

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
August 5 through August 11, 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

BAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Keen received information that a fugitive from Texas was living on a sailboat near the Panama City Marina. The subject had two active warrants with a combined bond of \$120,000. Texas authorities advised they would extradite. Lieutenant Keen, along with Officers Hellett, Goodwin, Gore and Investigator Goss, set up surveillance on the sailboat. They caught the subject returning to the boat one morning and confirmed that he was the fugitive with the active warrants from Texas. Officer Goodwin also charged the subject with giving a false name to law enforcement, drug paraphernalia, failing to transfer title of the sailboat and expired registration on the sailboat. The subject was transported and booked into the Bay County Jail.

Officer Alsobrooks was patrolling St. Andrews State Park and observed a vehicle who failed to stop at a stop sign. The vehicle was traveling at a high rate of speed as it went through the intersection. Officer Alsobrooks conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle, and as he approached the vehicle, he could smell the odor of cannabis. He confronted the operator with the fact that he could smell the cannabis and the driver produced two cannabis roaches in a drink can. A search was conducted on the vehicle interior that revealed a bag of cannabis which was more than 20 grams. The operator was arrested and booked into the Bay County Jail. He was also issued a citation for failure to obey a traffic control device.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officer Baber responded to a landowner complaint about a suspect trespassing with a firearm. Once the investigation was completed, and at the direction of the local state attorney, the suspect was charged with felony trespass.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Hahr was patrolling in the Perdido River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he observed four adults smoking a cannabis cigarette. A search of their belongings revealed a bag of cannabis and a cannabis roach. They were each charged with possession of not more than 20 grams of cannabis.

HOLMES COUNTY

Dispatch received a complaint regarding the possession of a venomous snake whereby the victim was bitten and being treated at a local hospital. Officer Yates located the individual and, after an interview, cited the subject for possession of a venomous reptile without a permit. Officer Yates and Investigator Williams followed up the next day and

conducted an inspection at the subject's residence, issuing numerous warnings for improper caging requirements.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Lewis was on forest patrol in Blackwater River State Forest at a primitive campsite when he observed a man and a woman sitting in a creek sharing what appeared to be a cannabis cigarette. Officer Lewis also observed them drinking beer from glass bottles. Alcoholic beverages and glass containers are prohibited in the area they were in. Officer Lewis observed the adult male toss what they were smoking into the water and immediately approached the subjects. He explained to them that alcoholic beverages and glass bottles were prohibited in the area they were in. He also explained to them that they appeared to be smoking cannabis. The female subject said that the male subject passed her a cigarette to smoke. Officer Lewis thought that was odd because she was almost finished smoking a cigarette as he spoke with her. He asked where the female's cigarettes were and she retrieved a small bag from a larger bag. She gave Officer Lewis permission to search the bag and he found two smoked cannabis cigarettes. Officer Lewis searched the large bag the small bag was in and found various paraphernalia items containing methamphetamine. The female subject voluntarily stated all the illegal drugs belonged to her. Officer Lewis arrested the female subject and booked her into the Sarasota County Jail for possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, possession of cannabis not more than 20 grams, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Officer Lewis received a complaint in Blackwater River State Forest in reference to dumped garbage on a forest road. Officer Lewis met the complainant at the dump site and the complainant gave him an article with a name and address on it that was found in the garbage. Officer Lewis was able to ascertain who dumped the garbage, and cited them for littering not more than 15 pounds.

Officer Lewis received a complaint about two Jeeps tearing up the road in the Hutton Unit WMA. Officer Lewis entered the WMA and was met by two Jeeps fitting the description of the complaint. Officer Lewis stopped the Jeeps, and explained to the drivers that there was a complaint about Jeeps tearing up the roads in the area. One of the drivers said that they were doing donuts because they did not think it would be a problem. The driver showed Officer Lewis where they were tearing up the roadway. The complainant identified the drivers of the Jeeps and gave Officer Lewis a written statement. Officer Lewis charged the drivers with destruction of public lands by motor vehicles.

Lieutenant Hahr checked a fisherman returning from fishing with six largemouth bass. The man admitted to catching all of them and was charged with taking over the bag limit of bass.

