

**FWC**  
**Division of Law Enforcement**



***Weekly Report***

***January 6, 2017 through January 12, 2017***

*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**

### **CASES**

#### **OKALOOSA COUNTY**

Officer Arnette received information that a man had killed an illegal deer well before daylight. When he went to interview the subject, he saw a deer carcass under a piece of plywood that was partially covering it. The subject was not home at the time, so Officer Arnette went to find the location where the deer was allegedly shot. He located an area along the roadway where a deer was recently killed a short distance from the subject's residence. After confessing, he was issued a notice to appear for taking an antlerless deer out of season and taking deer before legal shooting hours.

#### **SANTA ROSA COUNTY**

Officers Lewis and Ramos were on patrol when they received information from Officer Hutchinson about a baited area in Blackwater Wildlife Management Area (WMA). They checked the area and found a man hunting over scattered corn concealed behind a blind made of freshly cut vegetation. The subject admitted to cutting various trees in the area to make a shooting lane and a blind. He was also hunting deer without wearing any hunter orange protective clothing. The subject was charged with hunting over bait in a WMA, failure to wear hunter orange, and cutting vegetation within a WMA.

Officer Lewis was on patrol in Blackwater WMA when he saw vehicles that appeared to be setting up a perimeter in a still-hunt area. He had checked hunters the previous day that were setting up for a man-drive in the same area. Officer Lewis saw a subject standing beside a pickup truck that was parked on a paved right-of-way and saw the subject walk to the front of the pickup truck carrying a rifle. Officer Lewis explained to the subject that he could not take wildlife with a gun from the right-of-way. The man initially stated that he was unaware of the road-hunting rule, but finally admitted that he knew the law. He admitted to hunting deer and stated that he would have shot from the roadway if he saw a deer cross the road. The subject was cited accordingly.

#### **WALTON COUNTY**

Officers Letcher and Tison were patrolling private property for suspected trespassing when they saw a vehicle parked on the property at night. A short time later, the officers heard shots and encountered a hunter returning to his vehicle. The subject had shot at a deer at night from his tree stand. An inspection of the area revealed a motion sensor light at the subject's feeder so he could shoot deer at night. A records check determined the subject had a prior charge for taking deer at night. While searching the area, it was determined the subject missed the deer. He was charged with attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light and for hunting without a hunting license.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **BAKER COUNTY**

Officer Burnsed was patrolling the John Bethea State Forest on the still-hunt portion of the WMA where illegal deer/dog hunting had been occurring. Shortly after arriving in the area, he heard several hunting dogs running game through the still-hunt portion. He then found three hunters actively trying to cut the dogs off and attempting to kill the deer the dogs were pursuing. The hunters were also driving down roads closed to vehicular traffic in an attempt to kill the deer. Officer Burnsed was able to stop the hunters and they admitted to trying to kill a deer in the area. The hunters were cited for the violations.

#### **CLAY COUNTY**

Lieutenant Glover was on land patrol in Camp Blanding WMA when he conducted an inspection on a hunter. The subject was very nervous and after the subject left the area, Lieutenant Glover was able to back track the foot prints left by the hunter to his climber tree stand inside the WMA. Corn was spread all around the tree stand to attract game. The next morning, Lieutenant Glover and Officer Barber made contact with the subject who was hunting in the same general area but had moved his stand. After an interview, the subject admitted to placing the corn around his stand in an attempt to attract game and to moving his stand because he was scared of getting caught. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Starling checked a hunter who killed an illegal deer during the second week of the Camp Blanding Dog Hunt. The subject killed a spike whose longest antler measured six inches, which is four inches below the minimum antler length. The appropriate citations were issued to the subject for killing a deer not meeting the required minimum antler length.

#### **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

Officers Johnston and Drew were conducting resource inspections on dog hunters in the Osceola WMA when they came across a hunter with multiple violations. The hunter was found to be operating a motor vehicle with an expired tag and was also in possession of an open alcoholic beverage. The subject consented to a vehicle search and located two Alprazolam prescription pills (Xanax) were found hidden in a cigarette pack. The subject could not provide a prescription for the pills. The subject claimed responsibility for the pills and was subsequently arrested and booked into the Columbia County Jail without incident.

