



NJDEP Fish and Wildlife
Monthly Highlights
Bureau of Law Enforcement
April 21, 2024 to May 20, 2024

Frank Panico, Chief
Jason Snellbaker, Deputy Chief
Douglas Applegate, Deputy Chief
Joseph Soell, Captain - Administration
Vacant, Lieutenant - Administration
Robert Driscoll, Lieutenant - Training

Northern Region (908) 735-8240
Joseph Kuechler, Captain
Jordan Holmes, Lieutenant (District 1)
Brice Paey, Lieutenant (District 2)
Hannah Koch, Agency Services Representative

Central Region (609) 259-2120
Linda Quirk, Captain
Andrew Riviello, Lieutenant (District 3)
Sean McManus, Lieutenant (District 4)
Vacant, Technical Assistant 2

Southern Region (856) 629-0555
Paul Toppin, Captain
Zane Batten, Lieutenant (District 5)
Craig James, Lieutenant (District 6)
Sue Canale, Agency Services Representative

Marine Region (609) 748-2050
Brian Scott, Captain
Chris Moscatiello, Lieutenant (District 7)
Ryan Harp, Lieutenant (District 8)
Chris Petrucci, Lieutenant (District 9)
Noreen White, Agency Services Representative

Conservation Officers report a total of 7,509.4 hours of duty (7,586.2 - 2023) These hours are charged to the following categories of duty:

	2024	2023
Law Enforcement	5,387.0	5,052.1
Fishing	1,872.9	1,787.3
Marine Resources	1,390.6	1,478.3
Hunting	675.8	866.3
Deer Hunting	8.0	2.3
Trapping	29.5	8.5
Wildlife Mgt. Areas	446.0	324.9
NG & Endangered Species	100.9	249.0
Court	69.0	46.8
Regional Meetings	108.7	0.0
Pollution Investigation	34.4	23.0
Training	700.4	465.0
Other Law Enforcement	839.3	687.6
Administration	1,893.3	2,107.0
Fish Management	0.0	0.5

Wildlife Management	27.1	74.8
Information & Education	41.5	56.0
Bear Control	1.5	8.0
Bear Patrol & Invest	22.1	53.8

During patrols, officers performed 3567 field inspections (3 7 2 2 - 2023) of hunters, fishermen or trappers and the resultant caseload is tabulated.

Law Enforcement Regions

	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Marine</u>	<u>Admin</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2023</u>
Summonses Issued	119	94	32	57	0	302	254
Criminal Arrests	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Warnings Issued	11	5	0	3	0	19	17
Bear Feeding Warns Issued	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

Field Inspections By Region

Administration	0
Northern Region	800
Central Region	900
Southern Region	384
Marine Region	1483
Total	3567

Field Inspections By Activity

Hunters	99
Freshwater Anglers	1480
Trappers	3
Commercial Fishermen	30
Marine Rec. Anglers	1296
WMA non hunt/fish	233
Other	111

Listed below are the types of summonses issued:

	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Marine</u>	<u>Admin</u>
Fishing	76	48	22	0	0
Hunting	6	0	4	0	0
Waterfowl Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Deer Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Trapping	19	0	0	0	0
WMA	4	38	3	0	0
Striped Bass	11	0	0	0	0
Shellfish	0	0	0	0	0
Marine-Commercial	0	0	0	0	0
Marine-Recreational	0	0	0	55	0
Nongame & Exotic	4	5	0	0	0
Title 58	0	0	0	0	0
Title 39	0	2	1	0	0
Other	5	1	2	0	0
Bear Hunting	0	0	0	0	0
Bear Feeding	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Striped Bass	0	0	0	2	0
Title 2C	2	0	0	0	0
Totals	127	94	32	57	0



Penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Police Officers: \$14,946.00

Call volume (reports of violations, general questions, requests for assistance, etc.) received at region offices:

North	172
Central	115
South	134
Marine	125
Total Calls Received	546

Bureau of Law Enforcement personnel status as of May 20, 2024

Administration - 8

1 Chief
2 Deputy Chiefs
1 CPO II Training
2 CPO I Training
1 CPO III Admin
0 CPO II Admin
1 CPO I Admin

Northern Region - 12

1 CPO III
2 CPO II
8 CPO I
1 ASR

Central Region - 8

1 CPO III
2 CPO II
5 CPO I
0 TA 2

Southern Region - 11

1 CPO III
2 CPO II
7 CPO I
1 ASR

Marine Region - 14

1 CPO III
3 CPO II
9 CPO I
1 ASR

Special Investigations Unit - 3

1 CPO III
1 CPO II
1 CPO I

Total Employees: 56

Northern Region Highlights

On May 7, 2024, CPOs A. Merritt and N. Hughes received a complaint of individuals fishing with bait in the catch and release area of the Ken Lockwood Gorge, located in Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County. The CPOs observed four individuals fishing with bait in the northern end and upon inspection, each fisherman was in possession of Powerbait and barbed hooks. CPOs determined that one of the fishermen was in possession of three trout and another possessed one trout. Two of the fishermen did not possess a valid 2024 fishing license or trout stamp. A total of ten summonses were issued for the following violations: fishing without first procuring a valid 2024 fishing license, fishing for trout without a valid trout stamp, possession of trout in a catch and release area, and possession/use of bait in a catch and release area.

In the early spring of 2023, CPOs A. Sutton and C. Sikora received a complaint regarding six full beaver carcasses that were dumped in a swamp in Wantage Township, Sussex County. The CPOs investigated

the matter but had no further information or suspects at the time. In March of 2024, photographs, taken the prior spring, of an individual wearing waders and walking through the swamp and their vehicle, were discovered. After several weeks of trying to identify the individual and vehicle, a suspect was identified. On April 21, 2024, CPOs A. Merritt and N. Hughes interviewed the suspect who confessed to trapping between ten and twelve beavers in March and April of 2023. The suspect also admitted that he did not remove anything from the beavers and dumped them in the swamp. The individual received a total of nineteen summonses for trapping without first procuring a valid 2023 trapping license, six counts of taking beaver closed season, six counts of taking beaver without a valid permit, and six counts of possession of untagged/unregistered beaver.

On the evening of the opening day of the spring wild turkey season, CPO A. Merritt received information that an individual harvested a wild turkey and had then discarded it near the property line of a neighboring property in Frelinghuysen Township, Warren County. The informant was able to capture photographs of the suspect driving a UTV to the area and then discard the turkey carcass. The informant suspected the individual to be his neighbor at the adjacent property. The following morning, the suspect returned and retrieved the turkey carcass from the location. On April 23, 2023, CPOs A. Merritt and N. Hughes arrived at the suspect's residence. Upon walking to the front door, multiple wild turkey wing feathers were observed on the front lawn. The suspect was interviewed and admitted to harvesting a wild turkey the prior day in Zone 2, even though they only possessed a Zone 5 permit. The suspect also admitted to failing to register the turkey by 3:00 pm on date of harvest and failing to complete the turkey harvest tag. The individual was issued the following summonses: hunt turkey wrong zone, fail to fill out harvest tag immediately upon killing, and fail to register turkey by 3:00 PM on date of harvest.

On Sunday, May 12th, CPO C. Sikora was patrolling the Musconetcong River and observed two individuals throwing a cast net. CPO C. Sikora stopped to conduct a fishing inspection and found that neither individual had a 2024 fishing license. CPO C. Sikora also located one trout that had been captured by the net and issued summonses for fishing without a license, possession of trout without a trout stamp, and illegal use of a cast net in freshwater.

Central Region Highlights

District 3 officers have been frequently patrolling the Delaware River by both boat and land during this spring's fish migration. Multiple summonses have been issued for possession of Alewife / Blueback herring during the emergency closure, possession of short sized walleye, and fishing without a license.

CPO Bickerton concluded an investigation into an East Brunswick property that is housing numerous exotic birds along with domestic animals in conditions that had raised concerns with witnesses. During the inspection four dead eastern box turtles were found in a tank. The owner of the property was issued summonses for possession of non-game and exotic animals without a permit and advised of the husbandry requirements and process to obtain a permit for the exotic birds.

Southern Region Highlights

Lieutenants James and Batten along with CPO Fox inspected a fisherman who was found to be in illegal possession of alewife (herring). The inspection took place in early May along the Maurice River in Millville after a complaint came from Trenton Dispatch. CPO Fox watched a group of people fishing from a floating dock and observed one angler fishing in a manner that led the officers to believe he was



jigging for herring. Several fish that appeared to be herring were also caught and kept. The officers made contact and three individuals of the group were issued summonses for Fishing w/out a License, including the suspected herring fisherman. He was also issued a summons requiring a court appearance after the officers counted 33 alewife in his possession.

CPO Fox appeared at the Delsea Regional High School (Gloucester County) for a presentation to their Criminal Justice class. CPO Fox outlined duties and responsibilities of a Conservation Police Officer, requirements for employment and the varied roles carried out daily. The class was engaged, and the presentation was well received.

