

January 2019.

From an email to Denise Jester:

Attached is a picture of Leo in his ballistic vest which you and your organization helped provide. I just picked it up yesterday. We ordered them from the same place that State Police gets theirs.

Thank you again so much for your support. I can honestly say that I don't know if we would have been getting these vests if it wasn't for your support. If you need anything don't hesitate to give me or John a call.

Trevor

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From: The Cape Gazette, January 8, 2019 by Nick Roth

(Scroll to the last page to see a nice mention of BHAD)

<https://www.capegazette.com/article/video-k-9-reports-duty-cape-henlopen-state-park/171683#.XDtm9spg2J8>.email



Cpl. John Lister of the state parks division of Delaware Natural Resources Police walks the department's new K-9, Vos, on the beach at The Point at Cape Henlopen State Park. NICK ROTH PHOTOS

Nick Roth

January 8, 2019

Vos is always on the alert.

New state parks K-9 Vos has an intimidating look and a bark to match.

The 3-year-old German shepherd graduated from the police academy Dec. 6 and is now on duty, covering state parks in Sussex and Kent counties. He and his handler, Cpl. John Lister, will primarily cover Cape Henlopen State Park and Delaware Seashore State Park.

In early August, Lister was part of a contingent from Delaware that traveled to Vohne Liche Kennels in Denver, Ind., to select seven dogs for Delaware State Police, Natural Resources Police and Newark Police.

The state parks division came back with two dogs who started at Delaware State Police Academy in September. Training involved two eight-hour days and two 12-hour days each week for three months, including night sessions and day sessions.



“It’s to get the dog used to working at night,” Lister said. “Obviously, it’s a different sight picture for the dog. The night changes things. It’s good to get that training in.”

Before entering the academy, Vos was considered green, meaning he had no training. He knew how to sit, but no other commands, Lister said. The key, he said, is repetition.

“It can be challenging at times, but I can say 100 percent it was the best three months of my career,” Lister said. “At the end of the day, you’re just working with the dog ... and that’s very fun.”

Lister and Vos will return to the police academy in fall 2019 for another three-month training session, where Vos will learn narcotics detection.

Lister said there have been a number of drug-related incidents at downstate parks over the last few years, and Vos will help in curbing that activity. “We’re not checking people at the gates for drugs or anything like that,” he said. “If at a normal car stop I’m getting indicators where I would normally take the stop further, then I’m able to use the dog in those situations.”

Vos is now adept at scent tracking, and he can be used to search for missing persons, track suspects, and search buildings and outdoor areas. “The day-to-day is just going on patrol in these great natural resource areas and open spaces,” Lister said. “Our day is just like being a police officer anywhere else. It’s just the area we’re policing is [state parks].”

Cape Henlopen State Park and Delaware Seashore State Park are two of the busiest parks in Delaware, particularly in the summer. Lister says the biggest issue he deals with is speeding. Most of the roads in Cape Henlopen State Park do not have shoulders, and many families walk and ride bicycles on the roads.

“There’s a lot of wildlife in the park,” he said. “If someone is speeding and a deer runs out into the road, they may swerve and hit someone.”

The pure volume of people at the coastal state parks in the summer creates many potential problems, he said. So whether patrolling the drive-on beaches or monitoring traffic flow on the park’s roads, he said, the K-9 always has the potential to be called into action.

To prepare for a K-9, DNREC purchased and equipped an SUV for Lister. The biggest difference, he said, is the K-9 compartment. Windows are tinted to keep the temperature lower and the vehicle is equipped with a sensor to constantly monitor the temperature inside the vehicle. If it goes above 87 degrees, an alarm will go off, rear windows will drop and a fan will kick on. At the same time, Lister will receive a page to alert him if he is away from the vehicle, such as at a court appearance.

The SUV is also equipped with an automatic popper, where Lister can remotely open the door to release Vos. It would be particularly helpful in a situation where Lister needs immediate help.

Lister and Vos were part of a patrol class of seven K-9 teams. Also in the class were the state parks division’s other duo of officer Trevor Ditmore and his dog Leo. They will be covering New Castle County, and will be visible at large events upstate.

The state parks division was the only arm of Natural Resources Police without a K-9. The Environmental Crimes Unit has one dog, and the Division of Fish and Wildlife has two dogs, each specializing in search and rescue and wildlife detection.

Lister said the typical career for a K-9 is seven to nine years.

“Just like a human, medical issues may require them to retire early or some may stay on longer,” he said. “It really depends on the health of the dog.”

He said as Vos gets older he’ll look for signs showing a decline in performance. Upon retirement, Vos will stay with Lister and become a pet for the rest of his life.

“We want him to have a good retired life,” he said. “He will have earned it just riding around with me every day.”

Three groups have already donated to supplement the cost of the K-9s. The Friends of Cape Henlopen State Park offered a donation of \$2,500, the Blue Heron Agility Association of Delaware donated \$2,000 toward ballistic vests for each dog, and Delaware Mobile Surf Fishermen donated \$1,000.

Delaware State Parks established a GoFundMe campaign to support the program. Anyone interested in donating can go to www.gofundme.com/support-new-de-state-park-k9039s, or donations can be sent directly to Delaware Community Foundation, c/o Delaware State Parks Fund, P.O. Box 1636, Wilmington, DE 19899.

Lister said he feels privileged to be selected as a K-9 officer.

“There are not a lot of police officers in the country, let alone in this state,” he said. “There are far fewer that get to be K-9 officers. We get to work and communicate with a different species and build this connection with each other. At the very least, I have someone to talk to who won’t talk back to me.”