Officer McDonald was working a duck-hunting detail at Alligator Lake Small Game Management Area when he conducted an inspection on two hunters. One of the

hunters was using an unplugged shotgun and had an expired federal duck stamp. The subject was cited for attempting to take migratory game with an unplugged shotgun and warned for the expired federal duck stamp. Within a week, one misdemeanor, six infractions for license violations, numerous warnings for boating safety violations, resource violations and attempting to take migratory game from a moving vessel have been issued by Officer McDonald.

## DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Schirbock was on patrol at Taye Brown Regional Park in Jacksonville when he saw a vehicle backed in to the woods. The owner of the vehicle exited the woods with a rifle after hunting in the city park. The subject also had a tree stand and corn in the area he was hunting. The subject admitted to hunting and stated that he did not know he could not hunt in a city park. Officer Schirbock issued the subject a notice to appear in court for hunting in a city park.

Officer Schirbock saw a vehicle and two subjects trespassing on Jacksonville Electric Authority property off Yellow Water Road in Jacksonville. The two subjects were target shooting and were armed with a Glock handgun and two AR-15 rifles. The property is posted "no trespassing." Both subjects were issued a notice to appear for trespassing.

Lieutenant Arkin was on vehicle patrol when he saw a Ford Explorer pulling a utility trailer with lawn equipment on Roosevelt Boulevard in Jacksonville. The trailer had a blowout tire and was being operated on the rim digging into the roadway causing smoke and sparks. The trailer tag was also expired. Lieutenant Arkin initiated a traffic stop and made contact with the driver who seemed impaired. The driver handed Lieutenant Arkin his credit card twice instead of his driver license. A strong odor of alcoholic beverage was observed and the driver performed field alcohol tasks. The driver was subsequently arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI). At the jail, the subject submitted to a breath test with results of 0.268 and 0.275. The legal limit is 0.08. The driver was also issued uniform traffic citations for having an expired tag, an open container of alcoholic beverages while driving and for damaging the roadway.

Lieutenant Arkin was on vehicle patrol east of Curtis Lee Johnson Boat Ramp when he saw a male on a bicycle make an improper left turn in front of oncoming traffic that was slowing for the traffic light at the intersection of Lakeshore Boulevard and San Juan Avenue in Jacksonville. The subject failed to cross at the intersection, and almost got struck by a vehicle. The subject was asked if he had any warrants and he stated he might. Jacksonville Dispatch advised that the subject had warrants issued by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. The first warrant was for grand theft with a bond of \$20,003. The second warrant was for driving while license suspended or revoked with a bond of \$358. The subject was placed under arrest in compliance with the warrants and transported him to the Duval County Pre-Trial Detention Center where he was turned over to Corrections staff.

## LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Drew were conducting resource inspections on hunters in the Mallory Swamp WMA when they made contact with two subjects in a vehicle. Both officers could smell the scent of cannabis coming from the vehicle. Both subjects were detained while a search of the vehicle was conducted. A check of the driver's information revealed an active warrant for her arrest. The warrant was for providing a false name and date of birth to FWC officers in Levy County. A search of the vehicle revealed no contraband. The warrant was confirmed and the subject was transported and booked into the Lafayette County Jail with no further law enforcement action required.

## MADISON COUNTY

Officers Vazquez and Cline were on land patrol in Twin Rivers WMA when they saw fresh tire marks and footprints leading into the woods. Following the sign, they discovered a hunting stand where corn had been illegally placed inside the WMA. The next day, officers returned to the area and saw a subject wearing camouflage and holding a rifle hunting from the tree stand. When asked initially what he was doing, the subject stated "trying to kill a big buck." The subject also stated that his friend placed the bait and dropped him off to hunt. The subject's friend was a habitual, convicted felon. Post Miranda, he admitted to placing the corn in the WMA and was also found to be in possession of a firearm as well as ammunition. His parole officer was contacted who advised the officers that the subject was in violation of his parole. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Madison County Jail. The firearms were seized and placed into evidence. The appropriate charges will be filed against the initial subject with the state attorney's office.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### CLAY COUNTY

Officers from Clay and Duval counties participated in the second week of the annual Camp Blanding WMA Dog Hunt. A total of more than 700 hunters were checked, six warnings and citations were written for violations that included operating a vehicle on a closed road, killing an illegal deer, distributing bait in a WMA as well as several license violations.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Platt, K-9 Officer Simpson and K-9 Moose worked waterfowl hunting in the T.M. Goodwin/Broadmoor WMA. A vessel returned to the Broadmoor Boat Ramp with four individuals aboard. During a resource inspection, 24 ducks were seen on the bow of the

vessel. Officer Simpson deployed K-9 Moose to inspect the rest of the vessel, resulting in K-9 Moose alerting on a decoy bag within the vessel. Located in the decoy bag were seven additional ducks hidden amongst the decoys. Three hunters admitted to shooting nine waterfowl a piece, and one hunter admitted to only shooting four. The three hunters were issued citations for taking over the bag limit of waterfowl. The fourth hunter, who was within her legal limit, was allowed to retain her ducks.

