

FWC
Division of Law Enforcement
Weekly Report



September 1, 2017 through September 14, 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

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Arnette received a call from a complainant advising there were subjects night hunting near his property in Blackman. The complainant got a tag number and gave it to Officer Arnette. Officer Rockwell located the registered owner and determined that her son and two of his friends were in the truck. She called them to come home to speak with Officer Rockwell. Lieutenant Hollinhead arrived to assist. After questioning, all three subjects admitted to attempting to take deer at night. Officer Rockwell issued each subject a notice to appear citation for attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light.

Officer Nichols responded to a single vessel accident that occurred in Rocky Bayou. The accident involved a privately owned personal watercraft (PWC). The investigation revealed the operator of the PWC struck the Rocky Bayou Bridge piling. The impact caused the operator to be ejected off the PWC. The operator was transported to a local hospital for treatment for minor injuries.

Officer Nichols was on vehicle/land patrol at Henderson Beach State Park. While traveling the eastern parking lot, the officer observed damage to a protected dune system. The officer observed large aggressive tire imprints on the protected sand dune, which led from the asphalt, over the concrete curb, over established protected dune vegetation and up the sand dune towards the top. As the officer continued along the curb, he observed a blue Jeep leaving the area. The Jeep had large tires with an aggressive tire pattern, which was like the tire imprints on the protected sand dune. As

the officer got closer to the Jeep, he observed white beach sand from the sand dune attached to the interior of the rear tires. Officer Nichols initiated a traffic stop on the Jeep and observed white beach sand attached to the outer side walls of the tires. The officer determined this was the Jeep that drove on the dunes damaging this important ecosystem. The driver was issued notice to appear citations for leaving the designated roads and damaging plant life.

Officer Bartlett and Investigators Molnar and Armstrong were on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections in the Crab Island area and observed a pontoon in violation of the idle speed/no wake zone. Officer Bartlett stopped the pontoon to address the violation and conduct a safety equipment check. The inspection revealed the pontoon was rented from a livery company. A boating safety inspection revealed that a screwdriver was being used to steer the vessel because the steering wheel had become inoperable the previous day. Officer Bartlett determined the vessel was not in seaworthy condition. The officer contacted the livery company and met them at a pre-determined location. An individual with the livery was issued a notice to appear citation for renting a vessel that was not seaworthy and not displaying boating safety information. A warning was issued for failure to provide pre-ride safety instructions.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Mullins received a call of a derelict vessel in the Peterson Point area. Officer Mullins worked the investigation and identified and located the last registered owner for the vessel, met the subject and provided him information regarding his derelict vessel. The subject was issued a citation for leaving a vessel in derelict condition.

Officer Mullins was on patrol in Yellow River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he observed a subject fishing in a creek. Officer Mullins began checking the subject and spoke with another subject standing by a vehicle. Officer Hutchinson arrived on scene to assist. During the inspection, the officers discovered that the subjects were in possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), drug paraphernalia and cannabis. The subjects were placed under arrest and booked into the Santa Rosa County Jail.

Officers Hoomes and Roberson were loading their patrol vessel from a local boat ramp when they observed two subjects seated in a vehicle in the parking area. The officers observed one subject continually attempting to light a pipe. As the officers approached, the subject attempted to conceal the pipe. The officers determined the pipe contained cannabis. An additional bag of cannabis and other drug paraphernalia were in the vehicle. Both subjects were issued the appropriate citations.

Officer Hutchinson was patrolling the Blackwater State Forest when he observed a truck turn onto a dirt road next to where he was conducting a traffic stop. The truck began spinning the tires, throwing dirt and gravel in the roadway. While the truck continued along the dead-end dirt road, Officer Hutchinson could hear his engine accelerating as he was spinning out. After completing the traffic stop, he drove along the dirt road and

observed several places in the roadway where the truck had spun out causing ruts and throwing mud in the roadway. Officer Hutchinson located the truck and observed it spinning its tires in a small mud hole. When asked why he was tearing up the roadway, the driver stated, "I just put new tires on my truck and wanted to see if they would spin out." Officer Hutchinson charged the man with destruction of state lands by a motor vehicle.

