

Notes from the Streams



Casting to a buck

Recently, WCO Lee Creyer and I were presenting a program to local Cub Scout Pack 25. The program consisted of fish identification, safe fishing practices, laws governing fishing, the correct procedure for rigging a line, and proper casting techniques. Each scout was allowed four attempts at casting a fishing rod. As an added incentive, WCO Creyer placed a dollar bill on the floor about 20 feet in front of the casting line. He struck a deal that the first scout who could cast a practice plug on the dollar bill would win it. All the scouts came close, but to no avail, except for the last scout in



line! His first cast landed directly on top of it! Sorry, Lee, I didn't know we were dealing with a professional, either. —DWCO Chad Eyles, Southern York County.

Making it all worthwhile

This past September, for a couple of days I had the opportunity to fit in my annual Kinzua Dam fishing trip with my brother Bill and my three cousins. It's a great time of year to beat the crowds, and the temperature is still fairly warm for camping, especially at the "boats only" campsites.

This year things didn't work exactly as planned, and the fishing was slow. The last full day was Sunday, and it was pretty much a steady rainfall. The next day we had to leave. The sun came out and it was a beautiful fall

day. We had one last chance to do some shoreline fishing before breakfast and packing out.

My brother Bill was fishing in the back of the cove when he landed a nice fish and yelled for me to come there. The problem was with identification. I looked at the fish, but at first I wasn't sure what it was until I saw the distinct markings, such as the adipose fin, which confirmed that it was in the trout and salmon family, and the silver color with the small "x"-shaped spots on its back. Using the process of elimination with a picture, we later identified it as an 18-inch landlocked Atlantic salmon. This was the first one I'd ever seen. We went back to the campsite for the others to see the fish, and a large bird flew over and landed in the top of a pine tree not far away. Identification with binoculars showed that it was a golden eagle, though becoming more common, the first one I'd ever seen in Pennsylvania.

The eagle remained perched in the tree long enough for us to watch when my cousin hollered, "Look on the far shore, a bear." Sure enough, a small black bear came down on the shoreline and ambled along as only bears can do.

Though all three of these species are becoming more common in Pennsylvania, the experience to enjoy seeing all three at the same time is one of the reasons why I look forward to that annual fishing trip. —WCO Rick Valazak, Jefferson County.

Tell me it isn't so!

Despite our constant appreciation for those who assist with trout stocking efforts, we occasionally experience one needless frustration. It seemingly never fails that an extra-caring individual walks a bucket to the stream and then proceeds to stock one fish at a time, spaced some short distance apart. Speed is often critical, so I remind these well-meaning folks, "Get them in the water; don't name them! They'll swim by themselves—we teach them at the hatchery." Sometimes it brings a chuckle, sometimes a quizzical frown.

I'm afraid now the laugh is on me (and a nameless fish culture station manager). Recently, while at a Centre County hatchery just after hours, I emerged from a building to see the



lone manager bent over a raceway. I swear his lips were moving and his arms gestured in swimming motions. Tell me it isn't so! —Northcentral Assistant Regional Supervisor Brian B. Burger.

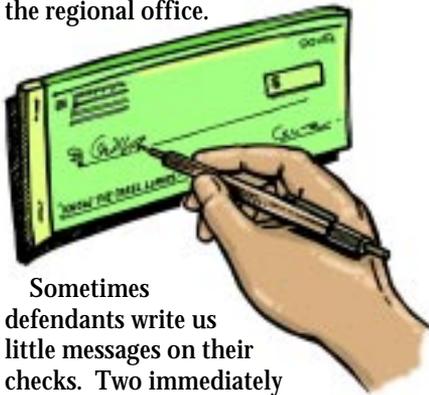
Deer of a different color

While on boat patrol last July 4th on tornado-ravaged Lake Carey, some caring residents pointed out a dead deer floating feet up in the water. I looked through my binoculars to see four hooves pointed straight up. I thought it best to remove the deer before it began to smell or cause an unhealthy condition. I called WCO Wasserman of the Game Commission and asked if he could take the deer away after I pulled it from the water. He agreed. I then picked up DWCO Ardell Loncosky to help me hook onto the deer and pull it to shore with the patrol boat. After picking up Ardell, we had a hard time relocating the deer. Finally, he pointed it out to me and we pulled up alongside it. To our surprise, the deer turned out to be a plastic hobby horse still attached to the springs that once made it bounce. —WCO Larry L. Bundy Jr., Wyoming/Eastern Sullivan Counties.