Officers Marroquin, Rasey and Hadwin conducted surveillance in the Haulover Canal area due to recent poaching activity in the area. The officers saw four subjects fishing from a vessel in the canal. After approximately 15 minutes of observing the vessel, the occupants returned to the Bairs Cove Boat Ramp. During a subsequent vessel safety and resource inspection, Officer Marroquin saw the operator showing signs of impairment and began a boating under the influence (BUI) investigation. When requested to produce the required safety equipment and provide identification, the operator refused to comply and became argumentative and belligerent. When asked to perform field alcohol tasks, the operator refused. He attempted to pull away from the officers as they arrested him, but they quickly secured him in handcuffs. The operator was placed under arrest for BUI, resisting arrest without violence, interfering with an FWC officer, and failure to submit to a breath test (2<sup>nd</sup> offense). Several boating infractions were also addressed along with a fishing license violation.

#### LAKE COUNTY

Officers Morrow and Phillips received a complaint tip of a subject trespassing on private property in central Lake County. When they arrived, they located the subject's pickup truck parked along a wooded vacant lot. They found the subject, along with two male juveniles, leaving from a large pond in possession of ten largemouth black bass on a stringer. Through their investigation, they learned that the man did not have permission to be on the property. He was also found to be in possession of two largemouth bass over the legal size limit. He was issued two misdemeanor citations along with a trespass warning.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officer Dias was on foot patrol walking a closed road in the Hopkins Prairie area of the Ocala National Forest when he found corn scattered on the ground. Further inspection of the area revealed a small pile of corn located approximately 15 yards from a pine tree with a climbing tree stand that appeared to have been climbed several times. One morning, Lieutenant Yetter checked on the baited area and made contact with a subject deer hunting from a climbing tree stand located 15 yards from the corn pile. Lieutenant Yetter issued the hunter a notice to appear for placing bait on a WMA.

#### OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officer Mendelson set up a targeted enforcement action directed towards night hunting in southeast Orange and Osceola counties. Officers Hadwin, Platt, Loeffler and

Lieutenants Trusley and Lightsey from Brevard and Osceola counties all participated. A vehicle was seen shining a light in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer up and down a rural road in Osceola County. Individuals in the vehicle shot multiple times into a nearby field. The vehicle was subsequently stopped and the investigation resulted in multiple criminal misdemeanor charges including shooting from a public roadway, possession of a concealed firearm, possession of a firearm while displaying light at night, minor in possession of alcohol, possession of cannabis under 20 grams and possession of drug paraphernalia. Two individuals were arrested and booked into the Osceola County Jail.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

While on foot patrol in Bulow Creek State Park, Lieutenant Baer encountered a Kubota utility vehicle that had been abandoned deep in the woods, far from any public road. All of the obvious identifying plates and decals had been removed. Officers Sapp and Bellville arrived to assist with the investigation which revealed that a Kubota matching the recovered one had been reported stolen about 20 miles north in Flagler County several nights before. The officers then located a hidden serial number and confirmed that the Kubota was indeed stolen from Flagler County. The Flagler Sheriff's Office responded and processed the vehicle for DNA and the investigation was turned over to them. The Kubota was returned to its owner.

Officer Malicoat saw an adult male in a boat operating in violation of a regulated speed zone in the New Smyrna Beach area. During the stop, Officer Malicoat performed a fisheries inspection which revealed that the male subject was in possession of multiple undersized sheepshead. The subject was issued a criminal notice to appear for the violation.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### CASES

#### HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Canamero and Little were working information about possible illegal hunting on Mitchell Road and CSX railroad property. The officers located a subject that was actively hunting on the railroad tracks and CSX property. The subject hunting was found to be a convicted felon and was arrested for possession of a firearm/ammunition and armed trespass.

#### LEE COUNTY

Officer Thompson and Lieutenant Barrett were working late at night targeting commercial fishing vessels near Estero Bay. The two officers watched two suspicious vessels operating, without navigation lights, along the beach at Lovers Key State Park.

