

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report

November 11, 2016 through November 17, 2016

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

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

BAY COUNTY

The offshore patrol vessel *FinCat* with Officers Cushing, Allgood, and Basford and the offshore patrol vessel *Vigilance* with Officers Rockwell, Trueblood and Lieutenant Allen conducted three days of patrol in federal waters. The patrols covered a large area of the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico with an emphasis on marine protected areas. During the patrols, the vessels located and inspected both commercial and recreational vessels. They located a commercial vessel with the following violations: using reef fish for bait; failure to land king mackerel in whole condition; undersized and over the bag limit of gray triggerfish; and undersized gag grouper. They also located a charter vessel that was in possession of undersized vermillion snapper and possession of gray triggerfish and red snapper during closed season. They located another charter vessel that was in possession of gray triggerfish and red snapper during closed season and had red snapper hidden behind a cooler in the back of the vessel. The appropriate federal charges and warnings were levied for the violations.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Anderson, Fletcher, Nelson, Raker, Rice and Lieutenant Marlow worked the opening weekend of small game season on the Apalachicola River system. They checked and interacted with many hunters and individuals camping on the river. They located many violations ranging from boating safety-related violations, license violations, disorderly conduct, willful and wanton waste of wildlife, littering and trespass. The appropriate warnings and citations were issued for the violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Trueblood and Nichols assisted staff at Henderson Beach State Park with a group of students visiting the park on a field trip. The officers educated more than 120 third grade students about the FWC. The officers brought two small young alligators with them and provided the students the opportunity to interact with, touch and ask questions about alligators.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

BAKER COUNTY

During opening week of general gun season in the Osceola Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officers Burnsed and Gill were working numerous areas where suspected baiting was occurring. With important assistance from K-9 Friar, the officers located four different bait sites in the WMA. K-9 Friar was able to track suspected hunters who were baiting to their hunting sites and also located the baited areas for the officers to document. Officers Burnsed and Gill teamed up to work four separate illegal baited sites on state lands through gathering intel on suspected hunters and long tracks with the aid of K-9 Friar. Four hunters were cited for the violations.

Officer Burnsed and K-9 Officer Gill received information of an undersized spike deer that was killed while running dogs. The officers obtained a photograph that showed the deer to be well undersized by the requirements of the deer management unit in that area. The officers tracked down the subject that had killed the deer for questioning. The subject admitted to killing the deer. The antlers were seized as evidence and the subject will be charged with taking an undersized deer.

Reserve Captain Lee was on patrol in the Osceola WMA when he observed three deer-dog hunters cast their hunting dogs into the still-hunt portion of the WMA. The hunters cast the hunting dogs into the still-hunt portion in an attempt to run deer back into the dog-hunting portion of the WMA. The hunters were cited for attempting to take deer by the use of hunting dogs in the still-hunt area.

Officer Gill received information of three rifle shots from an area where illegal deer hunting has been reported in the past. The subject in question lived next to the property where the rifle shots came from. Officer Gill observed from a concealed location the subject washing out the bed of their truck and cleaning out a cooler indicating they may have harvested game. Officer Burnsed arrived to assist Officer Gill and the officers made contact with the subject and asked if they had killed any deer. They advised they had and took it to a local deer processor. They advised the deer was a 4-point buck. The antlers were undersized and illegal to harvest. The officers went to the processor to retrieve the deer meat and saw another undersized buck. The officers interviewed another subject and he admitted to shooting the undersized buck. Both subjects will be charged with taking undersized antlered deer.

Officers Burnsed and Gill were working a report of an illegal deer killed in John Bethea State Forest during the muzzleloading gun season when the officers discovered the identity of the individual who had killed the deer. After making contact with the subject, he admitted to killing a spike deer approximately three inches in length. The officers retrieved the rifle that was used to harvest the deer. The subject will be charged with taking an antlerless deer during closed season.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Christmas was on land patrol in Four Creeks WMA when he stopped a motor vehicle after hours. As he spoke to the driver and passenger, he smelled a strong odor of marijuana coming from inside the vehicle. The passenger was observed trying to

conceal the marijuana in his pocket as he spoke to him. After observing a portion of a pistol concealed under the passenger's seat, the passenger was asked to exit the vehicle. The passenger was given his Miranda Rights, and he confessed to possessing under 20 grams of marijuana and concealing the loaded .357 magnum pistol. The passenger was arrested and booked in the Nassau County Jail for carrying a concealed firearm and possession of marijuana under 20 grams. The firearm and drugs were seized as evidence. Both the driver and passenger were issued citations for being in the WMA after hours.

