

Officers Rescue Trapped Man from Vehicle

Marine Resources Conservation Enforcement Officers Jason Downey and John Knapp were recently honored by Barnett Lawley, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, for the officers' heroic role in the rescue of an accident victim from Mobile Bay.

Downey and Knapp had just wrapped up a shift of duty at 11 p.m. during roe mullet season and were coming off the Dauphin Island Bridge when they noticed something out of place. They spotted a dim red light and then another. They quickly realized there was a submerged vehicle that had careened over the seawall on Highway 193.

The female driver was outside the vehicle, which was upside down in chest-deep water. She relayed the fact her male companion was trapped inside the Dodge Durango.

Downey and Knapp shed their equipment belts and plunged into

the frigid water. They managed to get the rear hatch open, but still could not see the trapped occupant. Downey finally spotted the 20-year-old male's hand sticking out under the console and Knapp spotted the trapped passenger's legs.


The officers then convinced the passenger to hold his breath and

that whole cab would have been full of water."

Lawley said presenting the certificates of appreciation to the two officers at the Alabama Conservation Advisory Board meeting recently was the least the department could do.

"We appreciate all that these officers do," Lawley said. "This gives us the opportunity to recognize the sacrifices and work these officers do on a daily basis. We don't do this enough. Hopefully, we'll be able to recognize accomplishments like this more often." Major John T. Jenkins, Chief of Enforcement with Marine Resources, said the response by Downey and Knapp is an indication of the quality of the department's enforcement personnel.

"You can't train or supervise people and make them just care – to care and do the

right thing," Jenkins said. "This is just one incident, but our officers stop and help people all the time. It's outside the framework of their jobs, but they do it because they care about the community and we are part of the community." 



DAVID RAINER

Left-right: Marine Resources Division Director Vern Minton, Officer John Knapp, Officer Jason Downey, Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley and Marine Resources Enforcement Chief John T. Jenkins.

go limp so they could pull him out. "We pulled him under the console under the water and yanked him out," Downey said. "They were lucky," Knapp added. "If that cab had crushed down a little more,



Marine Police Officer Lauded for Rescue Effort



DAVID RAINER

Left-right: Marine Police Captain Bob Huffaker, Sergeant Ronald J. Harris and Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley.

Marine Police Sergeant Ronald J. Harris was recently recognized for saving the lives of two boaters. After stopping a boat on Lake Harding for a safety inspection, Sgt. Harris issued a citation to the driver for a safety violation. After the citation was issued, the boat operator took off at a high rate of speed and struck the wake of a passing boat. This caused the violator's boat to overturn and ejected both the driver and passenger.

Sgt. Harris rushed to the scene and rescued both victims. In addition, he recovered their boat and towed it to the landing. He assisted in righting the boat and helped load it on the trailer. Both victims refused medical assistance and left Lake Harding.

A commendation from Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley was presented to Sgt. Harris to thank him for his rescue efforts and community service. Sgt. Harris is active in his community in the Auburn/Opelika area by serving as a volunteer CPR and hunter education instructor.

Elrod Honored by National Wild Turkey Federation

Conservation Enforcement Officer Greg Elrod of DeKalb County has been named Alabama Wildlife Enforcement Officer of the year by the National Wild Turkey Federation.

According to Rob Keck of the NWTF, "Trap and transfer is one part of the success story of the wild turkey. Protection from poaching is the other. Wildlife officers played a huge role in the comeback of the wild turkey. This is our way of saying thanks to those officers."

Elrod has worked for the state of Alabama since 1996 in various positions including park ranger at Guntersville State Park and Marine Police officer. He has worked as a Conservation Enforcement Officer with the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries since 2002.

Lt. Sammy Ransum praised Officer Elrod's work ethic. "Officer Elrod is a dedicated law enforcement professional that is always available to assist the public, his fellow officers and all enforcement agencies."



Left-right: Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries District II Supervisor Captain Fred Bain, National Wild Turkey Federation representative Harlan Starr and Officer Greg Elrod.