Officer Hutchinson was on foot patrol within the Blackwater State Forest. While patrolling near a creek and a recreation area, he observed a large group of people recreating. He contacted the group and immediately observed a container, commonly used to conceal illegal narcotics, sitting on a chair. He located a plastic bag containing cannabis inside of it along with a marijuana smoking pipe. While continuing his search, he discovered a marijuana cigarette inside of an ice chest. Two men admitted ownership of the illegal items. Both men were issued the appropriate citations and given a court date.

Lieutenant Hahr was observing a man and woman on the bank of a small creek in the Blackwater State Forest when the man suddenly began walking towards him. Lieutenant Hahr greeted the man who apparently didn't recognize him immediately. As the man attempted to walk past him, Lieutenant Hahr saw a burning clump of cannabis fall to the ground. The man immediately handed the remainder of his cannabis cigarette to Lieutenant Hahr and received a notice to appear for possession of not more than 20 grams of cannabis.

Officer Lewis was working in the Blackwater State Forest when he observed a large group of campers along Juniper Creek. Upon contacting the campers, he immediately discovered one of them in possession of cannabis and drug paraphernalia. The man was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officers Cushing, Pettey and Land worked multiple days offshore in the Gulf of Mexico while aboard the NW Fincat. They were enforcing both state and federal marine fisheries regulations during the trips during Labor Day weekend. The crew conducted 45 offshore marine fisheries inspections, in which 16 different vessels were found to be in violation of federal rules. The vessel captains were cited for being in possession of gray triggerfish during a closed season. Additionally, a Florida state charter vessel captain was cited for operating a charter trip in federal waters without the proper federal permit.

Officers Cushing and Pettey responded to the report of a capsized vessel 30 miles offshore of Pensacola while aboard the NW Fincat. When they arrived on scene, the three subjects had already been picked up by a Good Samaritan vessel without injury. A report of the accident was taken.

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark responded to a single vessel boating accident near the Mid-Bay Bridge in Choctawhatchee Bay. Two individuals were pulled from the water by a Good

Samaritan vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) arrived on scene and placed the individuals on their patrol vessel. They were transported to a local marina. Lieutenant Clark interviewed the operator and passenger. The vessel was a 32-foot pontoon houseboat. The pontoon was returning to Pensacola from a five-day trip. The operator stated he had concerns about the path Hurricane Irma was taking and decided to travel back home to Pensacola. The seas at the time of the accident were three to four feet in the bay with winds blowing approximately 20 mph. Due to the weather and the vessel being top heavy, the pontoon capsized. The husband and wife were not injured and were wearing their life jackets.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers Lugg and Ramos teamed up with local FWC Bear Biologist Green with a canvassing effort in an area where there have been ongoing bear issues. The officers issued five notices of non-compliance to residents with egregious trash violations and educated those who were following good bear awareness practices. Bear-proof trash can retrofit kits were issued to every house in the area at no cost to help alleviate the ongoing bear and trash can issues.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CLAY/BRADFORD COUNTIES

Investigator Doricchi and Officer Starling responded to a complaint involving the disturbance of an eagle's nest. They investigated and determined a contractor debris clearing company for a new subdivision was committing violations. They ordered him to cease operations and contacted United States Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS). The case was turned over to USFWS investigators for enforcement action.

Officer Barber and Lieutenant Haney were on water patrol during the Labor Day holiday weekend when they conducted a stop on a vessel that violated a no wake zone. They detected signs of impairment from the operator and conducted a BUI investigation. The operator was found to be impaired and was arrested. He was transported to jail where he refused to submit to a lawful breath test.

Officer Barber and Lieutenant Haney were on water patrol during the Labor Day holiday weekend and conducted a vessel stop on a personal watercraft that had violated a no wake zone. The operator had numerous boating safety violations and exhibited signs of impairment. After a BUI investigation was conducted, the operator was arrested for BUI. He was transported to jail and booked for felony BUI due to multiple prior DUI arrests.

He refused to submit to a lawful breath test and was also cited for eight boating safety violations.