The occupants were overheard talking about a successful night fishing, though they never saw them actually use their nets on that section of beach. The vessels returned to the boat ramp and the officers met them there for a fisheries inspection. The officers found that one of the boats had used a seine net with greater than the allowed 500 square feet of mesh. The fisherman faces up to \$3,500 in fines, up to 1 year in jail, forfeiture of his fishing gear, and a suspension of his commercial fishing license.

Officer Perry was on plain-clothes patrol while watching a group of fishermen on the Big Carlos Pass Bridge in Estero. He heard a subject yell "Where's the guy that wanted to buy mullet?" Several people shouted back in the exchange. He followed and watched as two vehicles were backed up to one another. He approached the subjects and was told they were selling the mullet for \$60. Neither subject had a saltwater products license (SPL) or retail license. The subjects were issued citations for selling fish without a retail dealer license and warnings for not having SPLs with restricted species endorsements. The 50 mullet were seized as evidence.

Officers Stanley and Hardgrove were at the Punta Rassa Boat Ramp conducting resource inspections. Upon approaching one vessel, Officer Hardgrove spoke with the captain and asked if they had kept any fish. They were told that they had caught some grouper and porgies. Once the lid of the cooler was opened, two gray triggerfish were found. The captain stated that they were kept by mistake and that they were of legal size. One triggerfish was 14 ½ inches in length, while the other was 13 ¼ inches in length. The captain was issued a citation for possession of gray triggerfish out of season and a warning for possessing an undersized gray triggerfish.

Officers Collazo and Wilkenson received a call to assist the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). Officer Hudson, of the NCWRC, explained that an individual had been illegally hunting in North Carolina and had taken three deer without permits or a hunting license. The individual had then left the state and brought them into Florida where he lives. Officers Collazo and Wilkenson arrived at his residence where the suspect's deer meat was photographed and seized. The suspect faces several charges in North Carolina as well as a federal Lacey Act violation.

## PASCO COUNTY

Officers Pettifer and Balfour received information regarding illegal hunting activity in Green Swamp West WMA. The officers responded to the Cumpressco Grade Campground to conduct surveillance and saw two individuals return to the campground from the woods wearing camouflage and carrying rifles. The following morning, the officers returned to the WMA and located one individual wearing hunter orange, sitting in a tree stand with a rifle. While under observation, the individual shot a deer. The two officers initiated contact with the hunter and explained to him that deer hunting season was closed in the Green Swamp West WMA. Back at the campground, K-9 Officer Wolf conducted a search of the hunters' campsite. His K-9 alerted on a cooler. A search of the cooler revealed a deer carcass with the head and sex identification removed. After being read Miranda Rights, one of the hunters admitted to shooting and cleaning the



deer from the cooler the day before. Based on their investigation, the officers cited the hunters for illegal possession of deer during a closed season, illegal possession of a deer carcass in the field without proper sex identification and hunting in a WMA without a hunting license and WMA permit.

Officer Balfour and Pettifer were on land patrol in the Aripeka area when they saw a vehicle parked in a remote location of state property that is closed to the public. The officers conducted surveillance of the vehicle and saw two individuals appear from the woods. The individuals were wearing camouflage, rubber boots, and their hands appeared dirty. The officers were able to track where the individuals had gone and they located a shovel. After being read their Miranda Rights, the individuals admitted that they were on the property to excavate the land to search for historical artifacts. The officers trespassed the individuals from the property. The charges of being on state land closed to the public, entering state land from an undesignated entrance, and excavating state land will be filed with the state attorney's office.

#### PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol in Tierra Verde, Officer Bibeau saw two individuals that were actively wade fishing. While under observation, one fisherman caught a snook and tied it to a stringer around his waist. At the conclusion of the subsequent resource inspection, the individual was cited for possession of an undersized and out-of-season snook and a warned for not obtaining a valid snook permit.

Officers Caldwell and Boogaerts were on patrol at the North Skyway Fishing Pier and saw an individual fishing from the pier. A resource inspection revealed an undersized gag grouper and sheepshead. The officers received consent to search a cooler in the individual's vehicle which revealed an additional seven undersized gag grouper. The individual was cited for possession of over the bag limit, undersized gag grouper and possession of gag grouper during a closed season.

#### POLK COUNTY

Polk County Sheriff's Office requested FWC assistance in locating a suspect that was armed with a firearm that fled from them into a wooded area. The FWC officers arrived with 4x4 vehicles and assisted on setting up a perimeter. The suspect and firearm were found by a K-9.

