



NOTES *from the Streams*

Safely to the other side

Every year, there seems to be something swimming across Allegheny Reservoir. The first time, I saw a deer swimming across it. At the time, two new game wardens were with me on my patrol boat. Snakes and black bears also are excellent swimmers.

Hearing stories about animals getting harassed in these vulnerable instances is frustrating.

While traveling on the water, boat operators are obligated to be competent observers and be able to make the necessary corrections to ensure the safety of all passengers. After some hard rains, there may even be whole trees floating in the middle of the reservoir that washed downstream from the Allegheny River in New York state.

If you do come across wildlife swimming across a larger body of water, I understand the desire to get a closer look. But, you don't need to get too close and cause distress to wildlife. Keep a safe distance, and know your abilities as a boat operator. Protecting and conserving never gets old.—WCO Sergio B. Herrera, McKean County.

Watch your step

After many complaints about suspects cast netting trout out of a local waterway, another Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) and I focused on patrolling the area one evening. I climbed a hillside and positioned myself in an area that provided a good vantage point. When the suspects arrived at the waterway and began to use cast nets, I made my way down the hill, not taking note of its steepness. I slid down the hill belly first. I attempted to slow my graceful descent with my hands and knees, to no avail. I was covered in mud. Luckily, I got to wash some of it off when I

waded in my patrol boots to retrieve evidence from the middle of the creek. It was worth it.—WCO Daniel J. Wilson, Southern Westmoreland and Northern Fayette counties.

Muddy boots

WCOs work in diverse environments and deal with various weather conditions. To say the least, I got to experience one of Mother Nature's elements in the field—mud. While taking measurements for a pollution and stream disturbance on a logging site, I was walking down a skid trail caused by the heavy machinery. Suddenly, I got a blast of cold water and mud filling the tops of my muck boots. Just like that, I was knee deep in mud and somewhat stuck. After multiple efforts of trying to get out, I succeeded. I took a minute or two to dump the mud and water out of my boots. I finished my measurements and headed back to the truck to put on a fresh pair of socks and boots. After taking my boots off, I realized I had more mud on the inside of my boots than I did on the outside. My advice—always watch where you step, because one

day you may have mud in your boots.—WCO Shane C. Casey, Western Schuylkill County.

The reason why

As the stocking season gets underway, it's always met with a bag of emotions. Between the excitement of the beginning to the stress of organizing schedules and then the fatigue at the end. WCOs sometimes wonder why we do it. During the first stocking of the year, I was fortunate enough to have some great stocking help. At that stocking, help was a young girl with her father, ready to carry buckets. As the first bucket of trout was given to her father, I accompanied them to the water. As soon as the lid came off the bucket, she was smiling from ear to ear. When the trout were put into the water, she hustled back to the stocking truck for more. At that moment, I knew I gained another valuable stocking helper for years to come. These are the moments to remember when WCOs think to ourselves, why are we doing it.—WCO Luke E. Walter, Butler County.



artwork-Andrea Feeney