

Safety and Heroism



ANTHONY WAIT
Wildlife Resources Commission

As a Wildlife Conservation Specialist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, Tony Wait is responsible for improving fish and wildlife habitat for all endangered and game species in western North Carolina. He also is tasked with providing hunting opportunities for sportsmen, assisting in research and survey efforts, and assisting in restoring or improving native habitats.

Part of the latter includes monitoring the arrivals and departures of nature enthusiasts. Common sights include processions of tractors, sports cars, bicyclists, and trucks bearing bear hunters, as well as dangerously slow-driving flatlanders unfamiliar with the twists of mountain roads. While traveling on the very curvy Highway 209 in Madison County, Wait noticed that a vehicle had gone off the road in a blind curve and landed turned on its side in a ditch. Wait put on his hazard lights and stop, safely blocking the two-lane highway. A convoy of motorcycles also had to stop and Wait instructed a few of the motorcyclists to help with traffic control. With no cell phone access at the crash site, he asked a bystander to go to the nearest home and call 911.

While awaiting support, Wait noticed smoke coming from the vehicle and jumped into action. One by one, he pulled out three children and their grandmother. Fortunately, no one was badly injured, but they were frightened by their experience. Though never trained or assigned as a member of a rescue squad, he unofficially became a first responder that day. He went above and beyond the scope of his normal duties, preventing what could have been a life-threatening disaster. By positioning himself in harm's way to secure the scene, Wait courageously provided aid and comfort to those directly involved, and allowed other travelers to continue their journey without further incident.