Lieutenant Arkin was on vessel patrol with Officer Schirbock on the St. Johns River in the area known as the Little Jetties just west of Mayport Inlet. Lieutenant Arkin initiated a vessel stop on a recreational vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and checked the passenger who was fishing who had a 5-gallon bucket full of different species of fish including yellow mouth trout, croaker, pinfish, bluefish, and black sea bass. The bluefish and black sea bass were undersized. The subject knew that the black sea bass were undersized based on his statements. Also, just prior to the vessel stop, the subject threw an undersized overboard. Lieutenant Arkin issued the subject appropriate citations. A computer check revealed that the subject also had an outstanding warrant for violation of probation and was placed under arrest and transported by vessel to the Duval County Jail.

Lieutenant Arkin, Officers Schirbock and Culbreath worked a joint manatee detail with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) on Veterans Day Holiday weekend in the St. Johns River, Doctors Inlet and Julington Creek areas. The FWC and USFWS officers issued numerous citations and written warnings during this joint detail.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Boone observed a vehicle swerving numerous times along the roadway and the passenger was seen throwing litter out of the window. During the subsequent traffic stop, a strong smell of burnt cannabis was detected. Two rifles lay in the front seat of the vehicle and the driver was asked to exit the truck. While doing so, he handed Officer Boone a plastic container of marijuana. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed a pistol as well as the two rifles and a glass pipe packed with marijuana. A computer check confirmed the pistol was stolen out of Nevada. During a closer inspection of one of the rifles, the rifle was found to be equipped with an illegal homemade suppressor. The driver of the vehicle openly claimed ownership of the illegal items. The marijuana, pistol, and suppressed rifle were placed into evidence and the appropriate charges will be filed with the state attorney's office.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Eller conducted a resource inspection on two fishermen on Merritt Island. While checking their fishing licenses, he noticed a nearby vehicle with its trunk open and a cooler in plain view. After inquiring about what was in the cooler, the subject advised that there was a sheepshead inside. An inspection of the cooler revealed several miscellaneous saltwater species, including three undersized spotted seatrout. The subject advised Officer Eller that he did not have a measuring device and that he wasn't aware of the 15-inch minimum size limit for spotted seatrout. The subject was cited accordingly.

While pulling into the FWC Titusville field office, Officer Rasey noticed an occupied suspicious vehicle parked in the front parking lot. Upon further investigation, a male subject was found asleep inside while the vehicle was running. After conducting a welfare check, it was discovered that the individual was wanted out of Brevard County for two counts of violation of probation. Officer Eller arrived to assist and took the subject into custody. The male was transported and booked into the Brevard County Jail.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Teal was on patrol in the Paisley Woods area of Ocala WMA before the opening of general gun season and received information that a male subject was hunting in the WMA. He responded to the area and was able to locate the vehicle described by the complainant, and made contact with a subject wearing camouflage, a hunter orange vest and carrying a shotgun. Officer Teal interviewed the subject, who admitted to hunting deer. The subject was issued a citation for hunting during a closed season in the WMA.

On the opening morning of general gun season in Ocala WMA, Officers Simpson, Hargabus, and Lieutenant Yetter responded to a complaint of hunters taking an antlerless deer in the area of the Pipeline Unit and Highway 40. The officers were able to locate the vehicles and three male subjects reported to have been involved. Upon initial contact, all three said they hadn't killed a deer and there was no evidence of a deer being in or on their vehicles. Officer Hargabus did notice a small amount of fresh blood on the pants of one of the subjects. The three were separated and interviewed. The individual with blood on his pants admitted to taking an antlerless deer and led the officers to the carcass and quartered meat from the antlerless deer. The responsible subject was issued a citation for taking an antlerless deer in the WMA.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

During the Cecil Webb WMA general gun hunt, Officer Birchfield was working in plain clothes and observed a swamp buggy with four individuals all holding guns. After a while, the buggy jumped a buck and they all started firing at the buck. They eventually shot and killed it and loaded it onto the buggy. Officer Birchfield notified a uniformed officer to conduct an inspection. Officer Salem arrived shortly after and found a 6-inch spiked buck had been taken. Only juveniles under the age of 16 can take a buck with antlers under 10 inches, and two of the individuals on the buggy that were shooting at the deer were over the age of 16. Citations were issued accordingly.

