

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report

June 17 through June 23, 2016

This report represents some events the FWC handled over the past week; however, it does not include all actions taken by the Division of Law Enforcement.

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Cushing conducted fisheries inspections near the Pensacola Pass. During one inspection, the occupants on board claimed to have only king mackerel and mingo snapper. While on board, Officer Cushing discovered an undersized gray triggerfish. The season for gray triggerfish is closed. A citation was issued to the individual who caught the fish.

Officer Cushing received a phone call from a concerned citizen who had observed an individual on the beach at Ft. Pickens carrying an oversized redfish from the beach toward the parking lot. After beaching his vessel on the bayside, he proceeded to the parking lot and observed one of the individuals described to him by the complainant. Upon initial contact, the individual slumped his head and confessed that he had the oversized redfish in his truck. Upon further inspection, the individual had a total of three oversized redfish in a cooler in his truck. Citations were issued for oversized and over-the-bag limit of redfish.

On board the *FinCat*, officers patrolled in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. They approached a vessel that was fishing and asked the captain if they had any fish on board. The captain stated that they only had white snapper on board. After boarding the vessel, the officers discovered a large triggerfish. The crew claimed they forgot putting the fish on the vessel. The captain of the vessel was issued a federal citation for the violation.

Officer Land conducted a derelict vessel investigation on a sailboat that had been left in a wrecked condition at Shoreline Park in Gulf Breeze. The vessel had become grounded and the interior had filled with water. The registered owners of the vessel were notified and given a deadline to remove the vessel or restore it to working order. The vessel remained untouched by the owners and continued to deteriorate. Officer Land issued a notice to appear to each of the registered owners for abandoning a derelict vessel on the waters of the state.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Molnar conducted a vessel stop at Crab Island for not displaying registration numbers and an infant not wearing a life jacket (PFD) on a vessel less than 26 feet. When Officer Molnar made contact, the operator showed multiple signs of impairment. After field sobriety tasks were conducted, the operator was arrested for Boating under the Influence (BUI). It was determined the operator had three previous Driving under the Influence (DUI) arrests but only one conviction. Since DUI convictions count toward BUI arrests for enhanced penalties, the operator was booked into Okaloosa County Jail on BUI, second offense. He was also issued a citation for BUI refusal to submit, first offense, and for a child under six not wearing a PFD.

Officer Pifer was dispatched to a complaint of an injured crane at the Cinco Bayou Bridge. He was having difficulty locating the crane and saw two individuals at the shoreline of the bridge. He made contact with the male individual concerning the whereabouts of the injured bird. Officer Pifer observed the female individual who appeared to be asleep. In his observation and interaction with both individuals, he felt they were both under the influence of drugs. For public safety, Officer Pifer obtained consent to inspect their personal bags. The inspection revealed the female was in possession of methamphetamine and oxycodone. He also located syringes containing methamphetamine (two felonies/one misdemeanor). The male individual was in possession of paraphernalia. The female was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where Officer Pifer completed the intake process. The male individual was issued a notice to appear citation. Officer Pifer was unable to locate the reported injured crane.

Officer Corbin was on vessel patrol conducting state fisheries inspection in the East Pass. He observed an individual spearfishing at the east jetty. Spearfishing is prohibited along the portion of the east/west jetties. Officer Corbin issued the individual a notice to appear citation.

Officer P. Rockwell was on land patrol conducting state fisheries inspections in the Niceville area. He observed an individual fishing at the Florida Park and a fisheries inspection revealed the individual had harvested a grossly undersized spotted seatrout, which was on the fisherman's stringer. Officer Rockwell issued the individual a notice to appear citation.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Hahr and Officers Hutchinson and Clark were on foot patrol at the steel bridge on Coldwater Creek. They observed a group of individuals on a sandbar smoking cannabis. The officers made contact and interviewed the subjects. Upon conclusion of the interviews, three of the subjects surrendered baggies of cannabis and one cannabis cigarette. A total of four citations were issued for possession of cannabis under 20 grams and one citation was issued for possession of paraphernalia.