Little messages

Most of the public contacts I make as a WCO are positive. Of the literally thousands of people I meet each year, I

have to warn or cite only a small percentage. Currently there are two ways a violation can be settled with the Commission. The defendant can elect to take a citation and handle the matter through the local district court. The other option is to sign a Field Acknowledgment of Guilt and settle directly with the Commission, usually by mail. The WCO then has to process these payments and forward them to the regional office.



Sometimes defendants write us little messages on their checks. Two immediately come to mind. One angler caught fishing without a license on the opening day of trout season wrote, "A boneheaded mistake." The other, from a boater who failed to heed the "slow no-wake" buoys in the Essington Anchorage, contained a message that required heavy censorship. I'm sure everyone can figure that one out. —WCO Robert Croll, Delaware County.

Thanks for the help

We are often fortunate to be assisted by the anglers and boaters we serve in the field. However, we rarely get assistance from violators when pursuing them. While patrolling the Susquehanna River, I found some litter and a note written with the trash. On the note to his friends were several locations where this person said he might be, and instructions to look for his truck. Having seen a pickup truck earlier parked in an area known for illegal camping, I went back and noted the registration. After checking with York County Control, I found the owner of the truck to be the author of the "litter letter."

After locating the violator among a group of campers, I informed him that

I had some "personal" information that would be better discussed in private, to avoid embarrassment. We hiked back to my vehicle where I informed him that a citation is forthcoming for the litter. His only reaction was, "How did you find me?" After his irritation subsided with himself for leaving evidence, he accepted and signed a Field Acknowledgment of Guilt for the violation and walked away muttering. —DWCO Mike Deluca, Southern York County.

Sworn to secrecy

Since I have been sworn to secrecy by some of the local fishermen, I will not name the streams or places involved. During the summer and early fall of 1998, I assisted Area Fisheries Manager Larry Jackson while electrofishing several Class A wild trout waters in Blair County. Remember that these streams have not been stocked for quite a few years. The results were nothing short of amazing. For instance, in one section 300 meters long on one stream, we found 692 trout on a hot day in August. On another section of the same stream we found wild brown trout up to 24 inches. The other streams that we electrofished were almost as good.

Maybe some of the guys who think the only fish in a stream are found there after the big white truck arrives should look at some of our many wild trout streams. —WCO Walter A. Rosser, Blair County.

Doesn't taste right?

Before I became Southcentral Assistant Regional Supervisor, while patrolling my northern York County district, I received a call from neighboring WCO Craig Garman about some fish that had been illegally taken from his district by people who lived in my district. He asked me to conduct an immediate investigation, which I did. When I drove up the driveway at the home of the suspect, I was met on the porch by the man and lady who lived there. After I explained why I was there, the man told me that in fact five fish had been caught by his

next door neighbor with whom he was fishing. I asked where the fish were, and he replied that two were cooked and on their dinner plates as we spoke. I asked him for the fish on his table, which he subsequently gave me. Sure enough, they were cooked and partially eaten. As I was leaving, he said to me that the fish did not taste right. I replied that illegal fish never do taste good! —Southcentral Assistant Regional Supervisor George Geisler.

What's Next?

Over the past two summers, I have spent my weekends patrolling Lake Wallenpaupack. I have seen just about every type of watercraft imaginable. But just when I thought I had seen it all, an airplane circled the lake,



landed, and pulled up to a dock. What could possibly be next? —WCO Clyde N. Warner Jr., Northeast Region.

Yellow jackets

Longtime "Notes from the Streams" readers may remember a note I wrote shortly after my assignment to Greene County. In it I told how a border collie, upset at my presence, bit me when my back was turned. Obviously, the bite was quite painful.

Since then, I have sat on a yellow jacket while on boat patrol, an uplifting experience. And here in Elk County, I sat on a log atop a ground nest of yellow jackets. Needless to say, yellow jackets up your pant legs get your attention! What was really funny was trying to pick up my binoculars and pack with a long stick and then emptying yellow jackets out of the pack.