K-9 Officer Stasko was working the check station during the Webb WMA hunt and noticed a deer being brought to the check station that looked to be short of the requirements. After the FWC biologist recorded the information from the deer and harvester, Officer Stasko had a conversation with the hunter. The deer was short of the 3 points on one side or a main beam length of 10 inches or more requirement. The deer had 4 legal points in total, and both main beams measured short of 10 inches. The hunter stated, "I thought it was big enough." The hunter was over the age of 16 and was familiar with the regulations. Officer Stasko measured the deer with the hunter and explained the violations. A citation was issued and the deer was seized as evidence.

Officer Salem responded to a call about the destruction of an eagle's nest. When he arrived on scene, he found evidence that there was indeed an eagle's nest which had been destroyed. He worked with FWC biologists to confirm the eagle's nest and feathers which he located. Officer Salem called in a federal officer and they collected evidence for the case. The evidence will be sent to FDLE for testing. The investigation is ongoing at this time.

DESOTO COUNTY

Officer Scinta and Lieutenant Fugate received a call about trespassing. They were able to locate the subject who confessed to trespassing the prior night.

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Scinta and Lieutenant Fugate found three individuals trespassing on private property in the Lilly Community, while carrying a .22 caliber rifle. The individuals fled to Desoto County where they were apprehended with the assistance of Desoto County Sheriff's Office. They were charged accordingly.

Officers Scinta and Franks were conducting hunting enforcement on the Peace River. During their patrol, the officers saw a camp with two subjects on the shore with a possible resource violation and trespass issue. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found that one subject had an out-of-county warrant. The subject was arrested and booked into the county jail.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Canamero and Henry had been working a bait site in Chassahowitzka WMA. There had been no new activity since archery season; however, in the last week, the officers noticed new flagging had been put up and new bait on the ground. The officers checked the area and found three subjects (one being a juvenile) in the two stands hunting over the bait. The subjects were issued a notice to appear for hunting over bait and a citation for no hunter orange.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol near Kracker Avenue, Officer Rivera and Lieutenant Van Trees located a group of subjects fishing in an area known for having a large population of snook. After surveilling the area for some time, the officers surprised the group and found two subjects to be in possession of numerous undersized snook. The men admitted to cast netting the three undersized snook. Both men were charged with the appropriate misdemeanors for the violations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Brown and Dalton were on land patrol in the area of the South Skyway Fishing Pier. While on patrol, they performed a fisheries inspection on an individual fishing from the pier. Upon completion of the inspection, they found the subject to be in possession of several different kinds of fish, including numerous undersized grey (mangrove) snapper. The subject was given a criminal citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and will have to appear in court.

Officers Hinds and Davidson were on land patrol, when they received a complaint of someone using an illegal net to harvest freshwater fish in a neighborhood lake. Upon arrival on scene, they found that one of the residents of the community in which the lake was located had placed a large entanglement net over and around some fish beds. After making contact with the fisherman, the subject admitted to setting the net in the water in an attempt to catch fish. The subject was given a criminal citation for attempting to catch freshwater fish by illegal method. His net was seized and he will have to appear in court for his violation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on water patrol in Bunces Pass, Officer Bibeau and Lieutenant Van Trees observed an individual actively fishing underneath a nearby bridge. Officer Bibeau dropped Lieutenant Van Trees off on land to perform a fisheries inspection. While conducting the fisheries inspection, Lieutenant Van Trees located a cooler in the back of a nearby vehicle. The individual initially denied that the vehicle belonged to him, but a quick records search of the license plate showed that the individual was indeed the owner of the vehicle. The individual consented to a search of the cooler and at the conclusion, Lieutenant Van Trees located 13 mangrove snapper and 1 black drum. Eleven of the mangrove snapper, along with the black drum, were undersized. Lieutenant Van Trees wrote the individual misdemeanor citations for the violations.