Officers Hutchinson and Clark were on foot patrol on Coldwater Creek and observed a group of males and females on the sandbar drinking alcohol. They made contact and asked if everyone was 21 or older. Four of the females stated they were not. One of the males who was 21 years old was observed sharing an alcoholic beverage with one of the underage females. Four citations were issued for possession of alcohol by persons under 21 and one citation was issued for contributing to the delinquency of a minor: giving alcohol to a person under 21.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

WALTON COUNTY

Officers Brooks and J. Rockwell attended a youth camp and spoke to children about boating safety and the duties of a Fish and Wildlife Officer. A patrol vehicle and vessel were displayed and the officers provided boating safety and wildlife literature to approximately 50 children who were in attendance.

Officer White spoke to a Bay County bass fishing club during a fishing tournament on the Choctawhatchee River. Officer White discussed with the club members the new bass rule, effective July 1, 2016.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was contacted by the fire department after a citizen drove through a puddle of liquid and later complained of a burning sensation on their leg after exiting from their vehicle. It appeared to DEP that someone had improperly disposed of several plastic containers with some type of acid in them into a dumpster in front of a Jacksonville water treatment company. The substance leaked from the dumpster via several rusted holes and DEP contacted FWC Environmental Investigations for assistance after the three employees on scene denied any wrongdoing. Environmental Investigator Terrones was able to gain confessions from two of the employees who admitted placing the containers in the dumpster. Since the material in the containers was deemed hazardous waste, all of the other items in the dumpster were also declared hazardous waste and will have to be properly disposed of by a licensed contractor at a cost to the company. Criminal charges will be filed with the State Attorney's Office. The investigation is still ongoing.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

The Wildlife Alert program continues to be successful in Brevard County. A local angler saw a man deploy two gill nets from a relief bridge and called in the violation. Lieutenant Lightsey arrived and recognized the man as a suspect he arrested the previous year for gill net violations. After pulling the man's two gill nets from the river, he was arrested for use of a gill net on state waters and delivered to the Brevard County Jail.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer West was dispatched to look for an adult male who had reportedly been involved in a fight on Disappearing Island and had left by boat. Witnesses said "he had been

drinking and was very belligerent.” K-9 Officer North was able to observe the boat near the Port Orange area and relay a direction of travel. Officer West located and stopped the individual operating his boat, completed the vessel’s required safety equipment check, and began a BUI investigation. The operator was subsequently arrested for BUI and transported to the Volusia County Jail.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

Officers Luce and Bohne, and Lieutenant Lee attended a meeting of the South Atlantic Fisheries Marine Council. The meeting was held in Cocoa Beach and discussed a broad range of topics concerning federal fisheries management. The officers were on hand for the public comment session where members of the general public expressed their concerns and opinions about current and proposed fishery management practices in the south Atlantic. The officers were able to meet and discuss enforcement philosophy with many constituents and stakeholders during the evening.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Little responded to a vessel crash in the Bayport channel. The operator struck a channel marker causing one passenger to fall. The passenger was transported to Oakhill hospital for non-life threatening injuries. Officer Little is investigating the crash. Later during Officer Little’s water patrol, he stopped a vessel with several subjects who were observed fishing. A fisheries inspection of the vessel found that the subjects were in possession of three undersized gag grouper. Appropriate citations were issued for the violation.

Officer Balfour responded to a request for assistance from the Hernando County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO). HCSO had an individual in custody who was suspected of robbing crab traps. During the investigation, Officer Balfour learned the subject was observed removing traps from the water. The trap owner notified law enforcement and confronted the individual at the boat ramp. Upon arrival, HCSO was involved in a brief vehicle chase with the suspect. Several crab traps were located in the vehicle, which were subsequently returned to the owner. Officer Balfour has concluded his investigation, and charges are pending for the willful molestation of stone crab traps.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Thompson responded to a complaint of a male subject catching and cutting up baby bull sharks at the Cape Coral Yacht Club fishing pier. Officer Thompson made contact with the subject and found the subject in possession of two undersized, finned, beheaded and gutted spinner sharks. The subject admitted to Officer Thompson that he

thought he caught two black tip sharks. Officer Thompson educated the subject on the difference of a black tip shark and spinner shark. The subject admitted to the sharks having a black tip anal fin. Officer Thompson issued the subject a citation to appear in court for the violations.

