

**FWC
Division of Law Enforcement**



Weekly Report

January 13, 2017 through January 19, 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

BAY COUNTY

Officers Wicker and N. Basford were on water patrol in East Bay when they heard shooting coming from the Cooks Bayou area. They saw several vessels in the area chasing ducks and shooting while underway. The officers stopped one of the vessels which had two hunters on board. The hunters had three redhead ducks in their possession. Both were issued citations for hunting waterfowl from a moving vessel.

Officers Walker and Leonard were on resource patrol when they saw a vehicle parked at the intersection of Crews Lake Road and Environmental Road on the western boundary line of Pine Log State Forest. They waited in the area for the owner to return to the vehicle. Approximately 20 minutes later, a subject walked out of the woods and returned to the vehicle. The subject stated that two of his hunting dogs had gotten loose and that he was looking for them. One of the officers backtracked from where the subject exited the woods and found a loaded .270 caliber rifle 100 yards south of Environmental Road. They also found a tree stand and trail camera within 50 feet of whole corn. The subject admitted to baiting the area and that the gun, tree stand and trail camera were his. The subject was cited accordingly.

Lieutenant Allen and Officers Gore and N. Basford were conducting quality control inspections on seafood houses. At one seafood house, officers saw containers of shucked oysters with no expiration dates and some with expired dates. The officers also located untagged bags of oysters. The seafood house owner received a written warning for untagged bags of oysters and three misdemeanor citations for operating an uncertified shellfish plant, terminal sale date must appear and for selling shellfish after terminal sale date had expired.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Corbin was on land patrol along the Destin Harbor when he saw a pontoon aground on the shoreline. The last known registered owner was determined based on the vessel's registration numbers. He made contact with the registered owner who stated he sold the pontoon and provided a signed bill of sale. The new owner failed to transfer the vessel's title in his name, which is required within 30 days of purchase. The new owner was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Bartlett and Rockwell received a call from a complainant about three subjects trespassing on private property along the Yellow River. The officers went to the Oak Grove Boat Ramp to wait for the complainant. While waiting, they saw a man in a boat coming to the boat ramp. Officer Rockwell made contact with him and determined that he was coming from his camp upriver. He conducted a resource inspection and found the man in possession of a .22 caliber rifle, a gray squirrel and a turkey breast. During

Officer Rockwell's search, the man told Officer Bartlett that he had a domestic violence injunction against him and was not allowed to possess a firearm. The subject stated that he was hunting with his sons on an island. The officers accompanied the man back to his camp where the man's sons were hunting. Neither son had a hunting license and were issued citations for hunting without a license. The man was arrested for possession of a firearm while under a domestic violence injunction and booked at the Okaloosa County Jail. The officers determined that the man's hunting license had been suspended.

Officer Arnette was watching a field where he had seen possible night-hunting activity, when a truck pulled into the field and the occupants shined the area with a spotlight. When Officer Arnette activated his blue lights, the driver immediately left the field but pulled into a nearby yard. A woman was driving while her husband was riding in the passenger seat. A rifle was hidden behind the seat, but cartridges from the rifle were laying on top of the fresh groceries the subjects had just purchased. Both subjects were charged with night hunting.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Brooks located a tree stand on private property where no hunting was allowed. When he later checked the area, the stand had been removed. He made contact with two subjects on adjacent private property and recognized the tree stand in their possession. One of the subjects admitted to placing and retrieving the stand from where Officer Brooks had seen it. The subjects were issued trespass warnings at the request of the land manager.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark and FWC Bear Biologist Jordan Green conducted an outreach event at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. Mr. Green presented a PowerPoint presentation as well as a static display for the staff, volunteers, campers and members of the surrounding communities. The main focus of the outreach event was to educate the community on how to reduce human - bear encounters. Approximately 35 people attended.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson, Investigator Bembry, Officer Troiano and K-9 units Gill and Wiggins worked a complaint of an illegal deer being shot. After interviews and written

statements, a crossbow and blood samples were seized as evidence. Per the landowner's request, a warning was issued for trespass and charges will be filed through the state attorney's office for taking doe deer during a closed season.

Officer Stanley saw several violations on Watermelon Pond while checking area fisherman. Several kayakers and two Jon boats were gathered in a circle and, while watching through binoculars, he saw the boaters begin passing around a cannabis cigarette. When they returned to the ramp, they were shocked to see an FWC officer waiting on them. Eight warnings and three citations were issued.

