

Police investigating thefts

By Brendan McNally
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A string of six thefts that occurred during vehicle break-ins ended Monday evening when State College Police officers arrested a man in connection with the incidents during a routine traffic stop.

The six thefts — all of which were reported between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday — targeted unlocked cars sitting in the driveways of homes in the Highlands neighborhood, police said.

Police said they found the suspect when conducting a routine traffic stop on the 200 block of Easterly Parkway.

Further examination of the vehicle — which had more than one passenger — led police to obtain a search warrant and find the goods that were reported stolen earlier in the day, police said.

Police did not release any identifying information of the man who was arrested or any identifying information of any of the passengers in the vehicle.

Police Sgt. Keith Robb said people shouldn't leave anything valuable in their cars — especially wallets — and that locking car doors deters thefts like the ones that occurred Monday.

"This is a common crime in State College," Robb said. "Don't leave valuables in your car and lock your doors. Why give them anything?"

A theft at 3:31 p.m. in the parking lot of an apartment at 818 Bellaire Ave. was the single biggest theft of the streak — a GPS and CDs valued at about \$780 were stolen from an unlocked vehicle, police said.

The first theft of \$25 in cash occurred at 8:10 a.m. Monday at 425 E. Hamilton Ave., when an unlocked car parked in a driveway was broken into, police said.

The thefts continued at 1233 Garner St., where police said a debit card was stolen from another unlocked car at 8:17 a.m.

Vehicles at 1233 University Drive, 524 Garner St., and 171 Legion Drive were broken into between the hours of 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. Owners of the vehicles reported that a day planner was stolen from one car and some change was stolen from the other, police said.

The final theft occurred at 4:08 p.m. at 541 Easterly Pkwy., police said. Small miscellaneous items were stolen from the unlocked vehicle, police said.

The suspect's vehicle was stopped three blocks away from the final theft, police said.

Police did not say exactly for what traffic violation they pulled over the man who was arrested.

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'Furry friends' increasing their presence

By David Bodin
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Penn State's campus attracts more than just human visitors and residents.

More furry and feather critters are calling State College home each year as the campus continues to undergo what university officials call a cosmetic beautification process.

Penn State's Office of Physical Plant (OPP) workers are working to make the campus an inviting resort for State College woodland critters — like the residential ducks, squirrels, rabbits, and crows, OPP spokesman Paul Ruskin said.

Ruskin said landscape crews welcome the wildlife population.

"Nature was at this site for millions of years before Penn State," Ruskin said. "We need to share this sight with our furry friends."

Anyone who has strolled down Old Main's interweaving paths or lounged on the lawns may have noticed the duck flocks nearby.

Ruskin said Penn State has attracted more ducks than in the past, which has provided entertainment for some nature admirers.

But this attraction has created some concern for OPP, he said, because utility crews are often called to rescue ducks in peril.

"If you see a duck in need, call OPP," Ruskin said. "OPP has a heart. We provide ducking rescue services because we care."

The high duck proliferation has caused some challenges on campus and in town, university spokeswoman Lisa Powers said.

"As ducks cross College Avenue, [they can] potentially cause safety issues related to traffic flow," Powers said.

Other forms of wildlife, like



Lynn McGowan/Collegian

Rabbits are only one of several animals making Penn State their home.

skunks and deer, chipmunks, raccoons and opossums are continually encountered on campus, Powers said.

Chipmunks often chew through wires, she added.

And some woodland residents are becoming campus pests. Ruskin said they cause problems that are unsightly, unsanitary and smelly.

"Crows are unwelcome visitors," Ruskin said. "We've asked them to leave with flare-guns and noisemakers. They create sanitation problems for the campus."

Dana Ray (senior-English) said she loves the ducks, but agrees that campus crows are nuisances because they often wake her up early in the morning.

Unlike Ruskin, who welcomes residential squirrels, Ray said the

squirrel population should be greatly reduced.

"Squirrels tried to eat my backpack the other day," she said.

But the squirrels can be credited for contributing to Penn State's variety of trees and vegetation.

Squirrels started many of Penn State's tree populations on campus hundreds of years ago, Ruskin said.

"A lot of planting was done by our furry friends," he said.

In appreciation for the squirrels who helped create the older existing trees on campus, State College inadvertently grants wildlife a safe place to roost and romp.

"Let's face it, campuses are nice safe havens for wildlife with few predators," Powers said. "Who can blame them for wanting to live on a college campus?"



Steph Witt/Collegian

Construction for the Fraser Centre could begin as soon as October.

Fraser begins plans

By Paul Osolnick
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A potential start date for construction on the \$50 million Fraser Centre downtown condominium and entertainment complex has been proposed to the borough and could move plans forward.

Jack Kay, president of Susquehanna Real Estate (SRE), presented a plan for the 12-story building set to include three floors of cinema, two floors of office space, two floors of hotel rooms and three floors of residential condominiums to the State College Borough Council Monday night. The plan would allow for construction to begin in October, Kay said.

Kay said the presentation was designed to provide a general overview of where the project stands and explain why construction on the building has been delayed since the project's inception in 2007.

The Fraser Centre could be completed by June 2012, Kay said.

"We're still feeling the effects of all this and we're working through it," Kay said. "We are in this together. It's a partnership of entities that are trying to accomplish a very difficult but very worthwhile goal."

Downtown State College Improvement District (DSCID) Director Jody Alessandrine said that while the plan to build the Fraser Centre was made several years ago, construction was delayed because SRE had to receive funding for the theatre

from the state's "redevelopment assistance capital program" which took 12 months to receive.

Alessandrine said that in the period of time SRE was waiting for state funding, the economy went into a recession, making the residential sections of the proposed building harder to develop.

Kay said about 160,000 of the total 225,000 square feet has received commitments from renters. But the plan requires a commitment for 80 percent of the entire building's available space, he said.

The presentation was met with a combination of support and skepticism from the council.

Council member Theresa Lafer said she supported the proposed plan for the Centre.

"I think it's a very good plan," Lafer said. "I think if they get it built, people will be pleasantly surprised by its attractiveness and its effectiveness. But it is very frustrating to do this sort of thing during an economic downturn."

But council member Silvi Lawrence said she was skeptical about the proposed starting date because she felt SRE may not receive the necessary commitments before then.

"I just think there has been more optimism with this project than reality," Lawrence said. "I personally feel the borough should not be involved in development projects. It's far too risky. We are gambling with the taxpayers' dollars."

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