Officer McColgin was working plain clothes patrol in a popular fishing location known for snook. He observed two men who were fishing from a small raft load up their gear and begin to leave the area. He called Officer Price, who was in a nearby location, who stopped the vehicle to perform a resource inspection. When asked if they had caught any fish, one of the men said they had caught some redfish. Officer Price asked to see the fish and the man showed him the redfish. In plain view, Officer Price could see a large snook which was still alive, so he radioed for Officer McColgin. They were able to quickly photograph the snook and determine it was over the slot limit. Then Officer McColgin was able to return to a nearby boat ramp where a citizen offered to assist with reviving the fish. Officer McColgin and the citizen boarded his boat and idled the vessel around for several minutes until the fish was strong enough to swim off on its own. Officer Price issued misdemeanor citations for possession of snook out of season and over the legal slot limit.

Officer McColgin observed a man who was fishing begin to load up his vehicle and leave the area. Officer Price made contact with the man to conduct a resource inspection and found him to be in possession of a filleted undersized snook. The man told them he had caught the snook a while ago and was going to use it as shark bait. He was issued a misdemeanor for possession of undersized snook.

Officer Fogle was checking fisherman and boaters at the Burnt Store Road Boat Ramp in Cape Coral. One inspection of a vessel revealed two men to have caught their limit of mangrove snappers, but neither possessed a saltwater fishing license. Both subjects were issued citations for the violations and also issued a boating safety warning.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Berg, Hughes and Ridgway were on land patrol in the area of Tidewater Preserve. While on patrol, they performed a fisheries inspection on a subject that had been fishing inside the community's boat basin, which is connected to the Manatee River. Upon completion of their inspection, they found the subject to be in possession of one 11-inch snook. The subject was given several misdemeanor citations for possession of undersized snook, snook out of season and snook taken by illegal method (net). The subject was also given several written warnings for other fisheries violations.

PINELLAS COUNTY

The offshore patrol vessel (OPV) *Gulf Sentry* steamed to the Middle Grounds with Lieutenant Wells and Officers Freemon, Smith, Burks and Alvis on board. The officers worked the commercial reef fish fleet as well as recreational fishermen. This particular

patrol was conducted over three straight days. The second night the *Gulf Sentry* crew met up with Officers Crane and Ulrich on the OPV *Fincat* from Crystal River. The two OPV vessels conducted a joint patrol and covered a large area ranging from Pinellas County north to Dixie County out to approximately 85 nautical miles west of the coast. The *Gulf Sentry* had the following activity: 58 Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) hours, 19 vessel inspections, 1 Federal commercial case, 1 State commercial case, 1 State recreational case, and several warnings. The *Fincat* had the following activity: 24 JEA hours, 11 vessel boating safety/resource inspections, 3 misdemeanor resource citations, 2 boating safety uniform boating citations, 13 boating safety written warnings, and 2 resource written warnings.

Lieutenant Martin was on land patrol with Reserve Officer Caputo in Largo when they received a call that an individual had shot an osprey in the parking lot of a condo complex. Upon arrival, the subject advised that he had shot the osprey with a pellet rifle due to it continually defecating on his vehicle. The subject was cited appropriately.

While on land patrol at Fort Desoto, Officer Bibeau observed an individual returning to his vehicle with fishing equipment and a catch bag. Officer Bibeau contacted the individual and conducted a fisheries inspection. At the conclusion of the fisheries inspection, Officer Bibeau located an undersized red drum, mangrove snapper and trout. Officer Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of an undersized red drum and warnings for the other fisheries violations.