Officer Stanley saw thirteen garbage bags off NW 128th Lane on Plum Creek property and located two names after examining the contents of several bags. One individual was on probation. After talking to Parole and Probation, the individual returned to the dumpsite to clean up the garbage and gave a written statement on who dumped the garbage at the location. Charges will be filed through the state attorney's office.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenants Kiss, Huff, Officers McDonald and Yates conducted a detail at Alligator Lake Small Game Wildlife Management Area (WMA) targeting duck hunting. During the detail, two citations were issued for taking migratory game from a moving vessel. One citation for a license violation and four warnings were also issued. Approximately 45 hunters were checked during the detail.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Schirbock was on routine land patrol at the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA) power lines off Yellow Water Road, an area known for trespassing and poaching, when he noticed two sets of taillights and one ATV taillight driving away from him along the JEA power lines. He initiated a traffic stop on the two vehicles and the ATV and identified three subjects who did not have permission to be on the property. The subjects stated they did not know who owned the property and they did not see any "no trespassing" signs. Officer Schirbock explained to them that it was JEA property and that the entrance they used had a "no trespassing" sign on each side of the entrance road. The three subjects were issued notices to appear in court for misdemeanor trespassing on property other than a structure or conveyance.

RESCUES

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Waldo was on patrol of the Mitigation Trail at Heartstone Way when he found a three-year old child covered in mud wandering around in the woods. It was already dark outside and the child was scared and crying. Officer Waldo immediately notified the Jacksonville Regional Communication Center (JRCC) and gave a description of the child. The JRCC notified the Nassau County Sheriff's Office. Officer Waldo was able to

calm the child enough to find out the child's name and his parents' names. He took the child and began driving through the woods and the adjoining neighborhood to see if he could locate the parents. After several minutes, Officer Waldo came upon the child's grandfather in the woods. The child had wandered off from the hunt club and there were several family members already searching on ATVs. The child was released back to the care of the relieved family.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson and Officer Harris worked the 15th Annual Tour De San Felasco State Park bicycle event. With more than 700 registered cyclists participating in the 50-mile and 100-mile bike race, only a few minor injuries were reported throughout the day.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

While on foot patrol at Haulover Canal, Officer Balgo saw a couple fishing along the shore. While conducting a fisheries inspection, he found that the couple had three black drum over 24 inches. Each person may possess only one black drum over 24 inches. The couple also had an undersized sheepshead in their possession. After interviewing the individuals, it was determined the female had caught two of the three oversized black drum and the undersized sheepshead. The female was issued one citation in reference to possession of more than one black drum over 24 inches and one warning for possession of an undersized sheepshead.

At Haulover Canal, Officer Balgo saw a vehicle containing three fishermen drive past with several black drum tails in the truck bed. A fisheries inspection revealed six black drum over 24 inches. The operator of the vehicle was issued one citation for possession of more than one black drum over 24 inches.

LAKE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator McDaniel received a complaint of an individual possessing a rattlesnake without a license. He discovered that the male subject had an approximately seven-foot-long diamondback rattlesnake in an aquarium in his residence. He admitted to having the snake for over five years. The subject was cited for possession of venomous reptiles without a permit as well as given warnings for several caging violations. The snake was seized to be turned over to a licensed facility.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Birchfield and Goggin were working plain-clothes water patrol, enforcing commercial fishing activity near Gasparilla Pass. They conducted a vessel stop on a commercial vessel that was traveling through the Gasparilla Pass, displaying improper navigation lights. As soon as they approached the vessel, they could see that there was a pile of mullet on the floor of the vessel that did not have any ice on it. The mullet appeared dry and to be out of the water for some time. When the officers asked the captain of the vessel why his mullet was not iced down, he advised it was too rough in the Gulf to ice the fish. The captain was seen in calm waters for some time, and no effort was made to cover the mullet with ice. A notice to appear for the quality control violation and a warning for the navigation light violation were issued to the captain. Approximately 400 pounds of mullet was confirmed to be unsafe for human consumption and was subsequently sold as bait.

Officers Morrison and Goggin were on land patrol near the Boca Grande Fishing Pier when they saw two men break into a vehicle and remove several items from it. When confronted, both men claimed to be friends with the owner of the vehicle and stated they were playing a joke. However, neither of them were able to give the owner's name. When the owner of the vehicle was later located, still fishing on the pier, he stated that he did not know either subject, nor did they have permission to enter or take any items from the vehicle. Both men were suspects for other similar crimes in the area and were arrested. The investigation was turned over to the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office.

