



## Displaying proudly

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Mentored Youth Trout Days are a great opportunity for youth and mentors to experience a day fishing together.

One observation I made on a particular Mentored Youth Trout Day was the number of youth who proudly displayed their licenses. While walking the streams and talking to people, I had several youth go out of their way to show me their licenses without asking to see their licenses. One child, about 5-years-old, just pulled into an access area with his dad. The child got out of the vehicle and immediately walked over to me. He pulled out his wallet and took out his free Mentored Youth Fishing Permit. He then pointed to his identification in his wallet and stated that it was his identification and "you are not allowed to touch that." I assured him that I wouldn't touch his identification. He then proceeded to inform me of his fishing knowledge.

The boy's father stood behind his son the entire time, smiling at everything his son was saying to me. Then, the boy advised me that he needed to start fishing. I wished him good luck as he and his dad began a day of fishing together.—*WCO Terry J. Crecraft, Eastern Crawford and Warren counties.*

## Teamwork

It's always a disappointment to see our natural resources tarnished by litter. On many occasions, I have had the opportunity to see the benefits of local companies pulling together, with the help of sportsmen's clubs, in a Stream Clean-up to remove litter. The number of people that help during clean-ups is overwhelming. It's refreshing to know that so many people still take pride in conserving,

enhancing and protecting our natural resources.—*WCO Darrin W. Kephart Southern York County.*

## For good measure

I received a phone call at our office regarding two men stringing a fish net across the width of a recently stocked trout stream. I recognized the site given by the caller as a bridge scheduled for demolition. Minutes after I received the call, I arrived at the location. The only person at the site was a seasoned fly angler. We spoke for a minute, and he admitted that he made the phone call. He was hesitant to tell me what actually happened. With an embarrassed, sheepish grin, he told me the alleged net was a tape measure stretched across the stream by two engineers measuring the bridge. He was too embarrassed to call the office back to admit his misidentification and hoped no one would follow-up on the phone call. Both he and I erupted into laughter. No harm done, thanks for the call.—*WCO Mark A. Sweppenhiser, Northern Dauphin and Northumberland counties.*

## Drops the dime on dad

One of the various duties of a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) is to present information and education programs to the public, civic groups, sportsmen's clubs and school programs. Each year, a local school hosts a Career Day for their students to provide them with the opportunity to learn about different careers and to interact with the speakers.

While presenting a program about the duties of a WCO, I asked the students if they went fishing or boating. A number of students raised their hands to indicate that they went fishing or boating. Some of the students stated that they went fishing at Mauch Chunk Lake

and that they did well at fishing. I explained to the students that it would not be uncommon to see me or other officers on patrol if they went to Mauch Chunk Lake, Beltzville Lake or some of the other waterways in the district. A young girl immediately raised her hand and proudly stated that she saw me patrolling at Mauch Chunk Lake. She went on to say once, while fishing with her father, I caught him taking short bass and gave him a ticket. Somewhat caught off-guard, and all the eyes in the classroom now focusing on her, I quickly explained to the class that unfortunately sometimes a citation is issued for certain violations.

This was the best time to explain to the students why rules and regulations relating to seasons, sizes and creel limits are established, and the importance of reading the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* book.

I would not have been surprised to learn that the young girl told her family about the career speakers she met in school. I wondered if she told her father why rules and regulations are established and the importance of abiding by them.—*WCO Scott J. Christman, Southern Carbon and Southwestern Monroe counties.*



illustration-Andrea Feeney



## There's an app for that?

I recently attended a meeting as a member of the New Milford Rifle & Pistol Club. John Ord, Club President and also President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsman's Clubs, was giving a report on the latest news from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. I enjoy these meetings since I'm not in the spotlight for reporting latest news, which allows me to sit back and watch, especially since there are members who do not know what I do for a living.

Ord had recently been at a statewide Federation of Sportsman's Clubs function where an employee from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission was discussing the features of the free FishBoatPA app, which includes trout stocking information, rules and regulations and fish identification capabilities. The Near Me mapping feature was discussed. The Near Me feature allows the app to use your smartphone's GPS location capabilities for locating boating access points, stocked trout streams and lakes, and where to purchase fishing licenses. Before the Near Me features were explained in further detail, a hand rose up from the back of room. The inquisitive listener sincerely asked "will it let me find out if a warden is near me?" The room erupted in laughter.—*Sergeant Bryan C. Bendock, Northeast Region, Law Enforcement Office.*

## Too big

While on patrol one spring evening, I met a novice angler who was having little success catching trout. When asked how he was doing, he stated that he was not doing very well. He was using all the latest gear that he purchased from a sporting goods store. Little did he know, the problem was that all of his new fishing gear was suited for bass fishing, not trout fishing. I explained that he wanted to use light line (4-to- 6-pound-test line), small hooks (size 8 or smaller) and little weight.

He listened to my recommendations and asked several questions, which I answered. A few days later I ran into the same angler again. He had switched to smaller, lighter gear and told me that he had more success trout fishing since then. He even showed me several photographs of the trout he caught. Sometimes asking a few questions will help you improve your situation.—*WCO Michael P. Walsh, Eastern Allegheny County.*

## Mentored adult

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

Looking back on the previous year's Mentored Youth Trout Day, I recall the many families who were out taking part in the event. From my observations that day, it appeared as though the fish were eager to cooperate.

While walking through one of the remote sections of Nescopeck Creek, Luzerne County, I could hear the voice of a young child, giving fishing instructions to another angler in the art of drifting bait through a hole in hopes of enticing a trout. It was obvious to me that the young child had fishing experience and was no stranger to catching trout. I naturally assumed it would be a child providing a younger sibling with some needed instruction.

As I rounded the bend, I saw that it was a young boy who was giving the fishing advice. However, much to my surprise, it was not his brother or sister he was mentoring but his father who was receiving instruction from his young son. After striking up a conversation with the two anglers, the father informed me that when he was a boy, he had never gone fishing.

One day, his son, age 7, came home from school and told his father he wanted to try fishing. The boy said his friends at school were going fishing, and therefore, he wanted to learn as well. The father delighted in telling

me that his son was so excited, he virtually taught himself to fish by watching every YouTube fishing video he could find. He learned everything from how to tie his own hook, to what baits to use and how to find the best spot in the creek to lure trout into biting.

Turns out, the young boy caught his limit of two trout early on that day, and he was trying to help his dad have some good luck. With persistence, his dad landed two nice Brown Trout.

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

## Take my advice

A few years ago, I was approached by some guys at Raccoon Creek State Park, Beaver County. They were curious about what types of fish were in the lake and how to catch them. Sensing that the guys were not from around here, I asked them where they were from. "Texas," they replied. They were working on gas pipelines in the area.

We had a lengthy conversation about fishing, the gas business and Texas. Knowing that they planned on returning to Raccoon Creek State Park to fish and the area is patrolled by WCOs regularly, I reminded them to buy their fishing licenses.

A few years later, I ran into some guys who were fishing closed stocked trout waters in Raccoon Creek State Park without fishing licenses. After I issued them their citations for fishing without their licenses, one guy said "You probably don't remember, but you talked to me a few years ago right here about needing to get my fishing license." Then, I realized they were the same pipeline workers I conversed with a few years ago. I told them they should have taken my advice.—*WCO Jeremiah D. Allen, Beaver County.*