Officer Justus was on water patrol during the Labor Day holiday weekend and conducted a stop on a vessel with a juvenile operator. He observed that one of the passengers appeared to be intoxicated. A short time later, he observed the same vessel with the previous intoxicated passenger operating the vessel. He conducted a vessel stop and determined the operator to in fact be impaired. The operator was arrested for BUI and transported to jail.

Lieutenant Haney was on water patrol during the Labor Day holiday weekend and during a vessel stop, detected signs of impairment from the operator. Following a BUI investigation, the subject was arrested for BUI. He also had a previous DUI. He was transported to jail where he refused to submit to a lawful breath test.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer McDonald encountered several individuals under a local bridge consuming alcoholic beverages. Officer McDonald gathered identification and conducted warrant checks. One subject was wanted for violation of probation. The subject was arrested and booked into the Columbia County Jail.

DUVAL/NASSAU COUNTIES

During the last few weeks, Officer Sweat received complaints from private landowners about trespassing and theft by palmetto berry pickers. The areas of concern were in both Nassau and Duval Counties. Early Saturday morning, Officers Sweat and Christmas located a drop off location where several pickers began their day, illegally harvesting the berries on city property in Duval County. After several hours searching the property, air and K-9 support were requested. Lieutenant Cain arrived with air support and K-9 Officer Gill and partner "Friar" arrived to assist. Investigator Holleman and Officer Waldo also arrived to assist. After getting on a track in Duval County, a landowner spotted several subjects cross a dirt road onto his property in Nassau County. Officer Gill and K-9 "Friar" relocated inside Nassau County where a fresh track was available. Thirty minutes later, the three subjects were in custody and were later booked into the Nassau County Jail for trespassing and resisting arrest.

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Starling and Willis were conducting resource and boating safety inspections when an individual was found to be over his daily bag limit of sharks. During the inspection, the officers also learned that the individual had an active warrant for his arrest. Officer Starling issued a misdemeanor citation for over the daily bag limit of sharks and placed the individual under arrest. The subject was later turned over to the Levy County Sheriff's Office for booking on the arrest warrant.

Officer Starling received a call about two people illegally picking palmetto berries on Waccasassa State Preserve and Cedar Key Scrub WMA. After speaking with staff from the preserve who witnessed the picking, Officer Starling located two people walking along the road nearby. They admitted to being dropped off earlier in the day to pick berries and started walking down the road when they saw the employees from the state preserve. Lieutenant Umhoefer arrived on scene and explained to them the laws pertaining to palmetto berries while Officer Starling issued two notices to appear for removing palmetto berries from state land.

Lieutenant Jones, Officers Browning and Fox were conducting vessel safety/resource inspections on commercial shrimp vessels when they discovered that a commercial shrimping vessel did not possess a saltwater products license and the vessel's registration was expired. Officer Fox issued the captain a misdemeanor citation for not possessing a saltwater products license and two uniform boating citations for registration/boating safety violations. Officer Fox also issued the captain four written warnings for various boating safety violations.

Officers Fox and Hilliard were on patrol and conducting vessel safety/resource inspections at the Waccasassa Boat Ramp in Gulf Hammock during the Labor Day holiday weekend. During one inspection, Officers Fox and Hilliard observed an individual in possession of an undersized black drum measuring 12 inches. Officer Fox issued the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized black drum and one written warning for no vessel registration certificate onboard.

Officer Fox conducted safety and resource checks at the main boat ramp in Cedar Key during the Labor Day holiday weekend. One inspection revealed two undersized gray snapper and one undersized spotted seatrout. The captain admitted to catching the two undersized gray snapper and spotted seatrout. Officer Fox issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized gray snapper and one written warning for undersized spotted seatrout. Officer Fox also issued the captain two written warnings for various boating safety/registration violations.

Officer Fox was conducting safety and resource checks at the main boat ramp in Cedar Key during the Labor Day holiday weekend when one inspection revealed a grossly undersized gag grouper measuring 10 inches. The individual was also found to be in possession of one undersized gray snapper measuring 8 inches. Officer Fox issued the captain of the vessel a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized gag grouper and a written warning for possession of undersized gray snapper. Officer Fox also issued the captain two written warnings for various boating safety violations.

