

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report January 19, 2018 through January 25, 2018

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

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officer Raker was on land patrol in the Apalachicola National Forest when he observed a vehicle traveling north on Ashley Landing road displaying a light in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife. During a vehicle stop, a resource inspection was conducted and the odor of marijuana was emanating from one of the passengers. A small glass pipe was found under the seat. The subject was cited for possession of drug paraphernalia.

LEON COUNTY

While participating in the "Steel Curtain" detail in Apalachicola National Forest, Officer Mandrick observed a subject wearing blaze orange and camouflage clothing outside a truck pulled off a forest road. While checking the subject's hunting license, marijuana was observed on top of the dog box in the bed of the subject's truck. K-9 Officer Anderson arrived on scene for assistance and located a shotgun hidden in a palmetto bush. The subject was arrested for possession of a firearm by convicted felon and possession of marijuana.

Officer Hildebrand was on patrol in the Apalachicola National Forest when he received a call from dispatch regarding hunting dogs near private property. Upon arrival, he encountered several subjects who stated they were trying to catch their hunting dogs. The complainant had caught two hunting dogs with global positioning collars and it was

determined that the hunting dogs had crossed over to private property after seeing the global positioning tracts the dogs followed. Appropriate citations were issued to the two dog owners.

While working a special detail, Officer Peterson discovered two individuals hunting with dogs. After a brief discussion, it was determined that the subjects' dogs were pursuing deer on private property. The subjects admitted that they did not have permission to hunt the property. Both subjects received citations for violating the Hunter Responsibility Rule.

Officer Peterson assisted Officer Raker with a resource inspection on the Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area. During the stop, the officers noticed blood on the dog box. The subject admitted to shooting a short horn spike earlier that day. The subject took the officers to the property where he cleaned the deer. The subject was cited for taking antlerless deer and the meat and head were seized for evidence.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Pifer and Corbin, along with Lieutenant Clark, were on vessel patrol conducting boating safety/fisheries inspections in the Destin Pass and observed a vessel returning from the Gulf of Mexico displaying rods and reels. While conducting a boating safety inspection, the officers observed, in plain view, two harvested red drum and a gag grouper. A resource inspection determined the two red drum were oversized and gag grouper is closed for recreational harvest. The vessel operator was cited and issued notice to appear citations for possession of oversized red drum and possession of gag grouper during closed season. The passenger was also cited for possession of oversized red drum.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Mullins was checking a subject who had recently taken a deer. The subject had a cooler full of fresh deer meat, but the subject did not have the meat tagged and did not possess any sex evidence showing that the meat was from a legal deer. Officer Hutchinson arrived shortly thereafter to assist. The subject admitted to taking a short-horned buck that was under the legal antler size limit for the area. Through the investigation, it was discovered that a second subject had harvested a short-horned buck from this same property a day earlier. The officers seized two sets of antlers, the meat from two fresh deer and two firearms that were used to take the illegal deer along with cannabis and drug paraphernalia. Several charges were filed with the State Attorney's Office.

Lieutenant Hahr was patrolling the Escambia River Wildlife Management Area at Salter's Lake after receiving complaints that subjects had been shooting well after legal shooting hours. Lieutenant Hahr heard several shots well after shooting hours coming from a slough between the lake and the main river. After crossing the lake at a shallow area and walking towards the shots, the subjects were located and shooting at ducks 28

minutes after legal shooting hours. Neither of the subjects had a valid hunting license, waterfowl permit, management area permit, federal duck stamp, and both subjects were using lead shot to take waterfowl. Additionally, the subject that owned the boat had not transferred the title to the boat and the registration was expired along with several other boating safety infractions. Investigator Livesay and Officer Pettey arrived at the boat ramp and assisted Lieutenant Hahr. Both subjects were issued notices to appear for taking ducks after legal shooting hours, taking ducks with lead shot, and citations for license violations and boating safety violations.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officers Carr and Simpson were on land patrol at the public boat ramp at Shell Point when they conducted a resource inspection of duck hunters returning from a hunt. The inspection revealed that one of the subjects did not have a migratory bird permit. The subject was cited for the violation.

Officers Raker and Carr was working the deer decoy in the Apalachicola National Forest near Forest Road 340 when a subject passing by, stopped, and stuck his rifle out the window and fired at the decoy. The subject was cited for violation of the management area rule and evidence was seized and stored in the evidence facility.

Officers Hofheinz and Korade were working the deer decoy in the Apalachicola National Forest near Forest Highway 313 when a subject stopped and looked at some deer tracks on the road in the area. He later returned with other subjects to prepare to deploy dogs. The members of the group saw the decoy and two subjects shot it from separate vehicles. The officers cited the subjects for the management area rule violation and transported one of them to the Wakulla County Jail for possession of a firearm with its serial number removed. All evidence from the case was placed in the evidence facility.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Bradshaw located a vehicle parked near an area closed to hunting on Point Washington Wildlife Management Area and made contact with a subject returning to a vehicle who had been hunting. An inspection of the area where the subject had been hunting revealed he had placed bait around his tree stand. The subject was cited for hunting in a closed area and was also issued a warning for placing bait on a wildlife management area.

Officer White was patrolling the Briar Creek Unit on Eglin Wildlife Management Area that was closed to hunting due to training activities by the U. S. Air Force. After observing a vehicle parked along a road, he located two subjects hunting. Both subjects stated they had not checked the open/closed status of the unit prior to hunting which is required due to active military missions on portions of the management area. Both subjects were cited for entering a closed area.

