



Notes from the Streams

“You guys are everywhere”

Earlier this year WCO Terry Hannold and I worked a plainclothes detail at Scots Run Lake, Berks County, to detect over-the-limit violations after a late-winter trout stocking. I watched an angler catch his limit of three trout while fishing from the right side of the dam breast. This angler left the area and then returned less than 15 minutes later and got set to fish from the left side of the dam. While I was waiting to see if this individual would catch and keep more trout, I observed another angler approach him and flash what appeared to be a badge case. By watching body language, I could tell that the subject was getting very upset. He then gathered his equipment and left the area. About two hours later, after Terry and I both caught our limit of violators, the irate angler returned to the lake and began walking up the shoreline warning people that “the warden” was here and that he’d been “busted.” Terry approached him and asked to see the citation he’d received. The angry angler said he’d not been given a citation, that the officer had just shown his badge and told him to leave. Terry advised this angler that a “real” warden would have given him a citation, and then asked what kind of badge the officer had. With this I pulled my badge from under my shirt and said, “Did it look like this?” The angler examined my badge for a second while Terry pulled out his own badge. After seeing Terry’s badge, the angler’s lip began to quiver and he said, “You guys are everywhere—I’m going home.” — *WCO Rob Croll, Montgomery County.*

40 stitches

One day last summer, Cadet Edwards and I were called to investigate a boat accident on Pymatuning Reservoir. As in most boat accidents it could have been easily avoided. A child was allowed to ride on the bow of a pontoon boat (outside of the protective railing) dangling his feet in the water as the boat traveled up the lake at three-quarters throttle. A wave caused the child to get thrown into the water and he got struck by the prop. Fortunately, in this case only 40 stitches were required and the child is doing well. Boaters need to be aware that not only is it against the law to ride on the bow outside the protective rail at greater than minimum height swell speed, but it is also very dangerous. In this case it was only a 10 HP motor. However, another few inches with even this

size of motor and prop could have meant disaster for the young child. Anyone who falls off the bow of a boat while the boat is moving risks the chance of getting struck by the prop even with the quickest reaction of the operator. Everyone needs to remember that boats don’t have brakes and won’t stop on a dime.— *WCO Terry Crecraft, Eastern Crawford County.*

Stocking assistance



photo: WCO Jim Brown (PA Game Commission)

Acting Southcentral Assistant Regional Supervisor Donald L. Lauver (right) recently presented Blaine E. Shambaugh with a pewter Conserve 2000 stocking truck and a certificate of appreciation for his 20 years of helping to stock Perry County trout streams. Blaine is known locally as the “stocking coordinator.”



photo: Jason Petlock

WCO Bryan Bendock (right), Northern Susquehanna, Eastern Bradford Counties, recently presented Jeff Allen with a framed trout stamp poster for his help in stocking Wysox Creek. Allen’s 1,000-acre Bradford County farm borders some three or four stream miles. Much of this stream section is far from roads, and Allen uses his pickup truck to cart both stockers and trout to and from the creek.

“Ninja” Poachers

The phone at my house rang at 6:45 a.m. on a morning in November. Normally, the only acceptable reason for a call that early on a day off would have been that Lake Erie was on fire. The caller was a landowner who lived adjacent to the heavily used Manchester Hole on Walnut Creek. He started off the conversation with, “You told me to call you anytime of the day or night if I had a problem.” I confirmed that I had told him that and there was no problem with the early call. He said, “Three persons dressed like “Ninjas” were walking through his yard from the creek.” My mind (still half asleep) was running through the sections of the Fish and Boat Code for a possible violation when the landowner continued, “I saw them putting garbage bags under the pine tree in my yard and when I walked there to look at them, I found 12 garbage bags full of steelhead and I thought you might find that suspicious.”

Now wide awake, I told the landowner not to approach these people but if they came with a vehicle before my arrival, I would appreciate it if he could manage to get a license plate number.