Officer Land witnessed an individual fishing by himself at the Oriole Beach Boat Ramp during an evening patrol in Gulf Breeze, and approached the individual to inspect his

catch. There were multiple fishing poles with lines in the water, a crab net, and a five-gallon bucket. Officer Land asked the man if he had caught anything, and he replied that he had not. The officer then looked into the bucket beside the fisherman, and saw blue crab and stone crab in whole condition. The man stated that the crabs were not his and he was not fishing. The illegal stone crab was photographed and the man was issued a notice to appear. After signing for his citation, the man loaded the fishing poles, crab net, and bucket into his vehicle and left the area. The stone crab was still alive and released back to the water.

While on patrol in Blackwater Bay, Officers Land and Lewis conducted a fisheries inspection of a vessel they saw actively fishing. There were two men on board and when asked about their catch, the captain of the vessel said they had caught some mullet and a sandbar shark. Upon inspection, the officers located the head of a small bull shark. All sharks must be landed in whole condition, and bull sharks must measure at least 54 inches to the fork of their tail. The captain of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officers Jones, Roberson, and Hughes responded to a complaint from Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) officials of a group who were in possession of large sacks of palmetto berries. The officers arrived to find six males in a pickup truck loaded with freshly picked palmetto berries. They had no permit to harvest and no required permits to be on Eglin AFB lands. All claimed they did not speak English and only the driver produced identification. An investigation ensued which included assistance from a trooper who spoke Spanish and a trooper with rapid identification capability. One individual, the driver and apparent head of the group, was charged with removing vegetation from the Eglin WMA and for having no permit to be on Eglin AFB lands. One member of the group was arrested on an outstanding warrant and transported to Santa Rosa County Jail.

RESCUES

JACKSON COUNTY

Officers Guy and Forehand responded to a report of six tubers, one an infant, who became stranded after a severe thunderstorm on the Chipola River. The officers located the tubers just after dark and brought them safely back to the tube launch.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Corbin was dispatched to a late-night report received through the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) that a small private plane had crashed into the Gulf of Mexico. Several witnesses along the shoreline reported the crash. During Officer Corbin's response, FWC Officers Molnar, Maltais and Pifer were called out to provide additional vessel support/search. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office marine unit and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) responded as well. Further information received indicated that the plane was a twin-engine, 8-seat Cessna. The OCSO was able to

confirm there were no passengers on board, just the pilot. The USCG soon recovered the body of the pilot. The following day, FWC Officers P. Rockwell and Jarvis went to the wreck site by vessel to locate the fuselage. FWC Pilot Tolbert provided air support during the search. Pilot Tolbert quickly located the plane's fuselage through his sighting of an oil slick and bubbling oil. Officers Rockwell and Jarvis were able to confirm through their vessel side-scan sonar the location of the fuselage and marked the location for recovery efforts.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officers Jackson, Keelin, Alsobrooks and Gore responded to a search and rescue on Econfina Creek. Four individuals underestimated the time that it would take to canoe from Scott Road to Pitt Springs and were caught on the creek after dark. After a short search, the officers located them walking at the area of Devil's Hole. They were delivered safely to their vehicle at Pitt Springs.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

JACKSON COUNTY

Officer Burkhead conducted an alligator and wildlife presentation in Marianna at the national "Night Out Against Crime" event hosted by the Chipola Crime Stoppers. Numerous agencies participated in the annual event.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Boyer and Canfield were on water patrol out of Crystal River when they observed a vessel operating with no bow navigation lights at night. Upon stopping the vessel to address the navigation light violation, it was determined that the individuals on board had been fishing. Inspection of the catch on board revealed an oversized red drum. A citation was issued for oversized red drum and navigation light violation.

DUVAL COUNTY

Lieutenant Arkin was on patrol of the Mayport area along State Road A1A by Helen Cooper Floyd Regional Park when he checked several people who were fishing in the area. He also checked two subjects who were illegally camping in the woods. These campers seemed nervous by the lieutenant's presence. One of the subjects then stated that he had been trying to contact the judge because he has a capias. The capias was confirmed and the subject was placed under arrest without incident. The capias was

issued for failure to appear in reference to driving while license suspended or revoked. The subject was turned over to Duval County Department of Corrections staff.

Environmental Investigator Terrones located two piles of illegally discarded litter in excess of 700 cubic feet on a seldom used road in Jacksonville. The debris consisted of furniture, household garbage, children's toys and cardboard. Numerous pieces of mail in the litter led to one person who later admitted that the items were his. The suspect claimed that he had enlisted the help of several teenagers who he would not identify, but he took full responsibility for the incident and was charged accordingly.