I'm certainly glad border collies don't fly and yellow jackets don't herd sheep. —WCO Les Haas, Elk County.

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“Six”

While patrolling on the opening day of trout season, my deputy, Howard Ludwig, and a DCNR employee stopped to observe an elderly man fishing with a young boy. The older man caught three trout, handed them to the youngster, and proceeded to catch six more trout. They then picked up to leave. Officer Ludwig approached the man and asked him how many he had caught. “Six,” he replied, holding up his stringer. Before DWCO Ludwig could question him further, the youngster piped up and said, “No, Pap, what about the three you caught for me?”—WCO Lawrence P. Dvorshock, Lycoming County.



Not this time!

Recently, while patrolling Lackawanna State Park, I observed a 25-year-old woman, her father and boyfriend fishing. I watched for a while and noticed that the woman’s line became tangled around the reel. The boyfriend came to her aid and began pulling the line from the spool. He then cut the line, looked around, and stuffed it under a rock in the water. After a short period, the boyfriend left the area and I approached him. I told him I would be citing him for littering. During our conversation the father appeared and wanted to know what was going on. I explained the situation and he said, “You know, there is a lot of litter here and you should get the perpetrators, although I guess they always get away.” I replied, “Sir, this time they didn’t.”—WCO Walter Buckman, Lackawanna County.

A true romantic

This spring, while stocking Canonsburg Lake and Dutch Fork Lake with WCO Keith Small, retired deputy of 35 years Hugh Ealy and his wife, Laura, arrived to assist with the stocking. It is not unusual to see Deputy Ealy at stockings in Washington County. It seems he just can’t get it out of his blood. What I was about to find out, however, was unusual. We were just starting to stock Dutch Fork Lake, having finished at Canonsburg Lake, when Hugh turned to me and said, “You’ll never guess what today is.” I looked at him and then at Laura for some kind of clue. They were both grinning. He said, “It’s our anniversary—52 years today.”

I guess it was only fitting that a man this dedicated spend the day with his two great loves. A belated happy anniversary to Hugh and Laura Ealy, and a wish that you spend many more together (not necessarily stocking fish).—WCO Jay C. Redman, Western Allegheny County.

Free Fishing Day

Free Fishing Day was again observed in my district. The program was once again at Burrell Lake Park. Councilman Ed Binder saw that the lake was stocked with panfish as well as trout. A total of \$4,000 worth of fish has been placed into Burrell Lake. Help came from park personnel, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tri-County Trout Members, BASS members, and my deputies Bill Kopar, Ken Pate and Vaughan Zantotto. There were 158 persons young and old alike. The total attendance for the two days of free fishing came to 377 people. The prize fish of the day was a 22 1/2-inch channel catfish, caught by an 11-year-old. Five first fish were caught, and awards for them were sent—WCO Jerry Greiner, Allegheny County.



Remedial lessons

A Butler resident has chosen to become a regular attendee of the “Streamside Instruction in Fishing Regulations” course given informally at various locations in this area by Butler County WCO Jay Waskin and me. So far, this “student” has earned credits for nine citations and four years of fishing license revocations in just two years of study. His total tuition costs were \$550. The most recent lesson came near the end of his initial two-year revocation period when he tried to pass himself off as his twin brother, whose fishing license he was carrying. He failed the exam miserably. Should our pupil decide to attend class again soon, rest assured that Jay and I are prepared to give more remedial lessons.—WCO Bruce Gundlach, Western Armstrong County.

Complaints, complaints!

As WCOs we often field our share of complaints as we meet fishermen along our streams and lakes. Probably the most common ones are, “Where are all the fish?” and “Why aren’t they biting?”

I thought I had heard them all until last spring. I checked a fisherman on a stream that had just been stocked the day before. I asked him how he was doing. He said he had just caught 25 trout from the same spot. His complaint was that we had stocked too many fish! I walked about 50 feet downstream to check the next fisherman. You guessed it! He asked when we had stocked this stream and complained that he had not caught a single fish all morning.

After the fall stocking, I checked a fly fisherman in a Delayed-Harvest area. Seems the problem was not the lack of fish, just that we had stocked only large trout and none of them would bite. Sometimes it is hard to keep the customers satisfied!—WCO Joseph Morris, Northwest Region.