POLK COUNTY

Officers Sweat and Carter conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for careless driving in Lake Wales. During the stop, the subject did not have a valid driver license and came back with an active warrant. During a search of the vehicle incident to arrest, officers found several baggies of suspected synthetic marijuana. The subject was transported to the Polk County Jail for the warrant and charges are pending for felony possession of synthetic marijuana.

Officer Tyer was working in the Avon Park WMA when she observed a vehicle traveling away from her with the tailgate down. Through binoculars, she observed what appeared to be a deer in the back of the truck. She caught up with the vehicle to conduct a resource inspection and determined the deer was not a legal buck. The deer was seized and the hunter was issued a notice to appear for the illegal deer.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Franks taught the law portion of the Florida Hunter Safety Education Course at Hardee Correctional with 25 students in attendance. He discussed legal issues, along with the various rules and regulations associated with hunting season. He also talked about the safe handling of firearms and legal guidelines. At the conclusion, Officer Franks provided the participants with answers to a variety of questions and educated them accordingly.

Officer Franks conducted an educational outreach for a local 4-H Club group. The outreach focused on hunting season and the importance of hunter safety. He spoke about the laws, rules, and regulations governing hunting season and safe hunting practices while in the field. Officer Franks also answered many questions from the kids and parents.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Bell recently attended several educational school visits at Cape Christian VPK, Gulf Elementary Kindergarten Fall Fest, and Gulf Elementary 3rd Grade. He spoke about boats, boating safety, alligators and snakes. Officer Bell also answered questions the children had.

Officer Fogle attended an educational school visit at Skyline Elementary. He spoke about boats, jet skis, boating safety, alligators, K-9's, and answered any questions the children had.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Ryan, Gamage and Captain Hodges responded to the Everglades in response to a small plane that had crashed in the WMA. Both occupants had already been successfully rescued. The officers used an FWC airboat to go back into the Everglades, locate the downed plane again and turn off the emergency locator beacon that was transmitting a distress signal on the avionics channel. This was done at the request of the US Air Force to return the talking frequency the beacon was sounding on back to normal status.

Officer Vacin was on patrol in Ft. Lauderdale and conducted a marine fisheries inspection on an individual he observed fishing off a bridge. With information gathered from the inspection, he issued a criminal notice to appear (citation) to one individual for possession of undersized blackfin snapper.

GLADES COUNTY

Officers Muina and Nasworth were on airboat patrol on Lake Okeechobee and observed a vessel with four occupants actively fishing. They conducted a fisheries inspection and discovered six oversized black bass, two over the daily bag limit for the number of occupants on board. Officer Muina issued a notice to appear (citation) to the captain of the vessel for possession of two black bass over the daily bag limit. The fish were returned to the water alive.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officers Toby and Cheshire observed an individual fishing on Lake Okeechobee at Nubbin Slough and conducted a fisheries inspection. The individual was in possession of two undersized black crappie and fishing over a fence that was posted as "no trespassing". The individual was issued a misdemeanor citation for the resource violation and a warning for the trespass violation.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

A vessel occupied by two adult males capsized in the early morning just outside of the Jupiter Inlet. While going eastbound out of the inlet the vessel encountered several large waves that flipped the boat over and ejected the occupants into the water. The capsizing was witnessed by several people from land and rescue was called immediately. The vessel operator and passenger were recovered from the water and were rushed to the Jupiter Medical Center in critical condition, but were pronounced deceased later the same morning. Lieutenants Orndorf and Harris and Investigators Phillips, Patterson and Turner responded, along with additional officers to investigate the accident.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Brock, Investigator Coffin and Lieutenant Laubenberger responded to Alligator Alley (I-75) in reference to contractor workers locating a large snake in the Everglades. The officers arrived at the sunpass plaza and met with the contract workers. They took possession of a live 13.5-foot Burmese python. The officers successfully transferred the snake to Nova Southeastern Researchers without incident.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Morrow conducted a hunter safety class for students wishing to obtain their hunter safety card. Hunters were educated on safety, laws and regulations, and ethical hunting practices.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Errico, Kleis and White were on night-time water patrol in the area of the Marco River and observed a vessel with fishing gear operating with improper navigational lights. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a resource inspection and address the navigational light issue. When the officers activated their blue lights, the operator and passenger switched places. Upon approaching the vessel, the officers noticed multiple empty beer cans throughout the vessel and multiple signs of impairment from the original operator, including slurred speech and the odor of alcohol emanating from him. After completing a resource and safety inspection, the operator consented to perform field sobriety tasks. Upon completion of the tasks, the operator was determined to be impaired and was placed under arrest for BUI. The operator refused a breath alcohol test and was transported to the Collier County Jail.

