



Boredom can be costly

While on routine patrol for trout poachers, I spotted an angler without a license who was fishing in closed approved trout waters. While I issued him citations, he appeared to be ashamed of himself, because he avoided looking at me and kept his eyes to the ground. Four hours later, while patrolling another body of water, an angler noticed me driving down the road toward him, threw down his fishing rod and started running. I immediately realized that it was the same guy from earlier in the day. He ran to an area of parked cars and ducked down behind one of them. After driving to where he had disappeared, I yelled, "Come on out, I've already seen you fishing." He came out from behind a car, hanging his head low. I asked him why he did it again. He said that he was bored and just wanted to go fishing. I was able to liven up his boring and expensive day by writing him more citations.—WCO Douglas L. Deppen, Lebanon and South Dauphin counties.

We're always watching

While patrolling on the opening day of trout season, I was watching two males suspected of catching trout over the legal limit. I spotted them around 7:00 a.m. as they stood along the stream, unaware of my presence. About 10 minutes before 8:00 a.m. (the legal fishing time), they started fishing. They were having great success, and putting the trout inside plastic grocery bags. When the younger one, which turned out to be the son, caught his limit of five trout, he took his catch up to their nearby truck. Then, he returned to the bridge near my position and continued fishing. The dad came over after he had caught his limit, and said he was

going to a different bridge to fish. A few minutes later the son headed up to the vehicle, and they were gone. Later that day, I was patrolling a different stream, and noticed the same vehicle parked nearby. I made my way down to the stream and saw the same two males fishing. I watched them catch some fish. When they were done, I decided to check them. I asked how they did, and they said that they each caught five trout. I made sure to clarify where they caught these fish, because they had no idea I had watched them earlier. They told me they just caught them at the stream where we were currently standing. I asked them, "Well, what happened to the limits you guys caught earlier?" They had puzzled looks on their faces at first, but after I went into detail about their morning's activities, they didn't have much to say. It goes to show, you never know who is watching you.—WCO Corey Girt, Mifflin and North Huntingdon counties.

Timing is everything

While preparing for a program for the third graders of Lake Noxen School at Harvey's Lake Access Area, Luzerne County, I noticed a mature bald eagle taking advantage of the recently-stocked brook trout fingerlings we had placed in the water. Jokingly, I shouted to the eagle that he had better return during the program to impress the kids, or I wouldn't be bringing him any more fish.

While I was waiting for the kids to arrive and to begin the program, I noticed that the eagle had flown out of sight. I hoped that he would return. While answering the question about what services the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission provides for the community of Harvey's Lake and who benefits, I saw the eagle swoop into sight and begin chasing fish

below the surface of the lake. I took the opportunity of that teachable moment to stop talking and let the children concentrate on the beauty that was happening before them. As the eagle cleared the ridge and soared out of sight, I told the students that they had just witnessed one more member of the community who benefits from our programs. I also gave the eagle a verbal warning for fishing without a license.—WCO John R. Cummings, Northern Luzerne and Northern Columbia counties.

The bottle trick

While working with WCO Daniel Nietupski at a York County lake, I watched a young man in his mid-twenties fishing. As WCO Nietupski and I sat in plain view, the man placed his fishing rod on the ground and picked up a bottle. He filled the bottle with water from the lake, then dumped out the water from the bottle back into the lake and returned to fishing. My initial reaction was that this was a case of underage drinking and the subject was attempting to get rid of any evidence. I checked the shoreline as I walked toward the individual and found a spray cap that belonged to the bottle. I asked the angler about the bottle and he replied that it was "an old trick my grandfather taught me. You pour fish attractant into the lake, then throw the bottle into the water and the fish come to it. Then, you fish near that bottle." When asked about the present location of the bottle, he said, "It's out there somewhere." I asked to see his fishing license, and he said he didn't have one. I asked if he had ever possessed a Pennsylvania fishing license, and he said he was unaware until one year ago that he needed one. We have

all benefited from learning from our elders. Unfortunately, this young man's grandfather neglected two important training points: don't litter, and buy a license.—*ARS David R. Keller, Southcentral Region.*

Irresponsible fishing etiquette

One day while patrolling the steelhead run in Erie County, I stopped to observe a very popular fishing hole at Walnut Creek near the marina access road. Among the more than two dozen people fishing, there was a father, mother and two sons, approximately eight and ten years of age, along with another adult friend. Upon further observation, the two kids were blatantly attempting to snag steelhead trout. The eight-year-old's behavior was especially out of control. He continually walked in front of other anglers and casted in front of them, while attempting to snag fish. This caused several anglers to become upset and move to another area. I first thought the parents would stop this behavior, but the more I observed,



illustration-Jeff Decker



it was apparent the father and adult friend were also discretely attempting to snag steelhead trout. At times, the father actually pointed out the location of fish for the kids to attempt to snag. If this activity wasn't bad enough, the youngest child finished a soft drink and threw the empty can into the weeds. During this same time, I observed all three adults chain smoking and throwing their cigarette butts into the water and along the shoreline. Additionally, the mother stuffed a large bundle of fishing line back under the shale rocks that she was sitting beside. To top things off, just before they packed up to leave, both kids helped pull in a steelhead trout that was snagged in its back. The father netted the fish and pulled the lure out of the fish's back. Then, they packed up and took the fish and left. After completing multiple citations on the adults, I explained to the kids what they had done illegally and what they could have been charged with. I also explained proper fishing etiquette for future fishing trips. While admitting to everything he had done wrong, the father apologized, but then commented that he "only wanted to let the kids catch fish and take one home."—*WCO Terry J. Crecraft, Eastern Crawford and Warren counties.*

High-tech tomfoolery

While on a recent day of boat patrol on the Allegheny River with DWCO (Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer) Amil Zuzik, we made our way upriver to Lock and Dam #3. This is a popular fishing spot, and on this particular day there were approximately 15 anglers fishing from the shoreline. After 20 minutes, we maneuvered in to the anglers to do license checks and to check for fish. DWCO Zuzik dropped me off on the shoreline at the end of the string of anglers. The plan was to make my way up the shoreline until I had checked everyone.

After checking a few, DWCO Zuzik shouted to me that a couple of the anglers who we were interested in, including one male and one female, were making their way up the bank. I immediately headed up the bank to catch up with them.

When I got to the parking area at the top of the bank, I encountered the male angler preparing to leave in his car. I asked to see his fishing license and identification. He replied that he didn't have a fishing license. While talking with him, I observed the female walking down the road attempting to leave the area. I told him to remain at his car while I caught up with her.

After catching up with her, I asked to see her identification and fishing license, to which she responded, "I wasn't fishing." I informed her that we had observed her fishing for over 20 minutes and instructed her to make her way back down the bank to the gentlemen that she was fishing with. I returned to the male and issued the appropriate paperwork for fishing without a license and then made my way to the location of where the female was supposed to be. However, when I got there, she wasn't there.

I asked the gentlemen, who she had been fishing with earlier, where she went. "She went into the woods," he said. I instructed him to go into the woods and bring her back, and I made my way to the top of the bank. After five minutes, they both came walking out of the woods. As they got close to me, she held an iPod up in her hand and said "I got it." "Got what?" I asked. "My fishing license," she said. Apparently, in an attempt to make herself appear legal, she had ducked into the woods and purchased her fishing license online.

Obviously, she didn't realize that the exact date and time of the transaction appears on the license. Accordingly, I issued the appropriate paperwork for fishing without a license.—*WCO Thomas J. Crist, Southern Westmoreland County.*