Officers Hilliard and Johnston were patrolling in Cedar Key during the Labor Day holiday weekend when they came upon an individual paddling a small aluminum boat across a shallow area. The officers instructed the individual to come to the officer's location for a boating safety and fisheries inspection. The man delayed obeying the officers, exited his boat in shallow water, and turned the boat blocking the view of the officers. He then removed what later proved to be a baggie of drugs. He placed it on the mud near the

boat and stepped on it, pressing it into the mud. The officers told the man to retrieve the baggie and come to them and he did not. When the officers walked toward the boat, the man admitted to having dumped the contraband and said he was gathering oysters to sell. A check of the licensing system shows that the subject did not have a Saltwater Products License (SPL) commercial harvesting license. The subject was cited for interference with officers in performance of their duties and illegal harvest of oysters with no SPL. The subject was also issued warnings for multiple boating safety violations and a warning for commercial harvest of oysters in a closed area. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Levy County Jail for booking.

Officers Johnston and Willis were on water patrol on the Withlacoochee River when they observed a vessel violating a slow speed zone. The vessel was stopped and a boating safety and saltwater fisheries inspection was conducted. During the inspection, it was found that the vessel had an undersized hogfish onboard. Officer Johnston searched the vessel and found an undersized black drum as well. Officer Willis documented the evidence and charged the boat captain accordingly.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Lentz was on routine patrol when he observed a vehicle driving erratically. During a traffic stop, signs of impairment of the driver were observed and the driver was asked to submit to field sobriety tests. The driver refused and Officer Lentz placed the driver under arrest for DUI. A subsequent breath test revealed the driver was almost three times the legal limit.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

While patrolling the Buck Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer Marroquin observed multiple individuals carrying large bags and other equipment commonly used to harvest saw palmetto berries. Four citations were issued for removing saw palmetto berries from a WMA.

While conducting water patrol on the barge canal in the Merritt Island area, Officer Eller observed a large vessel operating in an erratic manner; the vessel almost struck the shoreline. During the subsequent vessel stop, the operator ignored many of the officer's requests and appeared intoxicated. Seated field sobriety exercises were administered and the operator performed poorly on all the tasks. The operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Brevard County Sheriff's Office.

ORANGE COUNTY

While conducting enforcement of the statewide alligator harvest program during the opening weeks of the season, Officer Marroquin conducted approximately 15 resource inspections resulting in two BUIs, one DUI and multiple other safety violations. The operator stopped for DUI provided a breath sample of .162 g/210L BAC.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer North was on patrol in Tiger Bay State Forest when he encountered a man illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries. A computer check revealed the man had an active warrant for violation of probation and a writ of bodily attachment with a \$500.00 purge. The man was arrested and transported to the Volusia County Jail without incident.

Officer Haskins responded to a disturbance involving three juvenile males at Deleon Springs State Park over the Labor Day holiday weekend. The juveniles were creating a disturbance, using vulgar language and refusing to obey park staff. One juvenile actively resisted Officer Haskins and was placed in handcuffs. He refused to identify himself. Officers Sapp and Edson arrived as back up and observed one of the other juveniles litter. He refused to pick up the litter so Officer Edson began to issue him a citation. The juvenile refused to identify himself, so he was also placed in handcuffs. Through acquaintances of the juveniles, officers were finally able to contact their parents who arrived at the park and identified them to the officers. Both detained juveniles were charged with disorderly conduct, resisting without violence and released to the custody of their parents. One was also cited for littering. All three of them were trespassed from Deleon Springs State Park.

Lieutenant Baer was on patrol in Tiger Bay State Forest when he encountered a man illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries. A computer check revealed an active felony warrant for possession of methamphetamine and paraphernalia. The man was arrested and transported to the Volusia County Jail without incident. He was given a warning for unlawful berry harvesting.

Over the past week, FWC officers issued nine criminal citations for harvesting saw palmetto berries on state lands, including Tiger Bay State Forest, Lake George State Forest, and Heart Island Conservation Area.