Officer Berg observed a man loading a cooler and fishing gear in the back of his truck near the Gandy Bridge. The subject stated he had only caught catfish and stingrays all night and did not keep any fish. Officer Berg conducted a fisheries inspection which revealed 2 undersized and out-of-season snook along with 5 undersized seatrout. The subject was charged criminally with harvesting over the bag limit, undersized and out-of-season snook. He was also cited for harvesting undersized seatrout. Lastly, the subject was given warnings for no snook stamp and over the bag limit of seatrout.

Officer Martinez was on land patrol in the area of Johns Pass, when he performed a fisheries inspection on a man fishing near the bridge. During the course of his inspection, he found the subject to be in possession of one 14-inch gag grouper. The subject was given a criminal citation for possession of undersized gag grouper and will have to appear in court.

POLK COUNTY

Lieutenant Futch and Officer Young were conducting resource inspections at Saddle Creek FMA. They observed a vehicle parked in a secluded area and made contact with the operator. While talking with the subject, they noticed he was acting very nervous and moving around in the vehicle. The subject asked if he could exit his vehicle. As he opened the driver's side door, he continued to sit in the car. Lieutenant Futch asked if there were drugs in the vehicle and the subject nodded his head indicating "yes." Lieutenant Futch asked where the drugs were located, and the subject pointed to the

floorboard and stated “it’s right there.” Lieutenant Futch asked what kind of drugs were in the vehicle and the subject stated “it’s meth.” In plain view, the officers observed a small plastic bag containing a crystal like substance, and a glass drug pipe lying on the driver’s side floorboard. The contents of the bag field-tested positive for methamphetamine. The subject was subsequently arrested for possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

RESCUES

CHARLOTTE/LEE COUNTY

Officers from both Lee and Charlotte counties, along with several other agencies, participated in a round-the-clock search and rescue operation for a swimmer who was swept away along the gulf side of Boca Grande. Air assets from both the sheriff’s office and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) were used as well. All search efforts resulted with no sign of the distressed swimmer.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Lieutenant DeLacure successfully chemically immobilized a free-roaming black bear that was found in a densely populated, suburban Tampa neighborhood. The bear was relocated by FWC Habitat Species Conservation staff to the Ocala National Forest for release.

GLADES COUNTY

Captain Carpenter and Officer Zampella worked with FWC biologists, technicians, volunteers and U.S. Army engineers to successfully capture an injured manatee suffering from blunt trauma which was most likely caused by an impact from a vessel. The team located the manatee, set a net and were able to capture the animal without further injuring the animal. It was then transferred to a manatee rescue vehicle and transported to Tampa where it is receiving medical attention to address the injuries and begin rehabilitation so it can be released back into the wild.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

POLK COUNTY

FWC officers from Polk County, along with FWC staff from the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, participated in a fishing event with the Polk County Sheriff’s Office. The event provides under-privileged kids the opportunity to learn about conservation, fishing and enjoying the outdoors. The kids had a fun day of fishing as well as sharing a meal with the volunteers.

PASCO COUNTY

K-9 Officer Wolff, Officers Beckman and Pulaski conducted two outreach events in Dade City for groups of young people. During the events, the officers provided information about boating safety, fisheries, and wildlife. K-9 Officer Wolff also demonstrated the unique capabilities of K-9 Chaos. In all, the events were attended by 90 youth and 10 adults.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Vacin was on patrol offshore of Commercial Pier. He conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a spear fisherman. The individual was found to be in possession of a speared undersized red grouper. Officer Vacin issued the individual a criminal notice to appear (citation) for possession of undersized red grouper. The fish was seized as evidence.

While conducting water patrol, Officer Vacin observed some subjects that were free diving and had swam out from the beach. While he approached the subjects, he could see that they had spear fishing equipment and a catch bag. One of the subjects seemed to be messing with the catch bag as Officer Vacin got closer. When Officer Vacin asked what he was doing, he advised that he was trying to get rid of the grouper he had speared that was in the bag before Officer Vacin could see it. The red grouper was measured and found to be undersized. The subject was cited for possession of the undersized grouper and the fish was seized as evidence.

