

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report
February 10, 2017 through February 16, 2017

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

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers Long and Allgood inspected a local seafood dealer in Pensacola. They found several violations including undersized flounder, no paperwork documenting where the fish came from, and two different quality control violations. The owner of the business was given notice to appear citations for the violations.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Ramos was on patrol in the Robert's Pond Unit of Eglin Wildlife Management Area (WMA), when he found a vehicle parked in a suspicious location. He followed fresh foot prints and other sign towards a stalk hunting area and after reaching the legal boundary of the area, followed the tracks more than ½ mile into a permanently closed area of Eglin. Additional signs of hunting activity were present and it was determined the subject was currently hunting well inside the closed area. Officer Jones arrived to assist and the two officers positioned themselves on a trail waiting for the hunter to return from the closed area. Nearly an hour after sunset, Officer Jones intercepted the subject trying to sneak back onto the main trail in an area open for hunting. When Officer Ramos questioned the subject, he said that he was just barely inside the closed area. After presenting additional evidence, he admitted that he had been deep inside the closed area and that he "should have known better." Eglin Range Patrol arrived and issued the man a notice of violation, suspending his ability to enter Eglin WMA for one year. Officer Ramos charged the man with a criminal citation for hunting in a closed area and warned him for other violations.

Officers Roberson and Mullins were on patrol when they were dispatched to the Escambia River WMA. A complaint had been received about subjects hunting with dogs in the still hunt area and using an ATV. After arriving on scene moments later, two subjects walked out of the woods with two hunting dogs on leashes and carrying fixed-blade knives on their waistband. After interviewing the first two subjects, two more exited the woods with an ATV and more hunting dogs and two more knives. After gathering all information, they were found to be hunting hogs. Officer Roberson issued misdemeanor citations to three of the subjects for dog hunting in a still-hunt area. Officer Mullins issued one of the subjects an infraction for the use of an ATV on the Escambia River WMA.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Hollinhead checked two hunters in the Eglin WMA Archery Unit when they returned to their vehicle. The subjects appeared nervous and the lieutenant had previously noticed they attempted to conceal their foot sign around the wooded area they had entered to hunt. When the subjects exited the area, the back track led to

where they had hunted, revealing their tree stands that had bait (corn) deposited around them. Both subjects were later interviewed at their residence and admitted to hunting from the tree stands over the bait. Both were charged for hunting over bait on a WMA.

While Officers Pifer and Corbin were on vessel patrol conducting boating safety and state fisheries inspections in the Destin Pass area, they saw a fishing vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico. The officers stopped the vessel in the Destin Harbor. The fisheries inspection revealed the subject was in possession of an undersized scamp and was cited accordingly.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Brooks saw six subjects hog hunting with dogs on the Choctawhatchee River WMA, which was closed to hunting hogs with dogs during the primitive hunting season. An adjoining landowner reported one of the dogs had been observed on his property. The subjects were cited for hunting hogs with dogs during the closed season.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Escambia County officers concentrated their efforts on fisheries enforcement this week. Most fishermen were found to be in compliance, but officers documented eight state and federal fisheries violations. These violations included possession of red snapper during closed season and several other size-limit violations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Johnston and McDonald followed up on information they received in reference to two subjects who had fished at a bass tournament in Putnam County and kept all the fish they caught. The fish were taken to a residence in Lake City. The officers located both subjects and conducted interviews. Both subjects admitted to bringing the fish back and not releasing them. The fish were located in a freezer already cleaned. A total of 44 largemouth bass fillets were seized along with 22 largemouth bass carcasses. Appropriate charges will be filed with the state attorney's office.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

CLAY COUNTY

Uniform patrol, investigations and the Duval County Resource Protection Unit (RPU) Squad worked together to target moonlight cruisers in Jennings State Forest. In one night, the officers wrote 19 citations to individuals illegally driving off-road vehicles in Jennings State Forest. Citations were also issued for alcohol violations. Jeeps and other vehicles were out during the full moon in areas where vehicles have been damaging roads and other areas of the WMA.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officers from the Jacksonville RPU Squad joined Investigator Izsak to conduct offshore JEA patrol and made several cases of red snapper violations. Officer Christmas was able to locate bags containing three filets of red snappers on one vessel. In addition to the failure to land in whole condition case, citations were issued for possession of red snapper in closed federal waters and interference with an FWC officer conducting legal resource inspections.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Shaw received a complaint regarding an injured red-tail hawk that was possibly shot. He transported the hawk to the Aviation Rehab Center in Apopka for medical care. An x-ray revealed nine shotgun pellets and fractured bones in the hawk's wing. Officer Shaw's investigation located a witness and the subject responsible for shooting the hawk. Charges were filed with the state attorney's office.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Eason was on water patrol in the area of Lake George and Silver Glen Springs when he observed a male subject standing in the water, holding up a blue tilapia by hand. As he approached the subject, he saw him standing on a Hawaiian sling under the water. An inspection of the catch revealed five large tilapia and three mullet. All of the fish were located in a diver's bag, and the subject was wearing diving flippers. The subject admitted to taking the freshwater species by spearfishing. A criminal citation was issued for the violation.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

FWC officers and investigators responded to a single-vessel boating accident that occurred on the Peace River. The vessel was traveling on plane when it struck a sand bar, causing the subjects to be ejected. One subject was struck by the propeller and was transported to a local hospital with serious injuries. This is an ongoing boating accident investigation.