Officer Thornton was on water patrol around Lake Dexter and the St. Johns River when he observed a subject in a small vessel fishing on Lake Dexter. He conducted a fisheries inspection which revealed the subject to be in possession of 60 panfish (bream/blue bluegill). The subject was given a criminal citation and the fish were returned to the resource.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Salem and Lieutenant Ruggiero worked plain clothes patrol in Charlotte Harbor when they observed a commercial fishing vessel near the mangroves. The officers positioned themselves to observe what was going on. After a few minutes, the vessel took off and struck some nets out of the back. The officers quickly approached to conduct a marine fisheries inspection. As the officers approached, they observed the men pulling in seine nets full of mullet. During their inspection, the officers determined that the men struck four seine nets from a single vessel among other violations. The fisherman was charged with fishing with more than two nets from a single vessel and issued seven warnings for the other violations.

Officer Zampella and Officer Birchfield conducted a vessel inspection in Lemon Bay on a vessel returning from fishing offshore. Upon inspection, they found undersized and over the bag limit of red grouper. The subjects were issued appropriate criminal citations.

Officers Salem and Goggin were on water patrol and observed a group of vessels catching redfish. They observed a female who had caught multiple fish and put some fish in the live well. After a while, the female left the area and began fishing in another spot. The officers approached her to conduct a fisheries inspection. When they asked if she had caught anything, she said she had kept a trout and a redfish that was just under the 27-inch maximum size limit. Further inspection of the fish revealed the redfish was over 28 ½ inches long. She was issued a notice to appear for possession of over the slot size limit of redfish.

LEE COUNTY

Captain Carpenter and Officer Winton were on water patrol in Estero Bay when they conducted a vessel stop to determine compliance with boater safety regulations. During the boater safety inspection, the vessel operator showed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were conducted and it was determined that the operator had been boating while his normal faculties were impaired. The operator was booked into the Lee County jail and faces boating under the influence charges and a \$500 citation for failure to submit to a breath test.

Officer Winton was on fisheries patrol in Cape Coral when he came across several individuals fishing at a bridge. During a fisheries inspection, an undersized spotted seatrout and black drum were discovered. The individual in possession of the fish was issued a notice to appear for the undersized seatrout, and a warning for the undersized black drum. The subject was also provided with a copy of the Florida fishing regulations.

Officer Winton was on fisheries patrol in Cape Coral when he conducted a fisheries inspection on several individuals fishing from a seawall. Initially, the subjects were hesitant to talk and denied catching fish. During the investigation, one of the individuals admitted to catching several fish, which were found in a cooler. Two of the sheepshead in the cooler were undersized, for which a notice to appear was issued. The individual was also issued a warning for failure to have a saltwater fishing license.

MANATEE COUNTY

While on water patrol around Jew Fish Key, Officers Hinds, Gonzales and Lieutenant Hinds were flagged down by a boater who said there was a young man trying to start a fight with other boaters on the sandbar. The officers located the individual who was causing trouble and spoke with him about his behavior. While speaking with the subject, another man approached the officers and claimed that the subject who was trying to start fights had punched him in the face. When asked if the allegation was true, the subject freely admitted to punching the man. The subject was charged with simple battery and taken to the Manatee County jail.

While on water patrol around Jew Fish Key, Officers Hinds, Gonzales and Lieutenant Hinds stopped a boat to perform a boating safety inspection after they witnessed the operator of the vessel operating the boat carelessly. During the course of the inspection it became apparent that the operator was under the influence of alcohol. After giving the operator some field sobriety tasks to check his level of impairment, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence and taken to the Manatee County jail.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol near the North Skyway Toll Plaza, Officer Bibeau observed two individuals that were wade fishing from the shoreline. While conducting a resource inspection, a bait bucket was observed in the water with a snook attached to a blue stringer, which one of the subjects admitted catching. The snook measured 24 inches and the subject did not have a valid snook permit. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation and a warning for the fisheries violations.