CPO Fox represented the bureau at Elk Township's Law Enforcement Day. This event's venue is like a Nation Night Out and is co-hosted by the Elk Twp. Police Department and elementary school. It is an all-day event for the school children to interact with LE officers from several different jurisdictions. CPO Fox worked a table and explained the duties and importance of Conservation Police and the laws that we enforce. He also had wildlife displays, demonstrated the deer decoy and had furbearer hides for the youths to feel and guess.

After returning home from patrol, Lt. James received an illegal fishing complaint from Trenton Dispatch. The complainant reported three fishermen keeping over the daily limit of freshwater fish at the Lake Lenape Spillway in Hamilton Twp., Atlantic County. Lt. James responded and began observations of the suspected fishermen. After a few minutes of watching the suspects catching and keeping multiple fish in rapid succession, Lt. James inspected the three fishermen. Two of the fishermen collectively were found to possess 120 White Perch over the daily limit. Both were issued summonses for taking over the 25 fish bag limit in fresh water.

On his way home from patrol, CPO Malinski encountered a large police presence in his rural Dorothy, Atlantic County neighborhood. CPO Malinski advised Lt. James that there was an active search for a senior turkey hunter that was missing for nearly 6 hours. Both arrived at the command center set up at the Dorothy Fire Department to assist. The large response led by the NJSP involved multiple agencies including the use of drones and K-9 teams. Prior to receiving a missing person complaint, the NJSP had been investigating reports of an individual in camouflage with a gun wandering through yards. Because of this each search and rescue team were required to be accompanied by a uniformed law enforcement officer. The CPO's each set out with a team and the hunter was located just before dark. Missing for nearly 10 hours with temperatures over 90 degrees, the out-of-state hunter was found dehydrated and confused but otherwise o.k.

CPOs Chillari and Malinski obtained information related to the dumping of landscaping debris on the Peaslee WMA in Vineland, Cumberland County. Both officers conducted an interview which resulted in a full admission of dumping landscaping materials at 2 AM. As a result of the investigation the accused was informed on where to take landscaping debris in the future and issued summonses related to the dumping of solid waste, discarding refuse on a state WMA, and entering a state WMA after hours. Southern Region Officers have taken excessive complaints in the Cumberland County area of Millville regarding fishermen harvesting over the limit, fishing too close to the fish ladder at Union Lake and fishing with improper equipment and licenses. During and evening patrol Lieutenant Batten inspected several fishermen on the Maurice River targeting white perch. The daily bag limit for white perch in fresh water remains at 25 fish per person. Two fishermen were inspected and found to possess one hundred and twenty-two fish more than the daily bag limit. Both fishermen were issued a court



mandatory summons for sixty-one fish the over the daily bag limit. Several individuals in the same group were issued summons for fishing in fresh water without a valid fishing license.

Marine Region Highlights

CPO Tomlin charged a commercial fishing vessel operator after ascertaining violations against New Jersey's Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License. New Jersey's Possession in Excess of Daily Limit License allows commercial fishing vessels to enter New Jersey's ports and exceed trip limits with summer flounder and/or black sea bass during open and closed seasons. The license also allows vessels that are not permitted to land summer flounder and black sea bass in New Jersey to enter port with and offload other species like scup and squid while retaining summer flounder and black sea bass on board for sale in other states. The vessel operator must notify and declare the species and quantity of fish along with their intentions prior to entering State waters. The vessel must be properly licensed in the intended landing state, and the fish must be lawfully landed and sold in the intended state.

The vessel in question did not have a New Jersey black sea bass landing permit, and New Jersey's season was closed. The operator landed a trip limit of scup in Cape May and declared his intention for 1,000 pounds of black sea bass onboard the vessel to be landed and sold in Virginia.

When the vessel left New Jersey, it immediately went back out scup fishing and returned to Cape May a couple of days later and offloaded additional scup with the original 1000 pounds of black sea bass remaining on board as well as an additional 400 pounds of black sea bass intended for Virginia. The vessel then went back out fishing again and when it returned to Cape May a third time to offload scup, it returned without any of the black sea bass on board.

Upon interview, the operator admitted that it was not financially beneficial for him to transport only 1,400 pounds of black sea bass to Virginia, so he discarded the fish at sea. The operator was charged with unloading fisheries products from the vessel without the prior approval of the department within a seven-day period from the initial offload and failing to provide records documenting the sale of the excess black sea bass to a dealer in Virginia.