LEE COUNTY

FWC officers and investigators responded to a single-vessel, personal watercraft accident that occurred on a lake in Cape Coral. The vessel was traveling on plane, towing a passenger on an inflatable, tube-like device. The passenger fell off of the tube shortly before the vessel and operator collided with a fixed object. The operator was unresponsive and taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead. This is an ongoing boating accident investigation.

FWC officers and investigators responded to an alligator bite incident at a golf and country club in northern Fort Myers. The subject was golfing near a pond when he was bitten on the right foot by an alligator. The subject was able to hit the alligator with his golf club, which caused it to release his foot and get away. The subject sought medical treatment for his injury. This is an ongoing alligator bite investigation.

FWC officers and investigators responded to a boating accident which occurred in a small pond. When officers arrived on scene, it was determined that a male subject died from injuries after colliding with a dock. Officers coordinated with local authorities and hospital staff to determine the cause of the accident. The investigation is ongoing.

While on patrol at the Punta Rassa Boat Ramp, Officer Hardgrove performed a resource inspection which revealed an undersized red grouper. The subject was issued a citation for the violation.

Officer Hardgrove conducted a resource inspection on a vessel returning from offshore at the Punta Rassa Boat Ramp and found a grey triggerfish and a dusky shark on board. The subject was issued a citation for possession of an undersized and out-of-season grey triggerfish, and a warning for possession of the dusky shark.

Officer Hardgrove was on patrol on Sanibel Island when he encountered two subjects fishing. The subjects had several undersized sheepshead and mangrove snapper. One subject dumped his catch before Officer Hardgrove could measure them. The subject was issued a citation for undersized mangrove snapper, sheepshead, and interfering with an FWC officer. The other subject received a warning for his undersized catch.

While on patrol at a boat ramp in Cape Coral, Officer Hardgrove approached a subject fishing and conducted a fisheries inspection. His inspection revealed an undersized sheepshead and an undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was issued a citation for the undersized fish.

Officers Perry, Hardgrove and Investigator Jernstedt assisted the United States Coast Guard (USCG) with a vessel stop. The USCG had conducted a stop on the vessel and discovered several filets on board the vessel. The subjects were visiting from another state and had filleted their catch of lane snapper before landing them ashore. The operator was cited for failing to land lane snapper in whole condition.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton was on land patrol in the area of the South Skyway Fishing Pier. While on patrol, he performed a fisheries inspection on an individual fishing from the end of the pier and found that the subject had caught and kept a 9 ½-inch gag grouper. The subject was cited for possession of gag grouper out of season. He was also given a written warning for undersized gag grouper.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officers Pulaski and Pettifer responded to a complaint of an individual in possession of a gopher tortoise. Upon arrival, the officers located the gopher tortoise in a shopping cart. Officer Pulaski seized the tortoise as evidence, and issued a citation for possession of a gopher tortoise.

SARASOTA COUNTY

While on land patrol in the area of Blind Pass Park, Officer Brown performed a fisheries inspection on a subject collecting hard clams in Lemon Bay. During the inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of 25 gallons of hard clams, 20 gallons over the 5-gallons per person possession limit. The subject was also advised that he was harvesting clams from an area that was currently closed to shell fishing. The individual was cited accordingly for the violations.

FWC officers and investigators responded to a single-vessel boating accident that occurred in the area of Sarasota Bay. The vessel was traveling on plane, when the operator attempted to make a turn causing both subjects to be ejected. The passenger was able to swim to shore and call for help, while the operator was later found deceased. This is an ongoing boating accident investigation.

RESCUES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers Ahlers, Balfour, Boogaerts, Bontrager, Phillippi, Tyer, K-9 Wolff and Lieutenant Parisoe responded to Sergeant's Park to assist the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) locate an individual that was lost along the Hillsborough River. The HCSO received a 911 call from the stranded hiker who had been lost since the previous day. After a brief search, HCSO Aviation located the hiker and Officers Balfour and Phillippi walked to the coordinates provided and retrieved the individual. Hillsborough County

Fire Rescue checked the welfare of the hiker after their return. During the investigation, HCSO located drug paraphernalia on the individual, and he was subsequently arrested.