My wife recalls that it was the quickest she had ever seen me get out of bed, dressed, and into my patrol car. While en route to the scene, I realized that backup would be prudent, so I contacted Assistant Regional Supervisor Bob Nestor. Bob said he was just walking out the door and could respond immediately. Upon my arrival, the property owner pointed out the three “Ninjas” lurking in the woods about 25 yards away from the bags. Bob arrived shortly afterward in his personal vehicle and was able to take up surveillance while I moved the marked state vehicle to a remote location. An hour passed with attempts by the suspects to retrieve the fish, but they were foiled by the awakening neighborhood. Children with parents awaiting school buses, fishermen walking to their favorite spots, and people heading out to work all added to their paranoia.

Finally, Bob Nestor reported that all three suspects brazenly ran into the yard, grabbed the bags of fish and carried them to a more secluded setting for what would be a loading point for their vehicle. With that call, I went to their location with the state vehicle and apprehended them on Manchester Bridge. I ordered them to place their hands on my vehicle and not to remove them unless instructed. Bob Nestor arrived on the scene, and as we were patting the suspects down, my mind was racing as to how we were going to handle the logistics of dealing with the large quantity of fish, securing evidence and transporting the suspects. Just then, DWCO Don Benczkowski pulled up to the stop followed shortly by DWCO Bob Johnston pulling in behind us in his truck. With the additional manpower, we were able to secure witness statements, find additional evidence of other violations, and provide an acceptable level of officer safety.

Once everything was secured and transported to the Commission Walnut Creek Access building, the task of the

paperwork began. Only one of the suspects was found to have a valid ID, all were nonresidents, and one tried to provide a false name. Hours passed until all of the facts were finally sorted. A total of 18 citations were written with WCO Terry Crecraft coming up from Crawford County to help out, because both deputies had to leave for their regular jobs. Paul Atkinson of the Lake Erie Research Unit and WCO Mike Wojtecki of the PA Game Commission assisted in finding a place for the fish, to be used after they were photographed for evidence.

We contacted the local district justice office about the situation. District Justice Denise Stuck-Lewis was off for the afternoon to attend a function, but she said to call when we got them to her office and she would return to handle the case. We arrived with the defendants and had a total of 18 charges to file. The charges included three counts of over the limit, three counts of using an illegal device, three counts of littering, three counts of littering on Commission property, two counts of no license, two counts of no trout/salmon stamp, one count of borrowed license, and one count of false statements. The fines and cost totaled \$2,635, for which the defendants posted a cash bond.

Further investigation led to two additional charges filed on a suspect from Ohio on lending of a fishing license and false application. The Erie City Police Department also assisted in this investigation.

A hearing was held on the charges in front of District Justice Stuck-Lewis. The defendants were found guilty on all charges.— *WCO John Bowser, Western Erie County.*

Two “culprits”

Lackawanna Lake was recently stocked with fingerling tiger muskies. DWCO Taylor was patrolling the lake that day and observed a couple of the fingerling muskies leap onto shore. Before Dave could come to their rescue, a large bullfrog grabbed one of them and hopped into the lake. As Dave approached the second fish, a crow swooped down and took off with it. Deputy Taylor was frustrated! If anyone knows the whereabouts of the large bullfrog and the crow, contact Deputy Taylor. He is prepared to file charges on the two culprits for fishing without a license and using an unlawful device to fish.— *WCO Walter A. Buckman, Lackawanna County.*

Sacrificed himself again

Stocking thousands of legal-sized trout each spring in Venango County takes up a significant portion of time, and the past two seasons many helpers and I have been very lucky to have the weather accommodate us wonderfully. It has not rained or snowed on us while stocking either year. I told my helpers jokingly, “it does not rain on me.” So when on the last inseason stocking, I misjudged the depth of water in the East Branch of Sugar Creek and tumbled in waist-deep. I explained to them that I had sacrificed myself once again so that they could have another stocking season of good weather.— *WCO Thomas J. Tarkowski, Venango County.*