

Notes from the Streams



Don't tell

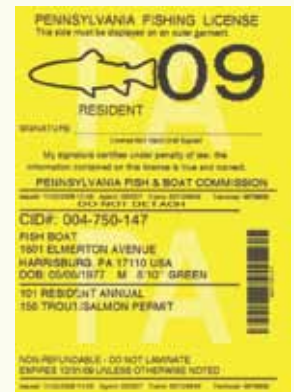
While I was patrolling the Geneva Marsh during waterfowl season, I was checking boats at a launch ramp when I observed an individual who appeared to be having a bad day. This individual was paddling a canoe and appeared to be wet from head to toe. As he pulled into the ramp and saw me he stated, "It keeps getting better." When asked about his life jacket he responded, "I don't have one." I informed the individual that he was going to receive a citation for the missing safety equipment. The individual said, "Please don't tell my wife about this citation." He continued to explain that last week he received a speeding ticket from the Pennsylvania State Police on I-79, and this week I'm receiving a ticket from you. If my wife finds out, she'll kill me. I laughed and said, "Don't worry sir. I won't say a word."—WCO John G. Hopkins, Southcentral Crawford and Eastern Mercer Counties.

Helping hand

One of my favorite Waterways Conservation Officer duties is public relations and helping anglers. While I was walking the shoreline of a popular fishing lake, I noticed a young man in his early twenties fishing by himself. His casting was odd. He was only getting his plastic worm out about 5-feet from the shore. I could tell he was getting frustrated with his rod and reel. I approached him and asked how he was doing. He explained that he received this new baitcasting fishing pole for his birthday from a family member, and he didn't know how to use it. Lucky for him, his family member bought him a top of the line fishing combo that I was very familiar with. I asked to see it, made a few adjustments to the reel and removed a bird nest of line from the spool. Then, I made a cast to test the adjustment. Something grabbed the plastic worm and took off. I set the hook and reeled in a nice 2-pound largemouth bass. I gave his fishing pole back and said everything seems to be fine now. He laughed and thanked me. I walked away feeling good about helping a fellow angler.—WCO Jeremiah Allen, Southern Pike and Northeastern Monroe Counties.

It doesn't tear

While on a recent patrol on the Lehigh River at the outflow of the Francis Walter Dam in Luzerne and Carbon Counties, I encountered an angler fishing the Lehigh River. I recognized the individual from the previous year. I had received reports of this individual leaving litter behind. Upon observing the individual, I saw him throw an empty can onto the rocks. In addition, I observed him throwing debris into the Lehigh River. As the angler walked towards his vehicle parked at the top of the dam, I approached him. When I asked about the litter he left behind, he immediately started to get irritated. We returned to our vehicles, and I wrote a citation for the litter that was thrown in and around the river. As I approached the individual to issue the citation, he reached for his fishing license in my hand. I informed the individual that his license needs to be signed and displayed while fishing. Once again, he reached for his license. As I handed him his fishing license, he immediately attempted to rip his fishing license into pieces. However, the material of the new fishing licenses will not tear. It just stretches. The individual attempted to rip the license several more times, getting more irritated with each attempt. Finally, he realized that the material doesn't tear. He crushed the license into a ball. Then, he threw it onto the rocks. I informed the individual of the two options available to him at this point. He could pick up the fishing license that he threw, or I would return to my truck and make adjustments to the citation. The angered litterbug decided to pick up the fishing license.—WCO Gregory R. Kraynak, Southern Luzerne County.



The material of the new fishing licenses will not tear. It just stretches.

He crushed the license into a ball. Then, he threw it onto the rocks. I informed the individual of the two options available to him at this point. He could pick up the fishing license that he threw, or I would return to my truck and make adjustments to the citation. The angered litterbug decided to pick up the fishing license.—WCO Gregory R. Kraynak, Southern Luzerne County.

Bath time

This story was told to me by one of my stocking helpers who was fishing with his 5-year-old grandson, Tommy. One evening after school, he and his grandson went fishing at Brodhead Creek. Tommy caught a nice 14-inch brown trout and wanted to take it home to show his grandmother. She told him it was a beautiful looking trout and assumed that Tommy brought it home to eat. Tommy's grandmother asked him if he wanted her to clean it. To which he replied, "No, the fish already had his bath today."—WCO Eric Weredyk, Southern Monroe and Northern Carbon Counties.



Photo: Spring Gearhart

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Northeast Regional Law Enforcement Office is a stone's throw away from Harris Pond.

A stone's throw away

Over the past two weeks or so I have had the opportunity to observe and issue citations to two individuals fishing in Harris Pond without a license. Unless you are familiar with Harris Pond, you might not find this surprising. You see, Harris Pond is a Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission pond bought and paid for by fishing license sales. However, the reason I was really surprised by these two fishing without a license is that our Northeast Regional Law Enforcement Office is a stone's throw away.—WCO John Cummings, Northern Luzerne County.

Test fishing

While on patrol along the Monongahela River with DWCO Bob Liptock, we noticed a man and a woman on the wharf. DWCO Liptock and I maneuvered ourselves into a position to observe the two individuals. We scaled up a steep bank and across a set of railroad tracks that put us directly above them. Upon further observation, we noticed that the gentleman had a fishing pole in his hand and a tackle box by his feet. There was also a line in the water from a fishing pole that was leaning against a rail in front of him. We watched for approximately 20 minutes as the gentleman repeatedly cast his line into the water. He also intermittently checked the line from the fishing pole that was leaning against the rail. After deciding that we had observed enough, we approached the gentleman to initiate a license check. We identified ourselves to the gentleman and asked to see his fishing license. To which he responded, "Oh, I just came down to see if the fish were biting first before I decide whether or not to buy a fishing license." We informed him that fishing isn't like buying a car in which you are able to take it for a test drive before deciding whether or not to buy it. Then, we told him that the state of Pennsylvania does offer two days during the

year when one can fish for free, but unfortunately today wasn't one of those days. I issued the appropriate citation for fishing without a license. As DWCO Liptock and I were making our way back to my patrol vehicle, I remarked to him that I often tell myself that I think I've heard every story or excuse imaginable. However, this was the first time in my career that someone told me that they were test fishing first.—WCO Thomas J. Crist, Greene and Southern Washington Counties.

With the works please

While on patrol, I found a dumped pile of garbage on a landowner's property where many anglers go to fish. If left unchecked, this dumping would have resulted in more posted property. As I started the unsavory task of going through the items, I found several identifying pieces of paper along with one unusual pizza topped with lettuce, onion, garlic, tomatoes, feta cheese and red chilies. I nonchalantly tossed the pizza box into my bag of evidence, not knowing its value to my case.

I started my investigation on the leads and stopped at several locations as I built my case on the individual. When I arrived at his home, I only needed to confirm his vehicle and whereabouts the night the items were dumped or secure a confession. His wife answered the door. He was not home yet from work. I explained why I was there and provided her with several incriminating documents that contained his name, a witness statement and the fact the vehicle in question returned to her present address. Even with all this evidence, she still doubted the case against her husband. Then, I presented her with my final piece of evidence. She immediately recognized it as only his belonging. It was the box from his specially ordered pizza.—WCO Mark A. Sweppenhiser, Northern Dauphin County.