SOUTH A REGION

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Sadilek and Ryan conducted a fisheries inspection on a subject who had been spearfishing along the seawall at the Hillsboro Inlet Park in Pompano Beach. As he exited the water, the officers observed him carrying a small black grouper. With information gathered, Officer Ryan issued the individual a criminal notice to appear citation for possession of grouper out of season. The fish was seized as evidence.

GLADES COUNTY

Officers Nasworth, Toby, Deweese, Mclendon, Warensford and Lieutenant Brown responded to the Fisheating Creek campground in Palmdale for a possible missing subject. When units arrived on the scene, contact was made with one adult male subject and one juvenile female subject, who had been listed as missing out of Lee County since January 27, 2017. Officers gained permission to search the adult male's campsite and discovered 21.50 grams of marijuana. The subject admitted he knew the juvenile was under age and had been given orders by the Department of Children and Families not to have contact with the juvenile female. The adult male subject was arrested and booked into Glades County Jail on charges of possession of marijuana over 20 grams, sheltering an unmarried minor and interfering with custody.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Alford saw three subjects at STA 5 with cast nets and large red baskets, made contact and asked if the subjects had caught the fish in the baskets with their cast nets. One of the subjects advised that they had caught the fish. Three black bass and seven bream were mixed in with the tilapia in the baskets. The net, when inspected, was greater than one inch. One of the subjects also had a warrant out of Collier County. The warrant was confirmed and the Collier County Sheriff's Office advised they would extradite the subject. A pipe in the subject's front pocket tested positive for marijuana. All three subjects were arrested for possessing fish and the illegal net. The subject with the warrant was also charged with the out-of-county warrant and for possessing drug paraphernalia.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Hankinson and Godward were on water patrol conducting fisheries inspections offshore of the Lake Worth Inlet, and saw a vessel with subjects attempting to harvest

fish. They found numerous violations pertaining to size limits, bag limits and closed season. The species in violation were black grouper, mutton snapper, vermilion snapper and yellowtail snapper. The three subjects were issued a total of nine criminal citations.

Officer Toby saw a vessel operating without the proper navigational lights on Lake Okeechobee. Upon conducting a vessel inspection for the violation, the two individuals on board were found to be in possession of two undersized black crappie in a cooler. Each individual was issued a misdemeanor citation pertaining to possession of the undersized black crappie and the operator of the vessel was issued five warnings pertaining to additional resource and boating violations.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Shermetaro was working late in the evening when he saw a boat returning from a day of offshore fishing. An inspection revealed the subject was in possession of two red and six red hind grouper. Officer Shermetaro explained to the subject that he had harvested the fish during a closed season. The fish were seized as evidence and the subject received a citation for the violation.

RESCUES

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Investigator Warne was on land patrol when he saw a vehicle stop in the middle of the roadway and an occupant discharge a firearm from the driver's side window at a turkey vulture roosted in a tree. Investigator Warne conducted a traffic stop and cited the driver for violation of the migratory bird treaty act.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Spradling responded to a search and rescue for a husband, wife and four young children who were stuck in their vehicle and lost in the J.W. Corbett WMA. Officers Spradling, Marrow, Mclendon and Warensford searched throughout the night through thick foliage and deep water to locate the lost subjects. At approximately 2:30 a.m., the officers located the family near trail 8 by tracking tire-tread imprints and by celestial navigation. All occupants were safe and, with the assistance of North County Towing, were escorted to North Check Corbett.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Morrow, Hankinson, Godward, Cobo, Carroll, Rogers, Kirkland and Lieutenant Russo conducted a special detail which focused on environmental hazards pertaining to marine sanitation devices (MSDs) in Martin County. All users were found to be in

compliance for MSDs. Multiple boating safety and navigation light violations were addressed and cited/warned accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Hankinson patrolled the manatee speed zones in Jupiter and the Loxahatchee River to enforce zone compliance. Numerous speed violations and boating safety violations were addressed accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Cobo, Mclendon and Lieutenant Morrison participated in the Cruisin' Food Fest/Antique Car Show at MacArthur Beach State Park on Singer Island in West Palm Beach. More than 700 visitors attended and officers provided assistance to Department of Environmental Protection park personnel and educated the public about numerous park activities.

