be carried away with your boat should you fall out.

Unpowered boats are required to have some means of making an efficient oral or mechanical sound signal that can be heard by another boat operator in time to avoid a collision. Kayaks and similar

unpowered craft must between sunset and sunrise possess one hand held or permanent all-around white light ready to display in time to prevent a collision. Be sure to use your light early to make other boaters aware of your presence.

While kayaking near shore, avoid crossing angler's lines and cutting between them and the shore, give them a wide berth.

Enhance your safety awareness by taking a kayaking course. Read the *Pennsylvania Boating Handbook*. Make your sport safe and enjoyable.



During Take your Child to Work Day at the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Sierra Gearhart drew this picture to illustrate the importance of safe boating and paddling. Life jackets should be personalized, properly fitted and tested in the water.

—WCO David R. Keller, Adams and West York Counties

Unnecessary effort

During the first week of trout season, I was walking a trail on the wooded side of Dunlap Lake when I observed two men fishing from shore. Since they were near the trail, I decided to walk over and find out if they were having any luck. As I got closer, I realized that neither man was yet aware of my presence, because they were both intently focused on something near their cooler. I quietly walked closer until I could see what held their attention. Each man was carefully and meticulously wrapping soda labels around unopened cans of beer. The labels had been cut to just

the right size, so that they fit perfectly to transform the beer into innocent looking cans of soda. Obviously, these two anglers had incorrectly assumed that alcoholic beverages were prohibited on Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission property. Although we do not encourage the use of alcohol, it is not prohibited on our property unless it is posted. Recognizing an opportunity to have a little fun, I quietly backed up and then noisily approached the two men. They turned, saw me and quickly closed the lid on their cooler. Their two altered beer cans were sitting on the ground beside them. I made small talk for a moment pulled out my wallet and said, "I sure am thirsty. Could I buy a can of soda?" I tried to maintain my composure, but when the anglers got that deer in the headlights look, I couldn't hold back a laugh. After an awkward moment of silence, I explained that I knew they were disguising beer cans, and it was unnecessary since beer was not prohibited at this particular lake. One of the anglers looked at me and said, "You mean we've been going to the trouble of covering up beer cans all these years for nothing?" As I walked away, it occurred to me that their efforts weren't a total waste of time. After all, they did provide the material for a pretty good stream note.—WCO Scott D. Opfer, Fayette County.