Officers Balfour and Pettifer were on land patrol near Kathleen when they saw a vehicle in the middle of a cow pasture. The driver was using the headlights in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife. The officers saw the vehicle occupants shine into a cypress bayhead, discharge a firearm and harvest a deer. After the deer was loaded, the officers stopped the vehicle and charged the individuals for taking a deer at night with the use of a gun and light, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and other license violations. The eight-point buck and firearm were seized as evidence.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### LEE COUNTY

Officer Fogle responded to a report of a manatee entangled in a crab trap line in Ceitus Lake in Cape Coral. After searching for several minutes and using incoming tips from the local homeowners, Officer Fogle was able to locate the manatee and confirm that it was entangled in the trap line. The local manatee program biologists had already been placed on standby by dispatch and were now enroute to begin a rescue operation. A short time later, with the biologists on board, he proceeded to locate and attach a radio tracking device to the manatee to prevent losing contact with the animal. It was during this segment of the operation that the biologists realized that they were actually dealing with a female manatee traveling with her calf. Captain Carpenter then joined the effort and the team attempted to slowly and methodically guide the manatee out of the deeper basin waters of the lake and into shallower water within the adjacent canal system, thereby making it much easier to approach. Once in the canal system and after several unsuccessful attempts, the team was finally able to briefly capture the manatee by hand and safely remove the entangled trap line from its flipper. The healthy looking female was photographed and immediately released unharmed. The trap will be returned to its rightful owner.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### PINELLAS COUNTY

In order to identify individuals attempting to buy, sell or trade fish and wildlife on the internet without a license, the Southwest Region Investigations Unit planned and implemented operation "Cyber Search." The lead investigator for the operation is Investigator McCorkle, who will proactively search internet websites looking for potential violators, set up buy/bust deals for teams of investigators to respond and make contact. Phase I of this operation began in December 2016. Investigator McCorkle has responded to over 25 advertisements from the internet, and set up over a dozen buy/bust deals for investigators. The investigators have issued 8 misdemeanor citations for no wholesale dealers license, no retail dealers license, unlawful sale of wildlife (removed from wild), unlawful sale of wildlife, illegal harvest, possession or sale of stone crab claws less than 2 ¾ inches, no valid saltwater products license and failure to present required records for captive wildlife. The investigators also issued 9 written warnings for unlawful sale of wildlife, possession/sale of birds/mammals; taxidermy operations, sale of bear parts, expired vehicle tag, and driving with a suspended license without knowledge. This operation has primarily been in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, and additional phases will be implemented in other parts of the Southwest Region.

### POLK COUNTY

Lieutenant Brooks, Pilot Fields, Officers Bontrager, Carter, Cloud, Infante, Kobs, Franks and Tyer conducted a night-hunting detail in southwest Polk County. This is a high-activity area for night hunting and trespass. With the assistance of Pilot Fields and Officer Bontrager using the FLAIR in the airplane, several vehicles were seen in the area and determined not to be in violation.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### DESOTO COUNTY

FWC officers have been assisting Horse Creek Ranch, Ben Hill Griffin Ranch, and VC Hollingsworth Ranch with ongoing wildlife and trespassing issues.

Lieutenant Fugate is helping Alico's Orange Co. division with documenting wildlife that has been disturbing their property.

### PINELLAS COUNTY

The 111th annual Epiphany Celebration took place in Tarpon Springs. The Greek Orthodox Archbishop blesses the waters in the Spring Bayou, tosses a wooden cross into the water, and approximately 60 Greek Orthodox boys (16–18 years old) attempt to retrieve the holy cross. This event draws thousands of spectators from land, and numerous spectators who arrive by vessel from around the world each year. As always, FWC officers are responsible for the boating safety, domestic security awareness, and perimeter security so vessels stay away from the Epiphany divers. With approximately 100 vessels in such a confined area, officers from the FWC, United States Custom and Border Protection, Pasco and Pinellas County Sheriff's Departments jointly worked together to ensure the safety of all. The FWC Southwest Region Dive Team also assisted during the celebration by pre-screening the lagoon where the ceremony takes place. This event progressed without incident, showing how a positive law enforcement presence makes a difference.