SOUTH B REGION

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Araujo and Polly were on land patrol at Lake Trafford when Officer Araujo saw an individual fishing with a cast net into Lake Trafford. The subject did not have any other fishing equipment with him. Officer Araujo observed the individual shaking fish out from his cast net and two buckets, one of which was placed into the back of a truck that the individual entered. The officers approached the truck and found the bucket with a cast net, but no fish. Officer Polly asked the individual where the other bucket of fish was and an individual in the truck handed him a bucket that was inside the truck. Upon inspection, Officer Araujo found 5 blue tilapias, which are non-native/non-game fish and have no regulations, 10 bream and 3 crappie. Bream and crappie are Florida freshwater game fish and may only be harvested by rod and reel or poles and line. The individual received a resource citation for the violation and the bream and crappie were seized as evidence.

Officer Kleis put together a boating detail for the Everglades City Seafood Festival. Officers Arbogast, Kleis, Lugg, Osorio-Borja and Plussa, along with Collier County Sheriff's Office Marine deputies and Everglades National Park rangers, patrolled the area during the busy weekend. The detail focused on boating safety and BUI violations. No BUI violations were found; however, FWC officers wrote 36 warnings and 12 citations for boating safety, registration and manatee zone violations. FWC officers were

also called upon to assist an elderly woman who collapsed due to heat exhaustion and assisted deputies on land with a fight involving three individuals.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Two FWC officers were on water patrol around the water of Monument Island when they stopped a vessel for a fisheries and boating safety inspection. All of the fish inside the ice chest were of legal length and legal to possess. A hidden compartment contained 4 undersized mutton snapper, 3 undersized yellowtail snapper and 1 undersized hogfish. The operator of the vessel was cited accordingly for all 8 undersized fish.

An officer was on water patrol when he observed two vessels anchored together in the vicinity of the Miami Seaquarium. Only one of the vessels was displaying its anchor light. The officer approached the vessels and noticed the second vessel turn on its anchor light. The officer advised both subjects that the anchor light must be turned on at all times after sunset. Both subjects replied that they had been fishing and were about to leave. The officer performed a fisheries inspection and found them to be in possession of five undersized lane snapper and one undersized mutton snapper. The vessel operators were cited accordingly.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Wagner and Lieutenant Payne responded to a call of an unmanned vessel driving in circles in the area of Key Haven. When in route, they saw the vessel in the distance circling on a flat and the engine was kicking up mud in its prop wash. The vessel appeared to run aground as they approached closer and once they were on scene, a man was operating the vessel towards deeper water. They got alongside the vessel and immediately saw signs of impairment. The man explained that he hit a large wave and was ejected from his vessel. A Sea Tow captain picked him up and got him to his vessel. Officer Wagner conducted seated field sobriety tasks on the man which he failed. The man was arrested for BUI and transported to the Monroe County Jail. A breath test showed that the man was more than three times over the legal limit.

Lieutenant Peters inspected two snorkelers that were actively harvesting lobster on the ocean side of the Lower Keys. Lieutenant Peters instructed one of the snorkelers to return their vessel as he was inspecting the catch bag of the second snorkeler. During that inspection, the subject that returned to the vessel dumped a bucket of lobster overboard into the water. Once both subjects were back on their vessel, a closer inspection of their catch revealed 3 undersized lobster and a total of 13 lobster. It was explained to the two subjects that they had 13 Florida spiny lobster, not counting the ones that were just dumped overboard. One subject was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersized Florida spiny lobster and possession of over the bag limit of 6 Florida spiny lobster and a uniform boating citation for failing to register his out-of-state vessel in Florida within 90 days. The second subject was placed under arrest and transported to Monroe County Detention Center Stock Island without incident. He was

charged with possession of undersized Florida spiny lobster and interference with an FWC officer.

Investigator Hein is investigating a boating accident fatality after a Good Samaritan (on a vessel) identified a body floating in Tarpon Basin near Key Largo. FWC officers and the USCG responded to the scene. Once on the scene, FWC officers identified a 19-foot vessel against the tree line with no occupants and no damage present. The deceased victim was located approximately 100 yards away from his vessel. The body was transported by the USCG to their station in Islamorada to be turned over to the medical examiner's office.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and FWC partnered for an operation targeting violators of the manatee speed zones in the waters of Miami Dade County. During the operation, 47 uniform boating citations and 49 warnings were issued and two persons were arrested for DUI and BUI.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Dube was the guest speaker at the Upper Keys Rotary Club's monthly meeting in Islamorada. Officer Dube talked about current rule changes along with current events concerning Monroe County and the Keys. Officer Dube ended his presentation with a lengthy question and answer session to end the meeting. Officer Dube spoke to approximately 60 plus Rotarians and guests that were in attendance.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC officers attended the Save Endangered Animals, Save the World event held at the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens. The officers taught family and children about endangered animals and how we can help save them and the world we live in. This event included arts and crafts, animal flow, a lecture by an endangered animal specialist and planting at the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens. All activities allowed the attendees to learn more about special species and the world. The FWC officers also provided two baby alligators and brought an airboat for the kids to experience.