While on land patrol at the Pinellas Bayway Bridge, Officer Bibeau encountered an individual that was loading up his vehicle with fishing equipment. During a resource inspection, the subject was found to be in possession of nine mangrove snapper, three of which were under the minimum size limit of 10 inches. After further investigation, Officer Bibeau found that the same subject had received warnings in the past for undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and a warning for exceeding the bag limit of mangrove snapper.

While on land patrol near the Skyway Bridge, Officer Bibeau observed two individuals that were wading in the water attempting to catch blue crab with a net. During a

resource inspection, one of the subjects was found to be in possession of a 9-inch gag grouper and a 5-inch sheepshead. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation and warning for the fisheries violations.

While on land patrol at the Fort Desoto Bridge, Officer Bibeau performed a resource inspection on two individuals and located a 15-inch gag grouper. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of an undersized gag grouper.

While patrolling the bridges on Dunedin Causeway, Officer Ferguson observed two subjects fishing on the north side of the bridge. Upon approach, one of the subjects left the area. After completing a fisheries inspection with the first subject, Officer Ferguson found the second subject smoking marijuana in his car. The subject was searched and found to have a small quantity of marijuana in a baggie in his shorts pocket. A subsequent search of his vehicle revealed a 17 ½ inch gag grouper in a plastic crate in the back seat. The subject told Officer Ferguson that his friend caught the grouper. The first subject then admitted to having caught the gag grouper a few hours ago, and was given a citation for the possession of an undersized gag grouper. His friend was given a warning for the possession of marijuana under 20 grams.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officers Ridgway and Grenz were on water patrol in the area of Roberts Bay, and stopped a boat to perform a boating safety inspection. They noticed that the operator seemed to be impaired by either alcohol or drugs. After performing some field sobriety tasks to gauge the level of impairment, the operator of the vessel was placed under arrest for boating under the influence and taken to Sarasota County jail.

Lieutenant Hinds was on land patrol in the area of New Pass Bridge and stopped and performed a fisheries inspection on a husband and wife that had been fishing from the bridge. During the course of the inspection, he found out that the wife had caught and kept one 20-inch snook. She was cited criminally for possession of undersized snook and will have to appear in court for her violation.

SOUTH REGION A

The entire region has been dealing with hurricane Irma this week. Days of preparation beforehand, relocating equipment and securing facilities transitioned into post hurricane issues.

FWC staff have assessed the damages to FWC facilities and to our personal properties and many are still without power.

The dispatch center in Lake Worth operated through the storm with a skeleton crew of three that stayed in the facility for two days. Communication towers were failing and modifications were being made rapidly to make sure that officers could reach a dispatch center, even if it wasn't in their own region.

A large amount of seaweed washed up onto the beaches throughout several coastal counties. FWC started receiving calls and seeing news reports that a lot of the seaweed contained dozens of sea turtle hatchlings. Beachgoers were digging through the massive piles of seaweed and retrieving the hatchlings. They were quickly gathering dozens and dozens of hatchlings in buckets and whatever else they could find. Officers were dispatched and relayed instructions on what to do with the hatchlings from FWC's regional sea turtle biologist. Officers transported many hatchlings that seemed lethargic and too weak to swim to the FWC biologist for rehabilitation. The rest of the hatchlings were returned to the shoreline where they crawled back into the surf.

Meanwhile, officers were patrolling the region, assisting the public with a variety of hazards left by the hurricane debris. They did everything from rescues related to flooding, to traffic management due to power outages, and many calls related to vessels that had broken free and drifted into areas of concern. These calls are ongoing and will be dealt with for many days to come.

A 41-officer team, including Special Operations Group members has been deployed from South Region A to assist with Monroe County Hurricane Irma response efforts.

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera conducted an investigation regarding the illegal possession of wildlife. He found a subject to be in possession of two adult raccoons without the required license. Further investigation revealed the raccoons were taken from the wild and possessed for approximately five years. The subject was cited for the illegal possession. Four warnings were issued for additional captive wildlife violations relating to the raccoons. Officer Armstrong assisted with this incident.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officers Payne and Fretwell were conducting license and resource inspections at a popular boat ramp in Fort Pierce. While there, they observed a vessel returning to the ramp with diving equipment on board. During a resource inspection, a subject was found to be in possession of two undersized sheepshead, two whole live conch and one speared Florida spiny lobster. The owner of the vessel stated that he had speared the lobster and claimed responsibility for the fish and other saltwater resource. The subject was issued a citation for the violations.