Officers Morrison and Cohl testified in a jury trial in reference to a subject arrested in December 2015 by FWC officers during the Punta Gorda Light Parade in Charlotte Harbor. The subject was arrested on numerous charges and violations including BUI, possession of a controlled substance, resisting arrest, and dumping of raw human waste. The subject was found guilty by a jury of his peers, and was convicted of resisting arrest without violence and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was sentenced to 60 days in jail, 24 months of probation, multiple fines and the requirement to complete 45 hours of community service and a substance abuse course.

HARDEE COUNTY

Officers Infante and Bontrager were patrolling in south Hardee County in an area known for night-hunting violations. The officers saw a vehicle drive towards them while shining a spotlight out of the passenger side window. During a vehicle stop, the officers saw a loaded hunting rifle and a spotlight within reach of the passenger. The passenger, who admitted to owning the spotlight and rifle, was charged with display of a light in a place where deer might be found in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer while possessing a firearm. The rifle and spotlight were seized as evidence.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Lieutenant Grover, Investigator Tsongranis, Officers Pettifer and Balfour responded to Southwest Florida Water Management District Property (SWFWMD), north of Aripeka and discovered a vehicle parked near an undesignated entrance point to the SWFWMD property. Shortly after finding the vehicle, two individuals covered in dirt and mud exited the property. The two individuals were interviewed and admitted to digging for artifacts on the SWFWMD property. The officers followed the two individuals' foot sign into the property and discovered a shovel specially modified to dig for artifacts. The individuals were cited for illegal excavation of artifacts on SWFWMD property.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Zimmerman received information that there were individuals illegally dog hunting in the County Preserve property. Once on foot in the woods, he saw two individuals running deer dogs from a county maintained road next to the preserve. The subjects were issued notices to appear for take or attempt to take wildlife from a county maintained road.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Stanley arrested a charter fishing guide for driving on a permanently revoked driver license. The officer had prior knowledge of the revoked driver license from a previous vessel stop, during which the subject was advised not to drive a motor vehicle. Officer Hardgrove and Officer Stanley saw the defendant driving, but were unable to conduct the traffic stop due to having a vessel in tow. When the defendant was seen returning from a charter fishing trip, he was arrested for felony traffic violation of driving on a permanently revoked driver license.

While on patrol with Officer McColgin at the second span of the Sanibel Causeway, Officer Hardgrove encountered four individuals shark fishing from shore. One individual was asked to reel in to check what they were using for bait. Two of the rods had spotted sea trout that was halved and hooked for bait. The halved ends of the spotted sea trout matched each other and measured 10 ½ inches in length. One individual was issued a notice to appear for the charge of possession of undersized spotted sea trout.

While on patrol with Officer McColgin at the second span of the Sanibel Causeway, Officer Hardgrove encountered an individual walking back to the parking lot carrying several fishing poles, a net, and pulling a cooler. Asked if he had caught any fish, the individual responded by stating that he had not. Upon inspecting the contents of the cooler, a clear plastic bag was located that contained several undersized fish including an undersized mangrove snapper, an undersized gag grouper, and an undersized sheepshead. The individual was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Investigator Ruggiero and Officer Price conducted a livery inspection on a business that rented a personal watercraft that was involved in a boating accident. While the officers were conducting the livery inspection, 13 violations were found by the officers. The rental managers were notified of the violations and were informed of how to correct the problems. They were also issued the appropriate citations.

Lieutenant Ruggiero received a phone call from former FWC Officer Rice, who is now a detective for the Florida Division of Investigative and Forensic Services, Bureau of Insurance Fraud. Detective Rice needed assistance getting to an island to investigate a person who received a stop work order in April 2016, and was still conducting business illegally. Upon arrival at the island, the officers conducted surveillance but were unable to identify any workers. Shortly after, they saw three men working with a commercial grade tree chipper. Lieutenant Ruggiero approached the men and pretended to be investigating a gopher tortoise violation and was able to get the men to admit they worked for the suspect. The suspect showed up a short while later, and admitted to the violation during an interview with Detective Rice. He was arrested for the felony violation of failing to obey the stop work order. The suspect was transported to shore and delivered to the Lee County Jail.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at Gandy Beach, Officers Bibeau and Martinez made contact with an individual to conduct a fisheries inspection. During the inspection, the officers saw a large red fish in plain view, located in the individual's vehicle. The officers measured the fish and it was found to be 32 ½ inches in total length. Officer Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of oversized red fish.