RESCUES

CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Ulrich and Boyer were called out in the middle of the night in reference to a call for assistance from Citrus County Sheriff's Office. Three subjects were lost while hiking in Potts WMA and made a call to 911 when one of the subjects began to display signs of dehydration. The Citrus County Sheriff's Office was able to locate the cell phone signal and provide the coordinates of their last known location. Officers Ulrich and Boyer located the three subjects shortly after arriving on scene and transported them off the property. It was determined that emergency medical services were not needed.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Balgo and Lieutenant Lightsey were on patrol at Sebastian Inlet State Park on the Brevard County side. Officer Balgo walked to the end of the catwalk on the north side of Sebastian Inlet State Park and Lieutenant Lightsey began conducting fisheries inspections along the jetty. Officer Balgo observed an individual attempting to discard fish as Lieutenant Lightsey was working his way towards him. An inspection revealed the individual was in possession of undersized mangrove snapper, and he admitted to attempting to discard the fish when he saw the officer because he knew they were undersized. The individual was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officers J. Humphrey, Balgo and Lieutenant Zamonis received a call in reference to some individuals possibly using large nets in the Indian River just west of Melbourne Beach. Officers M. Humphrey and Hallsten, and United States Fish and Wildlife Officer Amoroso also heard the call and began heading to the location by vessel. The officers were able to make contact with the individuals using the nets. It was discovered that one individual was using a monofilament entangling net that was approximately 150 feet long. It was later discovered that the individual also had a warrant out of New York for assault on a law enforcement officer and New York was going to extradite. The subject

was placed under arrest and also charged with possession of a monofilament entangling net.

Officers Hadwin and Cybula were patrolling Sebastian Inlet State Park on a plain-clothes detail targeting cast net violations when they observed a vehicle parked in an area known to be used by individuals that cast net at night. The officers observed a subject walking the shoreline using a cast net without the use of any light. When the subject returned to his vehicle, the officers conducted a resource inspection. The subject was in possession of four out-of-season and undersized snook that were harvested by illegal method. The subject was charged accordingly.

While on foot patrol at the Jetty Park Pier in Port Canaveral, Officer Lejarzar found a subject in possession of two scalloped hammerhead sharks measuring only 18 and 20 inches long. The subject admitted to catching the sharks and stated that he knew they were hammerheads, but he thought there were no regulations on sharks. He was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

While on patrol, Lieutenant Lightsey observed two men swimming along the edge of Sebastian Inlet. The men were wearing gloves and swimming masks. As one man dove down into the water, the other man appeared to act as a lookout nervously looking around. Once the men had surfaced, they placed what appeared to be crabs in a white five-gallon bucket. After observing the men for some time, Lieutenant Lightsey made his way to their location, hid in a nearby brush line and continued to watch them. Lieutenant Lightsey later approached the men and conducted a resource inspection. Inside the white, five-gallon bucket were 58 whole stone crabs. The following violations were discovered: possession of stone crab in whole condition, possession of stone crab out of season, possession of undersized stone crab claws, possession of egg-bearing stone crab, and no fishing license. It was discovered that one of the men had prior resource violations involving saltwater fish and knew the type of crabs he was currently taking. Numerous citations were issued to the men.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Barber and Guirate were patrolling in the area of Rodman Dam when they observed a subject fishing from the bank of Lake Ocklawaha. While conducting a license and fisheries inspection, the subject was found to be in possession of four black bass 16 inches or larger in total length. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for over the bag limit of bass 16 inches or over.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

BREVARD/INDIAN RIVER COUNTIES

Eighteen officers participated in a targeted enforcement effort for Florida's lobster mini season. During three days of enforcement efforts numerous violations were discovered. Citations and warnings were issued for possession of egg bearing lobster, possession

of undersized lobster, possession of undersized flounder and snapper, dive flag violations, safety equipment violations and registration violations. Additionally, the officers were able to assist and educate the public on proper ways to measure lobster and how to identify egg-bearing lobster.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

While heading to patrol the Babcock Ranch Preserve Archery Hunt, Officer Norris noticed a vehicle failing to maintain lane. After observing it swerve in and out of lanes numerous times, he conducted a traffic stop. Once contact was made with the operator, the officer immediately noticed the subject had slurred speech and bloodshot eyes. Officer Norris also observed a bottle of liquor on the floor board. The operator performed field sobriety tests and it was determined that the operator was too impaired to safely operate a vehicle. The operator was arrested and taken to Charlotte County Jail where he consented to a breath test sample and the alcohol level was nearly twice the legal limit at .151.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Price has been actively patrolling the local management areas now that archery season has begun. During his patrols, he made several stops for people illegally picking palmetto berries. On one of the stops, the men hid some containers of berries as he approached. When Officer Price asked the two men if they were picking berries, one of the men said no and the other man said yes at the same time. The officer was able to locate the berries in the bushes and a history check revealed that one of the subjects had been issued a citation previously for picking palmetto berries in a WMA. He was issued a misdemeanor for the violation.