## **SOUTH A REGION**

### CASES

#### OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officers Moffett and Nasworth were on foot patrol at the Nubbins Slough Lock and saw a subject actively fishing and trespassing. They made contact with the subject to conduct a fisheries inspection and also advised the subject that he was trespassing on a posted area. During the course of gathering and reporting the subject's information, it was discovered that he had an active warrant for his arrest. Officers Moffett and Nasworth arrested the subject on an FWC warrant out of Okeechobee County and transported him to the Okeechobee County Jail.

## ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Fretwell and Investigator Patterson were on land patrol in Fort Pierce, when they saw a vehicle heading towards them in their lane of traffic. As they veered off the road to avoid a head-on collision, they were able to quickly turn around and initiate a traffic stop. The vehicle stopped about a mile away and contact was made with the driver to determine if the event was caused by a medical condition. The vehicle operator appeared to be impaired by alcohol and Field Sobriety Tasks were initiated. Once the tasks were unsuccessfully completed and the subject realized he would now be arrested and booked in jail for DUI of an alcoholic beverage, he became verbally abusive and combative. The subject was transported and subsequently booked in jail and charged with DUI and Reckless Operation of a vehicle. He was also cited with a traffic infraction.

The Statewide Investigations Section concluded a long-term investigation into the operation of an illegal landfill. A search warrant was served on the property by Captain Jones, Lieutenant's Garzaniti, Rogerson, Investigators Luher, Booth, Douglas and Officers Payne and Shermetaro. Members of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) agency, St. Lucie County Code Enforcement, and St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office assisted as well. The search revealed large quantities of yard trash, construction and demolition debris, as well as solid, hazardous and universal waste. The facility did not have the required permits for the operation of the landfill. Felony arrests were made for unlawful dumping on private property and littering exceeding 500 pounds. Misdemeanor arrests were made for unlawful storage, processing and disposal of solid waste, illegal disposal of tires, and creating a public nuisance.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Brevik, Hankinson and Morrow conducted numerous vessel stops focusing on commercial fisheries and boating safety regulations off the coast at Peck's Reef. The three officers found several violations involving fisheries quality control, safety requirements, narcotics and drug paraphernalia. The violations found were addressed appropriately.

## **SOUTH B REGION**

### CASES

### COLLIER COUNTY

While on water patrol near Cocohatchee Boat Ramp, Officer Lugg saw a bay boat returning towards the ramp. The operator acted in a manner as to avoid any potential stops when Officer Lugg tried to make contact with him. Officer Lugg was finally able to make contact with the operator and stated that he would be performing a marine

fisheries inspection. The operator advised that he had already been checked, had a safety sticker and did not need to be stopped again. Officer Lugg saw fishing poles laying in the deck of the vessel and asked if he had any fish on board. The operator hesitantly admitted he had a king mackerel in his cooler. Officer Lugg boarded the vessel and located, in a separate cooler being used for food and drinks, a full gallon bag of stone crab claws. Closer inspection revealed that the operator possessed 44 stone crab claws, 19 of which were undersized. The operator was cited accordingly.

Officer Plussa was on patrol in the Naples Bay area at the Bayview Park Boat Ramp when he saw a commercial mullet fishing vessel with a registration display law violation. Officer Plussa stopped the vessel and conducted a resource, safety and registration inspection of the vessel and its two occupants. While Officer Plussa was attempting to locate the vessel's Hull Identification Number (HIN), the suspect readily admitted to removing it from the vessel. Officer Plussa detained the operator until he completed his investigation. Lieutenants Mahoney, Sushil and Officer Kleis arrived on the scene to assist. A detailed inspection of the vessel revealed that its HIN had been completely removed, the vessel trailer had no tag displayed and its serial number was removed. Because the officers were unable to confirm the identities of both the trailer and vessel, both were seized. Because another occupant was a convicted felon, the officers seized the operator's two firearms for safe keeping. Officer Plussa arrested the operator for one felony charge of removing a vessel's HIN/possessing a vessel with a removed HIN, one misdemeanor charge for operating a vessel on state waters without a HIN, issued him two citations for boating safety equipment violations and four warnings for other boating safety equipment and registration violations. The operator was then booked into the Collier County Jail without incident.