While on water patrol in Pass-a-Grille Channel, Officers Bibler and Bibeau stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. The officers located three red grouper, the largest of which measured only 15 inches. The captain of the vessel took responsibility for the fish violations, and was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized red grouper.

While on land patrol in Safety Harbor, Officer Martinez saw a subject cast netting from the railroad bridge to the water below. The subject saw Officer Martinez approaching, stopped what he was doing, and immediately picked up a nearby bag. Officer Martinez identified himself and told the subject to drop the bag. The subsequent resource inspection revealed an out-of-season and undersized snook in the bag, as well as four undersized sheepshead. The subject cited accordingly for the violations.

POLK COUNTY

While on patrol, Officers Balfour and Pettifer saw a vehicle traveling slowly in a field near S.R 471. The driver was shining the vehicle's headlights in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife. The officers saw the driver of the vehicle stop and shine its headlights into a wooded area. Shortly after stopping, one of the occupants of

the vehicle discharged a firearm. The driver and occupants of the vehicle exited the area. The officers pulled the vehicle over to initiate a resource inspection. The officers found a freshly killed 8-point buck in the bed of the truck. The driver of the vehicle admitted to using his headlights to illuminate the deer while he shot it with a rifle. The driver of the vehicle was cited for illegal take of a deer using a gun and light.

Officer Adams responded to a boating accident involving two vessels, with minor injuries, on Lake Shipp in Winter Haven during a bass fishing tournament. His investigation revealed that the operator of vessel one failed to maintain a proper look out and the operator was cited accordingly.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officers Sierra, Brown, Ridgway, Hughes, Dalton and Stasko were working a joint fisheries enforcement detail with Sarasota Sheriff's Department and Venice Police Department. The detail took place at the Venice Inlets, and focused on vessels returning from off shore fishing trips in the Gulf of Mexico. During the detail, a commercial charter fishing vessel was stopped and an inspection was performed. Along with numerous licensing violations, the captain was in possession of undersized red snapper. The captain was given warnings on the licensing violations, but cited criminally for the undersized fish. He will have to appear in court for his violation.

RESCUES

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officers Smith, Kobs and Infante responded to a missing boater on Lake Istokpoga. The officers searched the lake making contact with every vessel on the lake to ensure their well-being, along with attempting to find any vessel that was in distress. The Highlands County Sheriff's Office responded to the boat ramps to check for any sign of the missing boater. After a lengthy search, Officer Smith was able to make contact with the original complainant who told him that the boater was fine and just had a dead battery.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

LEE COUNTY

Officer Furbay conducted speed enforcement on Corkscrew and Alico Roads in an effort to reduce speeding in the known panther crossing areas. He issued three infractions and eight warnings for speed-related violations, and educated each person on the panther zones in the area.

SOUTH A REGION

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Alford responded to a boating accident on Lake Okeechobee. The operator of the vessel had struck an unknown object submerged below the surface of the water. No injuries were reported and the vessel was towed to shore by a local marina. Officer Alford conducted a boating accident investigation.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Alford responded to a boating accident at the Roland Martin Marina. He interviewed two operators and a witness to the collision, took written statements, and inspected damage to the vessels. One of the operators had violated Navigational Rule #5 for not having a proper lookout and was cited.

RESCUES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Alford was on patrol on Highway 27 travelling southbound near the Crooked Hook RV Resort when he saw a vehicle obstructing the road. He pulled over to investigate and found that an elderly female had struck the rear tire of a semi-truck while attempting to pull onto the highway. The truck had left the scene heading south on Highway 27. The subject refused any medical treatment and Officer Alford assisted in walking the subject to a safe place to sit in a nearby vehicle while waiting for her neighbors to pick her and her vehicle up. Palm Beach County Sheriff's deputies arrived to complete the vehicle crash report.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officers were conducting a detail to enforce commercial shrimping regulations while on water patrol near the Rickenbacker Causeway when they encountered a small commercial shrimping boat with a push net on the bow. The officers inquired about the net and its construction to which the subject stated he was using a monofilament net. When told by the officers that monofilament nets were no longer legal, the subject stated he knew that the law changed but he had not yet changed his net. The subject was cited accordingly.