While patrolling in western Broward County, Officer Ryan observed some vehicles driving very suspiciously along US 27, a common area for street racing. He also observed several people standing on a levee with a view of the highway. He saw three vehicles travel northbound, turn around, and two of the vehicles stopped side by side in the two southbound lanes. The third vehicle drove ahead of them. Once the third vehicle was up ahead of them, they accelerated at a high rate of speed. Officer Ryan followed the vehicles and was able to conduct a traffic stop on one of the vehicles as it pulled into a boat ramp. The driver was cited for street racing and the passenger in the vehicle was cited for spectating, which is also illegal. The subject made comments asking about the people standing on the levee, asking if it was legal or not. Officer Ryan educated them that it is not legal to spectate an illegal street race.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Smith responded to assist Broward County Sheriff's Office where a large, white-tail deer buck had ventured out of the wooded area and into a densely populated suburban area in Weston. The deer was jumping back yard fences and crossing busy streets. The deer posed a potential threat of causing an accident or

injury to people in the area. When Investigator Smith arrived on scene, the buck was located in a small back yard. Investigator Smith successfully sedated the deer with a dart gun. The deer was transported to a wooded area bordering the everglades west of Highway 27 and was released after fully recovering from sedation.

MARTIN COUNTY

While on patrol in the Hungryland Wildlife Management Area, Officers Koch and Carroll made contact with the occupants of a vehicle illegally parked on Canal Road 7, blocking the road. As the officers approached the vehicle to alert the driver that they were unlawfully blocking the road, the officers smelled a powerful odor of marijuana emitting from the vehicle. A search of the vehicle revealed the driver to be in possession of marijuana and a juvenile in possession of a firearm. The officers found the firearm tucked into the waistband of the juvenile. The driver was booked into the Martin County Jail and the juvenile was turned over to his parents. The parents had no idea where the firearm came from and no idea that their child was in possession of one.

Officer Carroll conducted a vessel stop in the Crossroads in Stuart because navigation lights were not displayed. He conducted a boating safety inspection and found the operator did not have the registration on board the vessel or a sound-producing device. During the safety inspection, Officer Carroll noticed the operator exhibiting signs of impairment and administered the seated standardized field sobriety tasks on the operator. Based on his observations during the stop as well as the administered tasks, Officer Carroll found reason to believe the individual was operating the vessel while impaired and arrested the operator for BUI. Officer Koch met Officer Carroll at Sandsprit Park and transported the subject to the Martin County Jail. The operator was booked into the Martin County Jail for BUI and issued citations for operating a vessel without navigational lights, and two warnings for no registration on board and no sound-producing device.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Newman responded to a mutton snapper complaint at the Boynton Inlet Park fishing pier. Per the reporting party, a subject caught and kept an undersized mutton snapper after he was advised by another fishing patron that the fish was too short. After further investigation, Officer Newman issued the subject a misdemeanor citation for the 13-inch mutton snapper.

While on foot patrol at Sportsman's Park in Lantana, Officer Mann encountered an individual fishing under the bridge. Upon inspection of a cooler, she found the individual to be in possession of undersized mangrove and mutton snapper. The individual was cited accordingly.

While on foot patrol at Phil Foster Park, Officer Mann encountered an individual fishing on the pier. Upon inspection, she found the individual to be in possession of a dead bonefish. He was cited accordingly.

Officer Mann received a call about an individual that had possibly speared a tarpon in the swim area at Boynton Inlet Park. During her investigation, she discovered an individual spearfishing in the swim area. The individual did not have any fish at the time, but was cited for spearfishing within a 100 yards of a public swim area.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

While conducting surveillance at Belcher Canal Spillway for snook poaching, Officer Fretwell heard several individuals yell out to an individual on the other side of the spillway. The subject had what appeared to be a very large snook and he was walking away from the water with it. Snook is currently closed to harvest. The subject began walking towards a vehicle, but stopped short and put the fish on the ground and then continued on to the vehicle. Officer Fretwell made his way over to the subject and found him looking down the road as he shut his trunk. After making contact, the subject appeared very nervous. A resource and license inspection was conducted and determined that the subject had a large snook hidden inside a bag commonly used to store camping chairs. The subject was cited for possession of a snook during a closed season and for possession of a snook measuring greater than 32 inches.

