



# NOTES *from the Streams*

## A teachable moment

One of the many things I enjoy about being a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) is seeing the look on a child's face when he or she lands a first fish. No matter what size or species, that fish is the trophy of a lifetime to the child and their mentor.

That said, I recall a memorable day during trout season.

Many families were out fishing, and it appeared as though the fish were more than eager to cooperate.

While walking through one of the more remote sections of the Nescopeck Creek, Luzerne County, I clearly heard the voice of a young boy giving instructions to another angler in the art of drifting bait through a hole to entice a trout. Although the voice belonged to a young child, it was obvious to me that he had experience fishing and was no stranger to catching trout.

Naturally, I assumed the boy was providing a younger sibling some needed instruction.

As I rounded the bend, the young boy was in the creek issuing instruction and guidance, just as expected. However, much to my surprise, it was not his brother or sister he was mentoring—it was his father.

After striking up a conversation with the two anglers, the father informed me that he had never fished as a boy. One day, his young son, who was 7-years-old, came home from school and said he wanted to try fishing. He said his friends at school were going. The father delighted in telling me that his son virtually taught himself to fish by watching every YouTube video he could find. He learned everything from how to tie his own hook, to which baits to use, and how to find

the most likely spot in the creek to find trout.

On this day, the young boy caught his limit of trout early, so he was trying to help his dad have some luck. With some persistence, his dad landed two nice Brown Trout.

I can't remember a prouder father than that man, and I don't blame him. It's not every day that a father and son get to fish for the first time together. Both caught a trophy of a lifetime, as well as memories to last an eternity.—WCO Aaron B. Lupacchini, Southern Luzerne and Columbia counties.

## Nice teeth

One evening in late June, I was patrolling Tamarack Lake, Crawford County, with a fellow WCO. While addressing a few all-terrain vehicle and launch permit violations, one of the individuals asked me if my first name was Tim. Before I could answer, she said, "Never mind I know it is." With a puzzled look on my face, I asked how she knew. She replied, "I can tell by your teeth." I instantly questioned my fellow officer if I had something in my teeth, and he assured me that I did not. Without delay, she explained that she worked for my dentist and assisted him with my braces years ago. I have to say this was a first for me and found it pretty amazing that she remembers people by their teeth.—WCO Timothy J. Fuller, Eastern Crawford and Warren counties.

## Investi "gator"

WCOs perform investigations into complaints we receive. During trout season, I received notification regarding a possible alligator navigating the Frankstown Branch Juniata River. The notification was accompanied by a photo and the location. From the

photo, I couldn't determine the size of the alligator.

I arrived at the reported location of the alligator. With the help of one of the area's Game Wardens, we searched about ½-mile of the Frankstown Branch Juniata River. After about 15 minutes, we noticed a long, scaly tail sticking out from undercut tree roots. From where we were standing, we couldn't tell if it was alive or not. As we got closer, it appeared to be an alligator about 3 feet long. But, something seemed out of place. The alligator didn't appear to be moving. Getting even closer to the undercut tree, I saw its back leg and noticed it appeared to be plastic or rubber. Peering under the roots, I could make out the rest of the body. I grabbed it by the tail and discovered the alligator that was terrorizing the Frankstown Branch Juniata River was in fact a 3-foot long rubber toy. As an investigator, you never know what may come your way.—WCO Frank J. Mehalko III, Blair and Huntingdon counties.



photo-courtesy of WCO Frank J. Mehalko III