Officer Bell was on off-road patrol in the Yucca Pens WMA when he encountered several individuals loading burlap sacks filled with saw palmetto berries into a vehicle. He also encountered several other individuals trespassing into an adjacent agricultural property while removing the berries. After a brief investigation, a total of five misdemeanors, one citation and six warnings were issued to the group.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Tyer was on ATV patrol in the Hampton Tract when she observed several subjects with hunting dogs. She made contact with the four subjects and advised them they were in a closed area owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The subjects stated they knew the area was closed, but their dogs got away from them. One of the subjects came back with an active warrant and was placed under arrest. All four subjects were issued criminal citations for entering district property through a non-

designated entry point, being on district lands at night, and for not having their dogs on a leash.

Officer Tyer was conducting fisheries inspections along Highway 471. While making contact with three subjects fishing, she detected the strong smell of cannabis emanating from their vehicle. During a search of the vehicle, the officer discovered two bags of cannabis with a combined weight of more than 33 grams. As soon as she discovered the drugs, one of the subjects immediately stated it belonged to them. Officer Tyer placed the subject under arrest for possession of cannabis over 20 grams and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Officer Adams was working the Lake Wales Ridge State Forest/Arbuckle WMA at the Reedy Creek Campground and located three subjects who were picking palmetto berries. All three subjects were cited for picking palmetto berries and failure to pay the day-use fee.

Officer Creel was dispatched to a complaint where a subject was said to be feeding sandhill cranes. The officer arrived on scene and made contact with the subject who said she was feeding any animal that came into her yard. Officer Creel educated the subject on the reasoning behind the law to not feed cranes and wrote the subject a warning for feeding the cranes and made suggestions on how to have bird feeders where the cranes cannot get into them.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Brown was on patrol in the area of Lemon Bay Park and performed a fisheries inspection on a man that had been fishing in Lemon Bay. During the course of his inspection, he found the man had caught and kept several undersized spotted seatrout. The subject was issued one criminal citation for possession of undersized spotted seatrout and will have to appear in court.

RESCUES

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Phillippi, Cason, Lieutenant Parisoe and deputies from the Pasco County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) responded to a request for assistance from a sailing vessel caught in rough weather on the west side of Anclote Key Preserve State Park. The sailboat and occupants were traveling up the coastline when they encountered rough seas and decided to anchor. The rough weather caused them to break anchor and pushed the vessel aground. The PCSO deputies retrieved the occupants from the island and transported them to Anclote River Park Boat Ramp. Lieutenant Parisoe spoke with the occupants, determined the vessel sustained damage and completed a boating accident report.

Officers Angelis, Cocke, Williams, and Lieutenant Parisoe responded to Hudson Beach Boat Ramp for a report of an overdue vessel. The individual was last seen the previous evening and was supposed to meet his party that morning at the boat ramp. Members from PSCO and the USCG also participated in the search. During a break from the weather, the FWC officers were at a local marina to discuss the next search area, when they noticed a vessel matching the description coming down the channel. The operator of the vessel was directed to the boat ramp so a statement could be obtained. According to information, the operator and his party miscommunicated on their meeting time. Thankfully, all persons involved were located safe and search efforts were cancelled.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Vacin was on water patrol in the vicinity of the Port Everglades Inlet when he observed a spear fisherman in the water. He conducted a marine fisheries inspection on the individual who was found to be in possession of a live queen conch. Officer Vacin issued the individual a criminal notice to appear for possession of queen conch, which is prohibited. The queen conch was released back to the water alive.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Willems received a call from the staff at Dupuis WMA stating that some individuals in a white vehicle were picking saw palmetto berries. Officer Godward was already in the WMA, so he was notified and began to search for the vehicle. He soon passed a white SUV with four occupants heading out of the WMA. Palmetto berries were observed on the back bumper of the vehicle and a traffic stop was conducted. Palmetto berries were observed in the vehicle, and none of the occupants had a driver license. There were approximately 100 pounds of berries in the vehicle. While writing citations, a fifth individual came out of the woods. This individual claimed to not know the individuals that were currently stopped. A few minutes later, another vehicle arrived to pick up the new individual. That driver was checked and did not have a driver license. The four individuals with the palmetto berries were issued criminal citations for removal/possession of palmetto berries in a WMA. The drivers of both vehicles were issued criminal citations for driving without a valid driver license.