Officer Plussa was conducting fisheries inspections of shoreline fishermen near the Jolley Bridge when he saw two subjects fishing behind some mangroves. A resource inspection revealed that neither subject possessed a fishing license. One subject provided identifying information to the officer cooperatively while the other provided a series of different number sequences, claiming that they were his driver license number. Officer Plussa conducted a records check with the different numbers provided by the subject, but no record existed. Officer Plussa requested additional information to identify the subject; however, the subject refused. Officer Plussa explained the fishing license law violation to him and his legal obligation to identify himself to a law enforcement officer. The subject then became hostile and continued to refuse to comply. Officer Plussa attempted to detain the subject until he could identify him, but the subject physically resisted. Officer Plussa arrested the subject for obstruction and resisting an officer without violence and cited him for fishing without a license.

Officers Araujo and Thurkettle attended a suppression hearing for an out-of-season deer case that they made in April 2016 in the Picayune Strand State Forest. The officers worked extensively with the state attorney explaining that they did have probable cause for the vehicle stop. They also received help from Officers Polly, Reams and Reith, who found specific laws to present to the courts in favor of the state's argument of a valid stop. If the defense had won the motion to suppress the validity of the stop, it would

have eliminated the violations of the two out-of-season whitetail bucks that were found hidden. The officers' hard work paid off when the judge ruled that the officers did have probable cause to stop the vehicle. The motion ended with the defense immediately accepting a firm plea deal that had been previously offered.

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officers and investigators came across two individuals walking in a remote area. Upon contact, they discovered the two individuals had been involved in an accident and their vehicle was submerged in a canal. The individuals were transported to a roadway and were provided assistance. The individuals' identifications were provided to FWC dispatch while waiting for family members to arrive. FWC dispatch advised one of the individuals had an active warrant from Monroe County, and the subject was taken into custody and transported to the TGK Correctional Center. The operator of the vehicle involved in the accident was cited by the Miami-Dade Police for careless operation.

Officers conducted commercial fisheries inspections on shrimp vessels when a cold front moved through making conditions ideal for shrimp harvest. Officers stopped several vessels with violations stemming from harvest of food shrimp by illegal method, improper storage of bait shrimp and food shrimp, improper commercial markings, improper lighting for gear in the water, over the recreational limit, no commercial license and illegal gear. Several written warnings were also issued along with educational stops.

While conducting harbor patrols, FWC officers assisted the City of Miami Police with alleged gun fire at the Bayside Market place. Although the officers conducted sweeps of the area, no gunman was found.

## MONROE COUNTY

Officers Foell, Richards and Pilot Willman were aboard the offshore patrol vessel *Interceptor* conducting a directed patrol on shrimp boats south of Key West to enforce regulations pertaining to Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) and Marine Sanitation Devices (MSD). The officers completed three shrimp boat inspections resulting in one warning, two MSD violations, one TED violation and a warrant.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### MONROE COUNTY

Officer Garrison helped with a giant loggerhead turtle that had become entrapped in a crab trap. Officers Carroll and Martino responded to assist with relocating the turtle to the Turtle Hospital in Marathon.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

## COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Shea took 23 cadets from the Naples High School Army JROTC program to the Naples Zoo to learn about native constricting snakes, invasive species of snakes and venomous snakes that are found in Florida. Some of the spotlighted snakes included the eastern diamondback, water moccasin and the dusky pygmy rattle snake. Lieutenant Shea also explained what to do if a snake bites someone. The class was to prepare the cadets for a two-day trip into the Big Cypress National Preserve where the cadets will learn survival skills. The cadets will need to be able to identify the animals that they encounter on the hike for a written test.

Lieutenant Bulger and Dr. J. Korn, FWC panther biologist, were invited to attend the Safari Club International, Southwest Florida Chapter, January meeting. Dr. Korn gave a presentation on the current state of the Florida panther and outlined FWC's role in protecting the species. The members of the club were very interested in FWC's mission, hoping to work closely with the agency in the future to encourage responsible sportsmanship in southwest Florida.

## MONROE COUNTY

Several officers assisted with the Keys Annual "Wounded Warrior Soldier Ride" where recovering veterans ride their specially manufactured and/or modified bikes through the Keys. The officers aided the Monroe County Sheriff's Office with traffic control as they escorted the riders throughout the route to Marathon. The 50+ riders and support personnel continued the following day to the Key West area for more activities. Numerous FWC officers and staff in the Marathon area proudly displayed our colors saluting and applauding the soldiers as they rode by our local office along the route.



Officers Carroll and Martino attended a turtle release at Sombrero Beach in Marathon on Christmas Eve. More than 200 hundred people attended and Officers Carroll and

Martino spoke with the public and passed out goodies for the children while educating them about FWC's mission.