Two officers were on land patrol checking shoreline fishermen at Moody Canal when they saw an adult female dumping what appeared to be undersized fish back into the water. She was instructed to stop her actions and upon completion of a fisheries inspection, the actual fisherman (her husband) was found to be in possession of ten

undersized mangrove snapper and one undersized schoolmaster snapper. The subject was issued citations for the resource violations as well as no shoreline fishing license.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Wilkins was checking fishing licenses and conducting resource inspections on Long Key Bridge. As he approached the entrance of the bridge, a man who was fishing there began to throw several undersized mutton snapper into the water. Officer Wilkins ran up to the subject and immediately detained him. Upon further investigation, the subject had a dead pork fish in his cooler and no valid saltwater fishing license. The man was arrested for interference and the other fisheries violations and transported to the Marathon Jail for booking.

Officer McKay was ending his shift when he saw on the Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) that an FHP trooper was in pursuit of a suspect in Key Largo. The trooper was following a suspected drunk driver and when he activated his lights for the stop, the driver sped up, crossed the median of US 1, drove on a side walk and then bailed out on a side street. Officer McKay soon arrived on the scene along with Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) deputies. The officer assisted in the search of a wooded area as the trooper and MCSO deputy went to the driver's last known residence. The female driver was later taken into custody where she was charged with DUI, felony fleeing and eluding, felony driving on a permanently revoked driver's license, trespassing of a conveyance, and resisting an officer without violence.

Officer Baumgartner was on patrol when she conducted a resource inspection on an individual and juvenile fishing under Snake Creek Bridge in the Upper Keys. The individual admitted to not having a fishing license. After conducting a resource inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of 5 undersized mangrove snapper and 1 over the limit. Citations were issued accordingly.

Investigator Cox and Officers Sapp and Baumgartner worked in conjunction on a derelict vessel case. An individual was picked up in Miami on a warrant for failure to pay prior uniform boating citations issued by Officer Baumgartner and other officers. The individual was cited for 2 more misdemeanors, including a secondary derelict vessel charge. Officer Sapp issued 5 uniform boating citations as well.

Officer Baumgartner came across a small group of people actively fishing under Snake Creek Bridge in Islamorada. Upon conducting a resource inspection, 3 undersized mangrove snappers, 2 undersized yellowtail snappers, 1 undersized schoolmaster and 3 species of deceased marine life were located in their possession. Officer Garcia was able to provide further translation and citations were issued accordingly to the individual who claimed responsibility.

Officer Mattson was dispatched to a vessel boating accident with injuries in Key Largo. When he arrived on the scene to talk to the rental operators, they stated that the injured party self-transported to the hospital to get his knee looked over by a doctor. At the

hospital, he spoke with the operator and the injured passenger. The man had broken bones as well as swelling and bruising from the impact with the PWC.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Sushil and Officers Polly and Reams responded to the area near Lostman's River in mainland Monroe County, Everglades National Park, to a reported Pseudorca whale (false killer whale) stranding. Lieutenant Bulger and Officer Plussa met with members of FWC's Marine Mammal Response Team at Caxambas Boat Ramp and, along with Officer Costello of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, escorted the team of biologists to the area. Due to the significant number of whales, a second team was delivered to the area by members of the Collier County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit. Officers and biologists worked tirelessly to aid the mammals, but many had succumbed by nightfall. Lieutenant Bulger, Officers Barringer, Lugg and Osorio, Marine Mammal Response Team members, officers from the National Park Service, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, Mote Marine Research Laboratory, Dolphins Plus, Harbor Branch, the Sarasota Research Program and the University of Florida all returned to the area on Sunday and Monday working together to rescue the mammals. The teams performed necropsies and took samples and measurements for future study.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Lieutenant Shea accompanied 20 cadets and 6 adults from the Naples High School Army JROTC program into the Big Cypress National Preserve for a 24-hour survival hike. The cadets had to hike seven miles into the preserve along the Florida Trail. While on their route, the cadets encountered a scenario where each of the three teams had to perform first aid on a teammate and carry them on an improvised stretcher one mile for a timed competition. Once at their campsites, the cadets built improvised shelters for the night, took written tests on snake and reptile identification, built improvised fishing gear, built a fire by primitive methods, took a written test on first aid, and completed a land navigation course where, at the end, they found their dinner. To keep the experience realistic, Lieutenant Shea provided donated fresh American Alligator meat for their evening meal. In the morning, the cadets hiked back out the seven miles. This year marks 21 years that Lieutenant Shea has been leading this outreach event which the teenagers look forward to every year.