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| DEC Environmental Conservation Officer Highlights |
| ECO Actions for Late MayNew York State Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) enforce the 71 Chapters of NY Environmental Conservation Law, protecting fish and wildlife and preserving environmental quality across New York.In 2015, the 268 ECOs based across the state responded to 25,000 calls and issued 22,000 tickets for crimes ranging from deer poaching to corporate toxic dumping to illegal mining, black market pet trade and excessive emissions violations."From Montauk Point to Mount Marcy, from Brooklyn to Buffalo, the ECOs who patrol our state are the first line of defense in protecting New York's environment and our natural resources, ensuring that they exist for future generations of New Yorkers," said Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos. "They labor through long and arduous hours, often deep in our remote wildernesses or in the tight confines of our urban landscapes, and without much public fanfare. But their work centers around the most important things we do at the DEC."Recent missions carried out by ECOs include:Bears on the MoveDuring the early morning hours of May 17 in the Tioga County Village of Spencer, a homeowner woke to find a black bear and her three cubs in his yard raiding his birdfeeders. The sow bear was startled by the homeowner, sent her three small cubs up a tree in the yard, and then departed the area. ECO Lt. Ric Warner and ECO Brent Wilson, with the assistance of the Spencer Police Department, were tasked with keeping the neighborhood secure and onlookers a safe distance away while awaiting the return of the mother to recover her three cubs. After a full day of waiting in the tree, the cubs were reunited with their mother at approximately 7:30 that evening, when she made it back across a state highway to the base of the tree. She gathered her youngsters and moved off into the wooded area nearby.Operation "Just Boats" (Monroe County)On May 21 and 22, Region 8 ECOs participated in a joint detail on the Erie Canal in Monroe County. Operation "Just Boats" was a U.S. Coast Guard intelligence patrol involving the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, New York State Police, and DEC patrol boats. Each patrol boat was assigned a US Coast Guard Boarding Team, which was tasked with making contact with both large and small vessels that were using the canal as a means to travel through New York State. The missions were to enforce safety requirements, gather intelligence, and increase the likelihood of detecting other violations of U.S. law, including the smuggling of controlled substances, illegal persons, and monetary instruments.Patrol boat on the Erie CanalNYSDEC patrol boatOverstocked BucketOn May 16, ECO John Lutz escorted two fish-stocking trucks from Caledonia as they stocked more than 10,000 yearling brown trout into the Irondequoit Bay Outlet in the Town of Webster. Less than an hour after the stocking was finished, ECO Lutz arrived at the Irondequoit Bay State Marine Park. He saw a male subject put a kitty litter bucket in his trunk and get into his car to leave. Suspecting that there were fish in the bucket, Lutz asked the man if he had been fishing. The man said that he had been fishing but hadn't caught anything. When Lutz asked about the bucket, the man sheepishly got out of his car, opened the trunk and showed ECO Lutz the bucket, which contained 11 of the freshly stocked brown trout, which was grossly over the limit of three fish per day. All of the fish were well under the size limit of 15 inches, as well. Since the fish were still alive, ECO Lutz allowed the subject to return them to the water before issuing him tickets for taking over the daily limit of brown trout and taking undersize brown trout.City Hunting in NewburghOn May 21, ECO Chris Lattimer was dispatched to Crystal Lake in Newburgh to assist the Newburgh Police Department with a complaint. ECO Lattimer met with a Newburgh Police Officer, who explained that he had responded to a "shots fired" call and had located four men with various weapons, multiple dead Canada geese, and a dead coyote. After a brief investigation, one of the men admitted to shooting all of the geese but stated the coyote had been killed by a car on a local road. ECO Lattimer confirmed that the coyote had not been shot and found that seven geese had been shot.During the investigation, Lattimer observed multiple houses within 500 feet of where the geese had been shot. He also found that the hunter was using lead shot, an unplugged gun, did not have his hunting license, and did not possess any permits to hunt waterfowl. The hunter was issued appearance tickets for discharging within 500 feet of a dwelling, illegally taking protected wildlife, taking geese out of season, hunting waterfowl with lead shot, hunting waterfowl with an unplugged gun, and hunting license violations. The other three men were issued tickets as accessories to a violation of the fish and wildlife law, all returnable to the City of Newburgh Court.Facebooked: Over The Limit of Turkey Post Leads to ArrestOn May 23, Lieutenant John Murphy received an anonymous complaint of a picture of two subjects with five wild turkey carcasses on Facebook. A quick Facebook visit located numerous other pictures posted of the same two men with other turkeys throughout the month of May. Armed with copies of the pictures and other pertinent information, Lt. Murphy and ECO Tim Worden located and interviewed the two subjects. Through interviews and further investigation, they determined that one of the hunters had killed the three juvenile turkeys with one shot on the same morning that he harvested another turkey. The other turkeys were all determined to be legally taken. Three jake turkey beards were recovered and seized. One subject was charged with three counts of taking over the season limit of turkeys, three counts of taking over the daily limit of turkeys, two counts failure to tag turkeys as required, and one count failure to report a turkey harvest. The second subject was charged with two counts of failure to tag turkeys as required, two counts of possession of an untagged turkey, and one count failure to report a turkey harvest. The charges are pending in the Harrisburg and Martinsburg town courts.BOCES Open House in MasonvilleOn May 24, ECO Nate Doig and George Wilber represented the Division of Law Enforcement at the BOCES Open House event held at the Harold Campus in the Town of Masonville. The goal was to further the public's respect and understanding of Environmental Conservation Officers' responsibilities and duties. The officers displayed ATV's and snowmobiles to highlight some of the different patrol vehicles used in Delaware County. Roughly 550 people attended the event.Kids at the Harold Campus checking out DEC snowmobileDEC ECOs Nate Doig and George WilberDEC ATVs and snowmobileIf you witness an environmental crime or believe a violation of environmental law occurred please call the DEC Division of Law Enforcement hotline at 1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267). |

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