While conducting conservation patrols in the Dupuis and Allapattah WMAs, Officers Carroll, Morrow, and Rogers made contact with multiple individuals removing saw palmetto berries. A total of seven misdemeanor citations were issued to the subjects in possession of the berries.

Officers Rogers and Morrow were on patrol by the St. Lucie inlet and noticed a vessel heading northwest of the inlet with multiple fishing rods. The officers stopped the vessel and conducted a fisheries inspection. The subject was in possession of eight king fish, six king fish over the bag limit. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for over the bag limit of king fish.

Officers Rogers, Carroll, Guerin and Morrow were patrolling Dupuis WEA for the beginning of saw palmetto berry season. The officers made contact with multiple subjects that were engaged in illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries from the WEA. The officers issued a total of six misdemeanor citations for removal of saw palmetto berries from a WEA, and two subjects were turned over to the U.S. Border Patrol.

Officer Cobo responded to a complaint about possible illegal blue crab traps in the waters of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Upon inspection of the waterway, Officer Cobo located seven traps which were consistent with trapping blue crabs. Florida law requires recreational traps be marked with a name and address and have an "R" on the buoy. While in the process of seizing the unmarked traps, the trap owner showed up and was given two misdemeanor warnings for improper or no markings on recreational traps.

Lieutenant Russo, Captain Schaeffer and Officers Morrow, Newman and Rogers assisted Jupiter Island Police and Martin County Sheriff's Office with a reported Chinese immigrant landing on the north end of Jupiter Island.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Troiano of the North Central Region contacted Officer Nasworth in the South Alpha Region about a Facebook case he is working on. Officer Troiano advised Officer Nasworth he observed a video of two subjects catching an alligator and taking pictures with it in Palm Beach County. Officer Troiano advised Officer Nasworth that he made contact with one of the subjects in the video in the area of Gainesville, who confessed to him (after being advised of his rights) that he caught the gator for fun. Officer Troiano advised Officer Nasworth that the second subject in the video resides in Palm Beach County and asked if Officer Nasworth could make contact with him. Officer Troiano sent Officer Nasworth the video of the incident and Officer Nasworth observed both subjects catching the alligator. Officer Nasworth made contact with the second subject, who admitted to catching the alligator for fun and taking pictures with it. Officer Nasworth received a written statement from the second subject about the incident and will be direct filing charges with the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office.

Officers Gamage and Matthews were on patrol in the vicinity of the Boca Raton Inlet. They conducted marine fisheries inspections on two individuals fishing at the Boca Inlet Bridge. Both individuals were found to be in possession of undersized mangrove snapper, mutton snapper, lane snapper, dog snapper and schoolmaster snapper. Both individuals were charged with multiple misdemeanors and transported to the Palm Beach County Jail. Numerous dead snapper were seized as evidence.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Investigator Patterson saw an off-road utility vehicle at a spillway that had three subjects in it. He observed the three subjects leave the spillway with a tree stand in the back of the vehicle. The subjects appeared to be nervous and were very muddy. Investigator Patterson asked Officers Payne and Fretwell to come to his location as this was an area where they had been watching for possible poaching issues. The occupants of the utility vehicle crossed a major highway with the unregistered vehicle and drove it down a non-motorized vehicle path along the highway. They turned off the path and down a side road in an effort to cross private property, but the gate was shut. They returned to the non-motorized path where Investigator Patterson initiated a stop of the utility vehicle. At this time, Officers Payne and Fretwell arrived. Investigator Patterson began interviewing the subjects and Officers Payne and Fretwell investigated the tree stand and utility vehicle. The subjects admitted to Investigator Patterson that the tree stand had been stolen earlier that day. Officers Fretwell and Payne discovered a St. Lucie County property tag on the utility vehicle. After further investigation, the utility vehicle had been reported stolen two months earlier from the Savannahs (a state and county park). A St. Lucie County auto theft detective was called to the scene. The vehicle was seized as evidence along with the tree stand. The case was turned over to the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department and charges are pending for Grand Theft.

