

# AFTER THE BADGE

**A**fter almost 37 years as a Rhode Island Environmental Police Officer, I began to think about my retirement and what I would like to do to fill my days. Retirement from law enforcement can bring anxiety, but it can also open doors to new opportunities where officers can apply their skills developed from experiences and training that they received over their career. Some of my favorite training and duties from over the years included boating safety education, crime scene investigation, speaking at schools about conservation law enforcement and training new officers. I was active in our officer association serving as the treasurer, qualified as a field training officer, completed a master's degree, and prepared and presented our cases in both the criminal and administrative courts.

As retirement loomed, I knew I wanted to stay active and I was ready to do something other than law enforcement. I wanted to share my love of the outdoors and wildlife and build on the great outreach programs that I had enjoyed throughout my career with others of all generations. Coupled with the many injured animal calls, I had already done some volunteering at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI) over the years at their Raptor Weekend, helping to educate the public about local birds of prey. I enrolled in two online classes through Cornell University on Environmental Education to help me gain knowledge regarding environmental education foundations and the specific philosophy unique to this career. I completed these prior to retirement



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and applied to be an environmental educator.

That was five years ago. Since then, I was hired as a part-time environmental educator with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. I've been leading programs for people of all ages to learn more about our nature and wildlife. Some of these programs cover outdoor field explorations, birds of prey, field & forest ecology, and native reptiles in a wide variety of settings, from classrooms and libraries to Audubon wildlife refuges. Environmental educators have a vast knowledge of a variety of animals and animal behavior. It didn't hurt that, as a game warden, my response to the many animal calls prepared me. I was ready to tackle anything, from snakes and bears to alligators and eagles. The skills, knowledge, and experience from my days as an officer continue to serve me as an educator. I take great pride and joy in sharing my knowledge and appreciation of the outdoors, local wildlife and, especially, Rhode Island's birds of prey.

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