Officers Fretwell and Miano were on land patrol in the Savannas State Park Preserve focusing on illegal saw palmetto berry harvesting. While in the area on patrol, Pilot Simons observed a suspicious parked U-Haul vehicle and directed Officer Fretwell to the location. The tag was checked and it was confirmed as a stolen vehicle. Two subjects with the vehicle were detained for further investigation. The driver was the

leasee, but had failed to return the rental and continued to use it without making the proper payments. When the vehicle was not returned on time, it was then reported as stolen. The second subject was just a passenger and was permitted to leave. The driver was arrested for grand theft with additional charges for drug possession and drug paraphernalia.

Officer Payne was conducting license and resource inspections at a local boat ramp. A vessel returning from fishing, with several subjects on board, was inspected. Upon inspection of the cooler on board the vessel, the subject was found to be in possession of eight mutton snapper. The fish were measured for compliance and all were found to be undersized. The subject was issued a citation for the violation.

Officer Payne and Fretwell were on water patrol when a vessel was observed coming into the dock. The vessel nearly caused a boating accident when coming up behind another vessel that was tying up to the dock and only struck the stern light of the vessel before quickly reversing. Once the vessel was at the dock, Officer Payne approached the operator of the vessel to conduct a vessel safety inspection. During the vessel safety inspection, the operator showed signs of impairment and was asked to complete field sobriety tasks. The subject agreed and performed poorly on the tasks. He was then arrested for impairment and transported to the Saint Lucie County Jail. At the jail, the subject refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Fretwell and Lieutenant Rogerson, while on water patrol, conducted a license and resource inspection on a pontoon boat around Taylor Creek and the ICW channel. Subjects on board were actively fishing. Upon conducting an inspection of the catch, the individuals were found to be in possession of three undersized mutton snapper and four undersized sheepshead. The owner took responsibility for all harvested fish and was cited for the violations. He was also educated on the importance of identifying and measuring fish.

Officers Fretwell and Payne assisted the Fort Pierce Police Department with recovery efforts at the Sable Chase apartment complex in Fort Pierce. The area flooded due to Hurricane Irma. Residents, especially on the first floor, were trapped and unable to leave due to the high-water levels and flooded vehicles. Recovery efforts totaled approximately 100 residents, some of which had medical issues and special needs.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Plussa was conducting water patrol in the Naples area over the Labor Day holiday weekend when a USCG vessel called for law enforcement assistance with a possible impaired vessel operator. Officer Plussa responded to assist and took over the

investigation at the request of the USCG crew. After the investigation, the suspect was arrested and booked into the Collier County Jail for BUI. While in route to the jail, the suspect spontaneously admitted to the officer that she was driving the vessel because she was the "least drunk" of the occupants onboard.

Officer Plussa conducted targeted boating safety enforcement patrol in the Naples area over the Labor Day holiday weekend. He checked a total of 128 people onboard a total of 38 vessels, issuing a total of 24 citations, 40 written warnings, and 69 verbal educations for violations encountered involving life jackets, registrations and wake zone violations.

Officers Kleis and Arbogast were on water patrol during the Labor Day holiday weekend conducting general boating safety and BUI enforcement. They stopped a vessel to perform a boating safety inspection and immediately noticed multiple signs of impairment from the operator including bloodshot eyes and slurred speech. The operator consented to field sobriety tasks, which Officer Kleis administered. The operator was subsequently arrested for BUI, and booked into the Collier County Jail.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officers were on water patrol when they stopped a vessel returning from the Bahamas with four subjects on board. Upon inspection, officers discovered two baggies full of conch meat and three baggies of fish fillets, one of which contained fillets with no skin. After questioning, the owner/operator of the vessel said the conch meat had been bought while in the Bahamas and the skinned fish fillets were yellowtail snapper. The subject was cited for the violations.