Investigator Turner was on patrol when he received a phone call from an off-duty officer concerning suspicious activity. Investigator Turner arrived at the location identified as the Indian River, Turning Basin and approached the area on foot and observed a white male in the water. The subject was shining a white light into the water while in possession of a large landing net. The subject then exited the water and grabbed a white, five-gallon bucket from the bushes. Investigator Turner made contact with the subject and found him to be in possession of six undersized lobster. Investigator Turner measured each lobster, each having less than a three-inch carapace. At the time, spiny lobster harvest was not in season. The subject was issued a notice to appear for possessing lobster out of season (6 counts), and possessing undersized lobster (6 counts). Investigator Turner photographed each lobster detailing the size of carapace. All lobster were returned to the resource in live condition.

Investigator Turner was on patrol when he observed three individuals fishing on the dock at North Bridge Boat Ramp and conducted a fishing license check and fisheries inspection. During the inspection, he observed a bucket containing two undersized grey snapper. A member of the party claimed ownership of the two fish. Investigator Turner measured the two grey snapper which proved both fish to be less than the required minimum length and issued the individual a notice to appear for possessing undersized grey snapper.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Willems received a call from a Florida Highway Patrol trooper who had rescued three baby squirrels that were in a junction box that utility workers had removed from a power pole. One of the baby squirrels was injured, and the mother squirrel had abandoned them. Officer Willems met with the trooper and transported them to Treasure Coast Wildlife Center where they will be rehabbed and released back into the wild.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Delatorre and Lieutenant Laubenberger attended the annual “Night Out Against Crime” in the City of Margate. The weather was poor, but many people attended anyway. The officers displayed their off-road utility vehicle and gave out numerous brochures pertaining to rules, regulations and safe recreational guidance. The officers also answered many questions about FWC Law Enforcement and job opportunities.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Araujo, Reams and Reith were conducting state land patrol in the Picayune Strand State Forest during the opening weekend of archery season. The officers discovered that Lieutenant Bulger observed two ATV riders in the forest that broke off from the group in which he initiated a traffic stop on. The officers were able to locate and stop the individuals riding down the trails. In addition to the ATV violation, the individuals failed to pay the forest fee and were cited accordingly.

Officer Araujo was on his way home after a shift in the Picayune Strand State Forest when he received a phone call from a hunter that he had talked to earlier that year. The hunter told Officer Araujo that while he was in his stand that he noticed a red truck drive by him and three individuals got out with empty trash cans. The hunter explained that the same thing happened last year and people would collect large amounts of palmetto berries. Officer Araujo headed back to the Picayune Strand State Forest and was met by Officer Kleis to help locate the individuals and catch them in the act of picking palmetto berries, which is a violation. The two officers communicated with the hunter and they were able to catch the individuals carrying out the trash cans full of berries. The berries were returned to the resource and the individuals were cited accordingly.

Officer Johnson was on water patrol during spiny lobster mini season in Monroe County with the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Upon nearing Sigsbee Basin, she observed a vessel on plane with eight people on board. The officers conducted a vessel

stop to perform a resource inspection and Officer Johnson asked if they had been participating in harvesting lobster. The captain stated, "Yes" and Officer Johnson boarded the vessel to inspect the lobster. She observed multiple lobsters in a cooler and live well. During the inspection, Officer Johnson measured 22 lobsters with 14 of them being undersized. The 14 undersized lobster were released back into the water and the captain was issued citations for the undersized lobster.

During another patrol with the USCG in Sigsbee Basin during the lobster mini season, Officer Johnson observed a vessel on plane with six people on board. The officers conducted a vessel stop to complete a resource inspection and Officer Johnson asked the individuals if they had been participating in harvesting lobster. The captain indicated that they had and Officer Johnson boarded the vessel to inspect the lobster. She found eight lobsters and determined that two were undersized. The two undersized lobsters were returned to the water and the captain received citations for them.

Officer Johnson was on patrol in the Gulf of Mexico, near Manta Ray Basin, performing boating safety and resource inspections. Officer Johnson observed a vessel on plane with 10 people on board. Officer Johnson conducted a vessel stop and asked the captain if they had been participating in harvesting lobster. He indicated that they had been and pointed to the fish box where the lobster were located. Officer Johnson found multiple lobsters and fish inside the fish box. During the inspection, Officer Johnson discovered three undersized spiny lobster and an undersized hogfish (10 inches). The lobsters and hogfish were then released back into the water. The captain was issued a notice to appear for possession of three undersized spiny lobsters and one undersized hogfish.

