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| DEC Environmental Conservation Officer Highlights |
| ECO Actions for Early JuneNew 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 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:Over the Limit for Horseshoe Crabs - Suffolk CountyDuring the night of June 3 and the early morning hours of June 4, ECOs Tim Fay, Mark Simmons, and Kaitlin Grady conducted a patrol between Moriches and Patchogue, having recently received information of illegal horseshoe crab harvesting in that area. Just before 11 p.m., they witnessed a small skiff with no navigation lights race out of Swan Creek. The ECOs recognized the boat and the operator as he passed very close to where they had concealed themselves. They waited for several hours until the boat returned and stopped it just inside the mouth of the river, discovering a total of 405 horseshoe crabs in the boat. The harvester did not possess a commercial horseshoe crab permit, and therefore was allowed to possess only five horseshoe crabs. The harvester was ticketed for not having a crab permit, illegal commercialization of wildlife (based on the commercial take of over the limit for horseshoe crabs) and NYS Navigation Law violations. The horseshoe crabs were all released back into the river.Frogs and Turtles - Cayuga CountyOn the evening of June 4, ECO Mark Colesante was on patrol at the Port Byron DEC boat launch site to check on fishing activity. Colesante observed a man loading a canoe onto a pick-up truck and asked the man if he had been fishing. The man replied that he and his son had not been fishing, but instead, they had been frog hunting on a back channel of the Seneca River. The man proceeded to show Colesante eight dead bullfrogs in a cooler in the back of his truck. Colesante also observed three live painted turtles crawling around in the bed of the pick-up. The man explained that his son wanted to keep the turtles as pets. ECO Colesante informed the man that frog season does not open until June 15 and there is no season on painted turtles because they are protected. He went on to further explain that frogs are currently in the process of mating and turtles are currently laying eggs. ECO Colesante issued the man a ticket for taking frogs out of season and issued him a warning notice for taking the protected turtles. The frogs were taken as evidence and the three turtles were returned to the Seneca River.Eagle Rescue - Columbia CountyECO saving eagleECO Davey capturing an injured Bald EagleOn June 4, ECO James Davey received a complaint of an injured Bald Eagle on an island in the Hudson River in Germantown. ECO Davey and ECO Anthony Glorioso responded by boat and located the injured eagle running through thick brush on the island, clearly unable to take flight. The ECOs were able to move the eagle out of the thick bushes and onto the shoreline, where they would have a better chance of catching it. ECO Davey used a catch pole and was able to capture the distressed bird. The officers worked together to secure the eagle and transport it back to Catskill. The bird was taken to a wildlife rehabilitator, where it was found to have lost its primary flying feathers and was suffering from pneumonia. The eagle is expected to make a full recovery once her feathers regrow and she recuperates from pneumonia. The eagle will be released back into the area where she was captured.Black Cloud From Burning Tires, Old Roof Shingles - Orleans CountyOn June 5, while on patrol in the Town of Gaines, ECO Vern Fonda received a radio call from the Orleans County Sheriff's dispatch about a possible garbage fire behind a local residence. ECO Fonda responded to the area and observed a large plume of black smoke coming from the woods behind the house. ECO Fonda walked into the woods, where he found a man tending to a pile of burning tires. ECO Fonda asked what he was doing and the man said, "I'm in trouble, aren't I?" Due to the heavy winds blowing and more complaints being called in, ECO Fonda advised dispatchers to have the Albion and Carlton Fire Departments respond and extinguish the fire. Once the fire was out, ECO Fonda was able to observe that the pile of tires was on top of a pile of shingles. Not coincidentally, the residence also had a brand new roof. The homeowner was charged with unpermitted open burning and unlawful disposal of solid waste.Subway Shellfish Seizure - Queens CountyWhile on patrol during the evening of Monday, June 6, ECO John Gates received a call from an NYPD Transit Lieutenant who advised that he had witnessed three individuals with large bags of clams entering the train platform at Beach Channel station in Queens. Officer Gates asked that NYPD Transit detain the subjects, and they were subsequently stopped at the Howard Beach Station. Officer Gates and two NYPD officers questioned the individuals, who admitted they had dug the clams from under the South Channel Bridge in Beach Channel. A count of all the clams found a total 1,423 littleneck clams, with 147 of them being undersized. The illegal clammers were each issued summonses for Taking Shellfish from Uncertified Waters and Failure to Possess a Shellfish Diggers Permit, both misdemeanors.A Bear Rescue - Rockland Countybear rescueECO Tom Koepf and Suffern Police Officers with the tranquilized bearOn June 6, ECO Tom Koepf was contacted to respond to a nuisance black bear creating problems in the village of Suffern. Upon his arrival, Koepf observed a 90-pound black bear approximately 25 feet up a tree near the shoulder of a road. DEC's Region 3 office was contacted for assistance and ECO Koepf kept onlookers away from the bear until Biologist Matt Merchant arrived. Merchant, with a team of two wildlife technicians, was able to safely tranquilize the bear. Ear tags were secured to the bear and several measurements were taken for data collection. The bear was released in the Catskill Park later that day, where it can hopefully live free of human interaction.If 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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