While conducting inspections in Collier County for wholesale and retail licenses, Officers Miller and Thurkettle found a seafood dealer selling both freshwater and saltwater product. After inspecting their paperwork, it was found that the store did not have a retail license to sell saltwater product. Officer Thurkettle had previously issued a written warning for the same violation. The manager of the store was issued a citation for the violation.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Two officers were on night-time water patrol east of Miami Beach when they stopped two recreational fishing vessels in separate incidents. Five subjects on board the first vessel were in possession of eleven undersized vermillion snappers. In the second incident, three subjects on board their vessel were in possession of six undersized mutton snappers. Citations for the violations were issued in both cases.

RESCUES

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Mahoney and Officer Barringer responded to a boating accident involving injuries. A local boater was on-plane and did not see a cable slung just three feet off of the water by contractors hired to perform work on a bridge. The boater made contact with the cable and got thrown out of the boat, ripping the pulling platform off of the boat. His vessel continued up the river and crashed into mangroves. Within a few moments of the accident, another boater saw the man in the water and came to his rescue and called for help.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Araujo and Polly responded to a call about a panther/dog-related incident. When the officers arrived on the scene, they met with the complainant who explained that he had heard his two dogs barking aggressively outside of his house. He has several livestock animals on his property, including uncaged chickens. When he went outside to investigate, he saw a panther come down from a tree and the dogs chased and cornered it. He said that the panther and the dogs got into a brief fight and then the panther got up another tree. The man pointed to the tree and there was a juvenile panther sitting in it looking down at the dogs. The officers had the owner put the dogs in the house, which gave the panther some space. After about 15 minutes, the panther got down and ran into a large, wooded area away from the house. Neither the panther nor the dogs had serious injuries and the homeowner thanked the officers for responding.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

COLLIER COUNTY

Over the course of two weekends, Officers Barringer, Johnson, Osorio-Borja, Tidwell and White worked a Manatee Zone detail to enforce manatee speed zones. The detail was conducted within the manatee zones from Wiggins Pass throughout the county down to Marco Pass. During the detail, the officers wrote 20 warnings, 8 citations, and educated over 100 boaters on the importance of manatee zones and safe vessel operation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Barringer attended the annual Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve post-season shoreline bird meeting, which was an opportunity for partners such as FWC biologists, FWC law enforcement, National Audubon Society, Rookery Bay staff and Team OCEAN to meet and share information about shorebird and seabird nesting data in Collier County. The meeting was arranged to learn more about statewide bird data and provide an opportunity to discuss important management issues that arose during the 2016 nesting season. The meeting was a huge success with more than 20 participating individuals from around the state.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Way, Foell and Sapp participated in an outreach event at the Key West Pre-School Co-Op's annual "Truck Day." The event brings together various utility vehicles from local agencies including the Monroe County Sheriff's Office bomb squad and crime scene investigations unit, Key West Police Department's mounted patrol, the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority helicopter, the Key West Fire Department and an FWC F-250 patrol truck and vessel. More than 65 children and their parents were in attendance. This is the officers' fourth year participating in this event.

Officer Dube gave a presentation to a group of out-of-state college students at the Turtle Hospital in Marathon. Officer Dube talked about the core missions of the FWC and vast duties of our FWC officers. Officer Dube also explained the role that FWC plays in rescues of sea turtles and other marine mammals. Officer Dube also discussed recruiting with interested students.

Officer Dube and the South Region's Public Information Coordinator, Carol Lyn Parrish, gave a presentation to the South Region Communication staff at the Miami Dispatch Center. Ms. Parrish gave information on the FWC Critical Incident Stress Management program and protocol to the dispatchers. They also presented more effective ways to work with the media.