Two officers were on water patrol when they observed three snorkelers along the rocks/seawall at Cape Florida State Park. They appeared to be harvesting saltwater products so the officers asked the subjects to show them their hands and then to climb out of the water. While maneuvering the patrol vessel, one of the officers spotted a dive bag lying on the bay bottom near the rocks where the subjects had been snorkeling. The bag was recovered revealing a speared moray eel and an undersized crawfish. As the three subjects exited the water, one began to walk away despite being told not to do so. He then ran from the area as one officer jumped from the patrol vessel to pursue the subject while the second officer secured the vessel to join in the foot chase. Approximately three hours later, and with the assistance of two other nearby officers, the subject was tracked down and taken into custody without incident. He was arrested and taken to jail on multiple resource violations as well as resisting an officer without violence.

MONROE COUNTY

A man was bully netting near 47th Street in Marathon. A man was awoken from his sailboat and began to have words with the bully netter. The bully netter began to leave the marina area. The suspect got into his 16-foot boat and began to chase after the

bully netter. The boats went back and forth and eventually crashed into each other causing one vessel to take on water. The suspect went back to his sailboat and the bully netter went home. Investigator Mattson was dispatched to interview the victim. Investigator Mattson took photos of the boat and noted the transfer of blue bottom paint. The victim stated that he was in fear for his life and felt that he was "lucky to escape." Investigator Mattson went to the Black Fin Resort where he interviewed and received a statement from the suspect who admitted to chasing after the bully net boat and that he made a mistake in judgment by taking things into his own hands. Investigator Mattson received a signed warrant for the suspect's arrest and booked him into jail. He was charged with reckless operation of a vessel and simple assault.

Officer Wagner, a plain clothes unit with the resource protection unit, was on water patrol when he noticed a kayak with two snorkelers carrying spear guns in the Lower Keys. He observed the individuals spearfishing for a short while and watched them put fish in a cooler on the kayak. A resource inspection revealed an undersized black grouper and undersized mutton snapper. The spear fishermen said they knew the size limits and didn't have something to correctly measure onboard. One individual took credit for both undersized fish and was cited accordingly.

Investigator Mattson was on water patrol around Indian Key Channel Bridge and observed a man scaling a fish on the rocks. He put the fish in a bucket next to him. When Investigator Mattson asked how he had done fishing, the man responded with "only grunts" and held up a grunt. Investigator Mattson took a closer look in the bucket and saw there were many types of fish. He called Officer Garcia on the phone and he read the two men Miranda Warnings in Spanish. They agreed to answer questions. They stated they were the only one's fishing in their group and had caught all the fish. In total, they had 17 mangrove snapper, 15 of which were undersized. They were also over the bag limit of 5 mangrove snapper per person, per day. They had 5 undersized schoolmaster snapper and 1 undersized yellowtail snapper. They were also over the aggregate limit of snapper. The two men were arrested and transported to jail by Investigator Hein. In total, they were charged with five misdemeanors each and one infraction each for no fishing license.

Officers Richards, Foell and Wagner were onboard offshore patrol vessel Interceptor in Rebecca Channel near the Dry Tortugas when they observed a multiple day fishing charter boat. The officers boarded the vessel to conduct a marine fisheries inspection and located 14 out of season hogfish, two of which were undersized. The captain then became very aggressive and argumentative. The officers took him into custody. The captain stated he wanted to commit suicide and attempted to jump off his boat into the water. The captain was transported to Lower Keys Medical Center by Lieutenant Robison and Officer Lopez for medical clearance then booked into the Monroe County Jail. Three felonies, one misdemeanor and two federal fisheries violations were documented and sent to NOAA.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube was the guest speaker along with Hada Herring of the FWC at the University of Miami Rosenstiel's School of Marine and Atmospheric Science on Key Biscayne. Officer Dube spoke to the graduate students about FWC's core missions, officer responsibilities and the efforts to protect marine mammals in the State of Florida. Officer Dube also spoke about past marine mammal cases that happened in his tenure in the Keys.