While on night vessel patrol, Officers Bartlett, Hein and White targeted bully netters during the final night of spiny lobster mini season. The officers found one vessel catching lobsters near Plantation Key. As the officers pulled up to conduct a resource inspection, they asked the subjects how many lobsters they had and the subjects stated that they had three. The officers asked the subjects what they were measuring the lobsters with to determine their length and the subjects stated that they did not have a lobster gauge, so they had measured 3 inches on a plastic zip tie by holding it up to a fish-measuring decal on the vessel and cutting it to "legal size." The officers then inspected the lobsters and found five spiny lobsters, three of which were undersized. The subjects were issued citations for undersized lobster and for not having a measuring device on the water.

Later while on night patrol, Officers Bartlett, Hein and White stopped another vessel near the Indian Key Fill once spiny lobster mini season had closed. The vessel had three undersized spiny lobsters. While writing those citations, the officers observed and inspected another unrelated vessel approaching the Indian Key Fill. The second vessel had five spiny lobsters, one of which was undersized. Furthermore, the subject of the second vessel had several boating safety violations and a registration violation. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued to the subjects on both vessels.

Lieutenant Shea and Officers Miller and Thurkettle were on water patrol in the area of Spanish Harbor Bridge in Big Pine Key Florida. The officers witnessed several vessels with dive flags up that were diving for lobsters during spiny lobster mini season. Officer Miller observed a tethered dive flag and entered the water in snorkel gear to observe the diver. While he was in the water, Lieutenant Shea and Officer Thurkettle made contact with the vessel that the diver was determined to be using. Officer Miller observed the diver actively harvesting lobsters. When the diver surfaced, Officer Miller made contact with him and told him he was with FWC state law enforcement and would be checking his catch. Officer Miller checked the lobsters in the diver's catch bag, which contained eight lobsters. Three of the eight were undersized and Officer Miller asked the diver if he had a measuring device and he said he did not. Officer Miller informed the diver that he was over the bag limit and in possession of undersized lobsters, and it was a violation not to possess a measuring device while diving for lobsters. The diver received citations for having over the bag limit of spiny lobsters and not having a measuring device while in the water harvesting lobsters. Officer Miller also warned the diver for the undersized lobsters. Lieutenant Shea also inspected the lobsters that were on the vessel and found two that were undersized. Warnings were given to all of the vessel occupants for possessing the undersized lobsters. Five lobsters were returned alive to the water.

Officer Kleis was conducting boating safety and resource inspections at a local boat ramp when off-duty Officer White informed him of a group of suspicious people in the parking lot. Officer Kleis went to investigate and noticed the odor of marijuana emanating from one of the cars. When Officer Kleis questioned the two individuals about the odor, they denied having any knowledge of the odor and having any marijuana. There was a bag of marijuana in plain view in the vehicle. A search of the vehicle revealed multiple containers of marijuana and paraphernalia. Both individuals were charged with possession of marijuana and paraphernalia, and issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Reams was patrolling Picayune Strand State Forest during the opening weekend of archery season when he received a tip that a subject had shot a spike deer, which is in violation of hunting regulations. Officer Reams made contact with the subject as he was leaving the forest and conducted a resource and license inspection. When questioned, the subject admitted that he had shot the spike. The hunter was cited accordingly.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Doricchi concluded an investigation into the possible illegal possession of a red fox. The investigation revealed that an individual received the fox from an acquaintance that was no longer able to provide for it. The individual that received the fox did not have the proper license to possess the animal. She was issued a citation for the illegal possession and a warning for not having acquisition records. She released ownership of the fox and it was transferred to a properly licensed facility.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Landa, Lieutenant Garzaniti and Investigator Stiffler investigated an escape of a spitting cobra in Dade County. A resident in Dade County saw and captured the snake and reported it to the FWC. FWC arranged to have a licensed venomous reptile (VRC) permit holder take possession of the snake. The investigation into the escape revealed that a nearby VRC permit holder recently had a clutch of spitting cobras, and admitted that the snake that had escaped belonged to him. Investigators cited the permit holder for numerous violations relating to the proper housing and possession of venomous reptiles. Investigator Landa Smith conducted a follow up inspection to confirm the violations had been corrected. Six misdemeanor citations were issued for the escape of the snake and the other violations. There was no indication that additional snakes had escaped.