Messages

To the helpful angler at Beechwood Lake: While you are to be commended for picking up other people's litter, the port-a-john is meant for a different kind of waste product.

To the traveler who stopped by our Beechwood Lake parking lot: Please do not allow your dogs to chew on the signs (The dog regulations sign was destroyed. The other signs on the backboard weren't touched).

To the unlicensed angler from New York state who was fishing Pine Creek: Yes, PA State Troopers can and do enforce the Fish and Boat Code.

To the angler who asked me at a Saturday inseason stocking why I didn't just hook the stocking hose up to the pipe that the Commission had "put into the lake to facilitate stocking when the lake is frozen over": The color of the truck that will hook up to the pipe will most likely be red, not white. The local fire department probably wouldn't like their dry hydrants plugged with trout.

To another angler at Beechwood Lake: The answer to your question is, no, the United States Postal Service will not deliver your letter if you try to use your trout/salmon stamp as postage. – *WCO William C. Carey, Tioga County.*

Boat registration

The *Boating Handbook* provided to all registered boat owners does an excellent job of explaining how to display both the registration numbers and the validation decal. Unfortunately, some boaters find reading the text or looking at the illustrations a little taxing. Based on actual experience, I have listed some obvious clues that your registration numbers are incorrect or incorrectly displayed:

- You have purchased 34 letters and numbers to display your registration—you are now displaying your hull identification number.
- You move five feet from your boat and are unable to see your registration numbers in daylight. The color of your numbers does not contrast with the color of your boat.



- You can stand in your boat, bend over the gunwale, and read your registration number correctly—you have placed the registration numbers on your boat upside down.

- Your registration starts with two letters that are not the abbreviation for any state and look like DB 3245 AP—you have mirror reversed your registration number.

- You are displaying a current Pennsylvania validation decal but your registration starts with the abbreviation for another state—you're not displaying the correct registration number.

- You notice the WCO next to your boat reading your registration with a magnifying glass—your registration numbers are not the required 3-inch height. – *WCO David R. Keller, Adams/Northern York Counties.*

Some interview!

I was called one evening to a local marina to investigate a boat fire and explosion that had just occurred. When I arrived at the marina, I was told that one person who was on the boat had been taken to the local hospital with minor injuries. I decided to take a look at the boat and get all the information I would need from the boat before I went to the hospital to interview the injured person. I was almost done gathering all the information I needed when a reporter from the local newspaper arrived and started asking me questions about the boat fire. I told her that I was just starting the investigation and didn't have much I could tell her at this point. I told her I had to go to the hospital and talk to the person who was on the boat when the fire and explosion hap-

pened, and she would have to contact me later when I had more information. I started walking down the dock toward the catwalk leading to shore. The reporter continued to ask me questions as we walked down the dock. When we got to the catwalk, I told her that I didn't have the answers to her questions and she would have to contact me later, and that the interview was over. I quickly turned and took a step and ended up in waist-deep water. I had missed the catwalk entrance by two feet. As I waded through the water toward the river bank, the reporter never missed a beat and continued to ask questions as if nothing had happened. – *WCO Gregory A. Jacobs, Northern Beaver County.*

Mother knows best!

While patrolling Antietam Creek, an approved trout water, with WCO Trainee Robert Wheeler a week before the opening day of trout season, we apprehended a young man fishing in the closed stream who was also fishing without a license. This young fellow, who was 17 years old, didn't have any identification to show us, so we transported him to his residence a few blocks away so that he could get his driver's license. After arriving at his residence, WCO Wheeler stayed outside at our vehicle to begin writing the tickets, while I accompanied the young man inside to retrieve his driver's license. As we entered the living room, the red light on the telephone answering machine was flashing, and the young man went over to the machine and pushed the playback button. I had to almost bite my lip to keep from laughing when I heard the message. The message was from the boy's mother, who apparently was calling from work. Her message began with a list of chores she wanted him to do that day, and ended with the statement, "And stay away from that creek. You know it's not fishing season yet, and you don't have a license, anyway." Too bad this fellow hasn't learned yet that mother usually does know best. – *WCO Ray Bednarchik, Northern Montgomery County.*