Officers Payne and Shermetaro responded by vessel to a call of a deceased female subject floating in the ocean northeast of the Fort Pierce Inlet. Upon their arrival, the subject was recovered to the vessel and transported to the dock at USCG Station Fort Pierce. At the time of the recovery, no reports for a missing person had been reported. The subject appeared to have no signs of trauma. The Sheriff's office was called in to assist with the investigation and make an attempt to identify the subject, as a resident or visitor to the state, as no personal effects were located.

FWC officers, investigators and supervisors responded to a call for assistance from the Sheriff's Office, as it had been reported that a boat crash had resulted in several subjects receiving severe injuries. An investigation began and resources were diverted to respond to a local hospital, where subjects had been transported, and several residences, attempting to locate vessels and operators involved. After interviews were conducted, it was determined that the consumption of alcohol by underage individuals played a major part in the incident. Three vessels were found to be involved; however only two played a part in the injuries. Two subjects were treated with serious but non-life-threatening injuries, while the third subject succumbed and died of his injuries. The investigation is ongoing.

RESCUES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Vacin responded to Hugh Taylor Birch State Park in reference to a call for assistance. Officer Vacin arrived at the park and continued down one of the walking

trails. He encountered a juvenile on the ground caught in some tree branches. The juvenile stated she had climbed a tree and had fallen out. Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue arrived seconds after Officer Vacin. He cleared a path for Fire Rescue to safely exit with the juvenile. Officer Vacin made contact with the juvenile's mother on scene at Broward General Hospital.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Rogers, Spradling, Hankinson, Godward, Trawinski and Moss patrolled on the 10M vessel throughout this week. The officers made multiple federal fisheries inspections. The inspections were from three to twenty-five miles offshore. Most of the vessels stopped were coming back from the Bahamas and were in compliance. Multiple warnings were issued for boating safety equipment.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Hankinson conducted resource education at local dive and tackle shops focusing on state, federal and Bahamian fisheries regulations.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigators Nelson and Smith responded to an internet advertisement of a marmoset monkey for sale. They suspected that the owner was not properly licensed to possess or sell the animal. Upon arrival, he confirmed the owner did not possess the proper licenses to possess or sell wildlife. Further investigation revealed he recently received the monkey from a family member that passed away. The owner released the monkey to Investigator Nelson, who placed it at a permitted facility. Warnings were issued for the illegal possession and sale.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Mattson was on land patrol in the area of Snake Creek Bridge when he observed a man actively fishing from the bank. Officer Mattson asked the man for a fishing license and his driver's license in Spanish. The man was extremely nervous and visibly shaking. The subject gave the officer his credit cards first before he gave him his fishing license. The man voluntarily opened his back seat and opened his cooler in his back seat before Officer Mattson could ask about it. Officer Mattson walked down to the area

where the man had been fishing and observed two fishing poles as well as a hand-line yo-yo device. Officer Mattson looked in his bags and found only bait. The officer then looked to the right and observed many snapper laying in the seaweed area adjacent to where the man had been fishing. Officer Mattson called for a Spanish speaking deputy from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. Officer Mattson then counted the mangrove snapper and the man had caught 15 in total. The man was read his Miranda warnings in Spanish and agreed to answer questions. He stated that he had been catching the fish and was leaving them there and from there they were jumping back into the water. Officer Mattson found this to be a false statement because out of the 15 snapper, only two were observed to be alive. It was also impossible that the fish could find a way to jump back in the water due to the distance from the water. The man was placed under arrest and transported to Plantation Key Jail. He was charged with possession of undersized snapper, 11 over-the-bag limit of mangrove snapper and failure to return food fish to the water.

Officer Trueblood was conducting fisheries inspections at the Channel 2 Bridge in Islamorada and observed a couple fishing under the bridge on the western end. When the fisheries inspections were completed, the couple had in their possession multiple undersized mutton snapper, lane snapper, and yellowtail snapper. Neither party would identify who caught which fish, so both parties were given a notice to appear for each of the three violations.