Miami officers just completed a week-long enforcement detail which concentrated efforts on the inspection of crawfish traps during the season's trap "soak period." The soak period is the five days prior to the opening of the regular crawfish season, where commercial fishermen may set their traps to allow time for crawfish to enter them and the crawfish can be harvested on the season's opening day. Officers staged themselves at the mouth of the Miami River where the highest concentration of commercial crawfish boats within the county are docked. As the crawfish boats exited the river, they were directed to a dock for inspection of their licenses, traps, buoys and trap tags. Regulations related to trap construction, trap-tag attachment, buoy condition and the vessels' buoy placard displays were the predominant focus of these inspections. Because the same crawfish vessels made multiple trips every day for the entire week, in most instances, only their first outbound trip received a written inspection form. Subsequent vessel inspections were cursory in nature to ensure lawful compliance with each load of traps being carried on board. As a result of the officers' week-long effort, the following statistics were compiled: 53 vessel inspections; 35 written warnings; 9 infraction tickets; and 10 misdemeanor citations.

During mini-lobster season, officers on water patrol were approaching a vessel in the area of Cape Florida Channel. As they approached, they observed two of the four occupants throw over board multiple times what appeared to be lobster. The subjects were given loud verbal commands to stop. When the officers were finally able to conduct a fisher inspection, the subjects were not over the limit. A total of 48 lobster were counted. The two occupants were cited for failure to allow an FWC inspection.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Plussa and Lieutenant Barrett were conducting maritime patrol near Sister's Creek when Officer Plussa stopped a vessel for an inspection. The vessel was rented from a nearby livery, and an inspection revealed multiple unserviceable, missing, and unaccounted for pieces of required safety equipment, and the vessel's gas cap, having been replaced with a wet rag possibly saturated with gasoline, presented a grave safety hazard. The operator of the vessel was unable to complete the safety inspection without the officer's help in locating essential items. According to the renting party, this was the condition of the vessel when checked out to them. They provided the officer proof of the

checkout inspection signed by the livery manager. Officer Plussa proceeded to the rental facility/livery and conducted an administrative livery safety inspection with the manager of the livery. It was revealed that he did not possess the required boating safety training and documentation to legally rent vessels. He was arrested and booked into the Marathon Jail in Monroe County for renting a vessel without the proper safety equipment, renting a vessel without adequate pre-ride instruction, and renting a vessel without the required boating safety training.

Officers Munkelt and Adam arrested two subjects for possession of hard stony coral with live rock. Six specimens of coral were recovered, one on live rock. The subjects have no ties to the community as one subject was from Tennessee and the other subject was from the Ocala area. The live coral was turned over to the Florida Wildlife Research Institute to determine viability.

Captive Wildlife Investigators Smith and Landa responded to a complaint of an abandoned ring-tailed lemur. The owner of the animal was no longer able to provide for it due to medical reasons. The investigators were able to secure the animal and transport it to a licensed facility. There were several domestic animals abandoned at this location as well and Animal Control was contacted for the removal and placement of the domestic animals.

RESCUES

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Larosa responded to two kayakers sinking on the ocean side of the 98 mile marker. They had launched at a homeowner's park nearby. Both men were lost among the shallow mangrove creeks and canals, their kayak was sinking, and both were being stung by jellyfish. Officer Larosa responded by water and he could hear them blowing their whistle, but was unable to see or reach them in his patrol vessel. Officer Larosa quickly went into action and removed his gear and stored it on board his secured vessel. He entered the water and went searching for them, at one point in chest-high water. After locating the pair, Officer Larosa led them to the closest home in the area to get back on land. They suffered no injuries other than jellyfish stings to both men and Officer Larosa. Officer Mattson provided assistance upon the group's arrival on shore.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers in Collier County focused on preventing and correcting any marine sanitation device (MSD) violations in state waters and local marinas during a recent detail. Organized by Officer Arbogast, the officers performed approximately 45 MSD inspections within four days, primarily enforcing in areas from Marco River to Chokoloskee. There were no MSD-related violations discovered. However, these

proactive patrols provided the opportunity to educate the public and deter any future violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Bulger and Bear Biologist Hannah Bates were invited to “Breakfast with Kelly,” a monthly community gathering of 45 residents held in the Dell Webb community of Ave Maria, to discuss living with Florida wildlife. Hannah gave a presentation on living with and better understanding bears and Lieutenant Bulger answered questions regarding alligators, snakes and invasive species.