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Lifetime Freshwater Fishing Licenses Awarded to 18 Alabama Youth

At a special ceremony at Oak Mountain State Park, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources awarded lifetime freshwater fishing licenses to 18 randomly selected youth who participated in the 2006 Oak Mountain State Park Expo Youth Fishing Event held in September 2006. The lifetime freshwater fishing license (\$150 value) allows anglers to fish in Alabama for the remainder of their lives even if they move out of state.


During the ceremony, Assistant Commissioner Hobbie Sealy, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Chief of Fisheries Stan Cook, Alabama Bass Federation, Inc. President Al Redding, and Alabama Power General Manager of Environmental Affairs Willard Bowers presented the following young anglers their licenses:



REBECCA LEIGH WHITE

Seven of the 2006 winners of Lifetime Freshwater Fishing Licenses include: (l-r) Andrew Jackson Allison, Birmingham; James Gardner, Calera; Sydney Acker, Alabaster; Ian Underwood, Montevallo; Brianna Thompson, McCalla; Christian Hayes, McCalla; and Jordan Huffaker, Talladega.

Sydney Acker	Alabaster
Andrew Jackson Allison	Birmingham
Benjamin Barton	Helena
Bryan Beebe	Calera
Anthony Boyd	Birmingham
James Gardner	Calera
Kelsey Gardner	Calera
Christian Hayes	McCalla
Will Hersey	Birmingham
Jordan Huffaker	Talladega
Madalyn Long	Montgomery
Zachary Richardson	Saraland
Morgan Sellers	Alpine
John Shaffet	Hayden
Brianna Thompson	McCalla
Ian Underwood	Montevallo
Alexander Waller	Midfield
Brittany Weeks	Gulf Shores

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources offers several different Lifetime Licenses including hunting, freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing, a combination of all three, or combinations of any two. The Lifetime License fees are held in the interest bearing Alabama Game and Fish Endowment Fund where only the interest earned can be used to help fund the Department. All ADCNR licenses can be purchased on the Department's Web site at www.outdooralabama.com. 




Trail Named after Gulf State Park Superintendent



The Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail sign is unveiled.

Natural beauty and quality recreational trails have been in the works for several years now in Orange Beach, Alabama. Linking major sidewalk projects to the Gulf State Park and its wooded, scenic trails is now a reality. Several miles of biking and walking paths were dedicated in a ribbon cutting in March. The City of Orange Beach City Council joined Mayor Pete Blalock for a special called council meeting nearly two miles in the woodlands as they adopted a resolution naming the “Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail” after Gulf State Park Superintendent Hugh Branyon.

Mr. Branyon has served for over three decades and continues to lead the park in pursuing full recovery from Ivan and into the future. Joining in the ceremony were Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley and Mark Easterwood, director of the State Parks Division. A special ribbon cutting marked the official opening of the new picnic pavilion and comfort station at the 1.7 mile mark of the Catman Road phase. Immediately following was a special unveiling of a cedar sign naming the Branyon BackCountry Trail, which will eventually mark the entrances to the landmark in the City of Orange Beach.


Kudos from Mayor Blalock went out to Branyon and his staff of Gulf State Park as well as to Phillip West, Coastal Resource Manager for the City of Orange Beach whose dedication to the project and pursuit of grants and partnerships made the trail system a reality for the Alabama Gulf Coast. Congratulations to Mr. Hugh Branyon and to Phillip West on this outstanding project for all to enjoy! 



Wild azalea

Visit Chewacla State Park

Chewacla State Park, located in Auburn, Alabama, is the perfect place to visit in the spring. You will find a quiet place to picnic, camp, fish, or take a leisurely walk on one of the hiking trails. Take a walk along the sparkling clear waters of Chewacla Creek and Moores Mill Creek where you can see an abundance of wildlife and spring flowering plants and trees. The best time to see the flowering plants is from late February through the month of April. Native azaleas, redbuds and dogwoods are just a few of the plants you’ll see.

Chewacla’s 696 scenic acres are just off I-85 near Auburn. Park facilities include a 26-acre lake, rental boats, swimming area, playgrounds, hiking trails, a modern campground and picnic areas with tables, grills and shelters. Newly renovated cabins offer an additional lodging choice. 

See what nature has to offer at Alabama State Parks by visiting www.alapark.com