RESCUES

MONROE COUNTY

Investigators Brown and Garrison were in plain clothes when they responded to a call of a vessel taking on water one mile from Vaca Cut in Marathon. The officers went to the closest vessel available located at USCG Marathon and responded by water. While enroute to Vaca Cut, Officer La Rosa plotted the location provided by dispatch and informed Investigators Brown and Garrison that it was approximately 1 mile southwest of Vaca Cut. Once on scene, the operator of the vessel informed them that the vessel was currently stable and no longer taking on water. He told them that his vessel began taking on water from the stern when he came off plane. He was able to pump most of the water out and the vessel appeared to be stable and was no longer taking on water. One of the passengers was visibly shaken from the experience and requested to board their patrol vessel. They gave five of the passengers a ride back to shore as a precaution in case the vessel began taking on water again. One of the individuals decided to stay on board and idle the vessel back to shore.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Barringer responded to a vehicle crash at the intersection of Oil Well Road and Camp Keais Road in East Naples. The vehicle crash involved a young, six-month-old

Florida panther. The vehicle was traveling westbound on Oil Well Road when a Florida panther attempted to cross the roadway. The vehicle was unable to stop in time and the vehicle struck the panther. The driver was not injured. The Florida panther was rushed to the Animal Specialty Hospital in Naples by biologists. The panther was a female weighing around 43 pounds. The panther sustained a non-weight-bearing hip fracture and a bruised lung. Unfortunately, the panther passed away the following morning. Officers and biologists urge drivers to drive the posted speed limit and to be alert when on the roadways.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Trueblood and Wilkens observed a female Loggerhead turtle attempting to cross Highway 1 at Sea Oats Beach in Islamorada while working the late shift. The officers initiated their emergency lights and directed traffic around the sea turtle while they assisted the turtle safely off the roadway. The turtle was safely returned to the small sand dunes on the ocean side of US 1 and the turtle began digging a nest to lay eggs. Unfortunately, the sand was not deep enough, and the turtle dug down to a concrete layer just under the sand. She aborted digging the nest, and did not lay any of her eggs. The Loggerhead Turtle safely returned herself back to the water.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Mattson put together a detail titled Operation “6 pack” which began in February 2016 and recently completed in June. Lieutenant Lyne, Officers Baumgartner, Schroth and Plussa all assisted on this detail. Overall, more than 40 commercial charter vessels were inspected for compliance in licensing and boating safety. A total of 6 fishing license citations were issued to various vessels fishing with expired charter fishing licenses. Six boating infractions were issued for various safety equipment violations to the charter vessels. A total of 48 warnings were issued for various safety equipment violations to the charter vessels.

Officers Schroth and Baumgartner, along with Lieutenant Lyne, participated in a resource detail targeting recreational fishermen at popular fishing bridges in the upper Keys. The intent of the detail was to target individuals who illegally fish from bridges, catch and keep protected species of fish, and also education. More than 200 users were checked, 7 citations and 14 FWC warnings were issued. An effort was made to educate as many as possible to the new tools available to recreational fishermen, such as the FWC and Fish Rules apps that can be accessed on a smart phone; many were receptive and downloaded the apps immediately.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Mahoney and Officer Barringer attended the National Clean Marina Day at Hamilton Harbor in Naples. Lieutenant Mahoney and Officer Barringer spent their time teaching the children of the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County about fishing and showing them several fishing techniques. The children learned about different types of fish, fish identification and boating safety. The children walked away with fishing knowledge and their own rod-and-reel setup for their next adventure on the water.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube appeared on a Keys “LOCAL” radio show for the “Girls Night Out” at the Green Turtle Restaurant in Islamorada. Officer Dube promoted the upcoming “Operation Dry Water” campaign for the weekend and gave some pointers such as the need to have a “Designated Boat Driver,” the effects of alcohol while on the water and the laws on BUI. Officer Dube also talked about some of the recent resource cases that our FWC officers have been making in Monroe County.