Officer Tison was patrolling northern Walton County early in the morning targeting duck hunting on private lands. Constant shooting was heard from one area, and by aid of aerial maps and moving to different locations, he was able to triangulate where the shots were coming from. A locked gate was found to be the entry point onto the private land where the shooting was coming from. Five subjects were seen hunting over a pond. Office White arrived to assist, and upon inspecting the subjects, Officer Tison located whole corn on the edge of the pond to draw the ducks to the pond. The subjects were cited for taking/attempting to take migratory birds over bait.

RESCUES

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Matechik, Sauls, Stephens, Nelson, Raker, and Miller responded to an overdue vessel in the Apalachicola Bay. The subjects left the night before to go fishing in the freezing temperatures. Shortly after arriving at their fishing location, their vessel broke down. After spending 28 hours in the elements, the subjects were located in Lost Creek by the Aviation Unit and assisted back to the boat ramp.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

NASSAU COUNTY

Several resource protection officers, uniform officers and one investigator conducted Operation Scavenger which targeted after-hours duck shooting in Nassau County hunt clubs. Complaints were received concerning subjects shooting waterfowl as they returned to the roost 25 minutes after sunset. Officers set up, listened for shots, and then made contact with the violators. Citations and warnings were issued for shooting migratory birds after sunset, unplugged shotguns and license violations. Word of this enforcement activity spread and the illegal activity quickly stopped.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Yates responded to an in-progress trespass call involving multiple subjects with dogs trespassing on private land. Upon arrival, the suspects had already left the area. The complainant gave detailed vehicle descriptions along with a suspect's name. The complainant also stated a single gunshot was heard after the subjects left the private land. The officers began to canvas the surrounding area looking for vehicles matching the descriptions provided by the complainant. Within minutes, the officers located a large group of subjects hanging around a skinning rack beside a mobile home. The crowd dispersed when the officers arrived revealing a cooler full of fresh deer meat and a truck backed up to the skinning rack with the bed having been recently washed. The officers located the owner of the truck who admitted to

transporting an antlerless deer in the bed of his truck earlier before the officers arrived. The subject admitted to being in possession of the illegal deer but denied having any knowledge about who shot the deer. The officers located the freshly dumped antlerless deer carcass a short distance away down a remote road. Blood and hair samples were collected from both locations including suspected deer hair from the bed of the suspect's truck. The deer meat was photographed and seized as evidence. Resource charges are pending with the State Attorney's Office on at least one subject.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Mobley was on foot patrol on a local landowner's property when he observed an individual dragging a deer through the woods. The subject continued to drag the deer to a nearby tree where he hung the doe deer up and began to skin it. Officer Mobley approached the subject who admitted to killing the doe deer earlier that day and had just returned to field dress the deer in the cover of the woods. The subject was issued a citation for taking doe deer during closed season.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Colasanti was on patrol near the Aucilla River and conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle near the Mandalay boat ramp. After giving a false name, the passenger fled on foot into the woods. Officer Colasanti secured the driver and Officer Albritton and Wilder responded to assist along with Taylor Correctional Institute K-9 team. Officer Wilder accompanied the K-9 team tracking the suspect for approximately 4 miles and lost the track at the Fenholloway River. Officer Albritton notified nearby hunt club members to keep an eye out for the suspect and a short time later received a phone call that the club members had the suspect held at gunpoint at their camp. Officers Albritton, Colasanti and Wilder responded and placed the suspect, wet, tired and dirty, in custody. He was booked into the Taylor County Jail on outstanding felony warrants, resisting arrest and providing false information to law enforcement.

Officer Albritton received information of illegal dog running in Steinhatchee Springs WMA. Officers Dasher and Colasanti responded to assist. Officer Dasher heard the dogs running and caught them. The officers then documented the owner's information from the dogs' collars and placed them in a pen at the suspect's camp. Charges are being direct filed with the State Attorney's Office.

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Harris responded to a complaint of a subject shooting a deer from a vehicle along an easement road bordering the complainant's property. Officer Harris located fresh blood, part of a liver, and deer hair in the bed of the suspect's vehicle. Officer Harris also discovered fresh deer hair and blood on a table in the yard when he noticed a dog sniffing and licking the table. Further search of the property revealed a freshly killed antlerless deer carcass along with a box of remains dumped in the woods on the property. With the assistance of Investigators Ayers and Bing, who determined the deer

was not hit, Officer Harris was able to charge two suspects. They were booked into jail on possession of firearm by convicted felon and one suspect admitted to driving the truck on the road, shooting the deer with a small caliber handgun, and then bringing the deer to the other suspect who cleaned it. Officer Harris seized the meat, carcass, and remains and he will be filing additional charges on both subjects for the doe deer and closed season violations, as well as the criminal traffic violation.

RESCUES

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Johnston was on an animal call with two Columbia County sheriff's deputies when the deputies received a report of a structure fire with a disabled male subject trapped inside the home. The structure fire was just a block away and Officer Johnston followed to assist. Officer Johnston and the responding deputies arrived on scene and entered the smoke-filled residence to confirm all occupants in the home had evacuated safely while checking on the well-being of those already outside the home. Several birds and one subject remained inside who was successfully controlling the fire with a fire extinguisher. Fire/rescue personnel arrived shortly thereafter to handle remaining fire suppression efforts and any medical needs.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson and Officers Stanley, Butler and Sheffield worked the annual Tour De San Felasco bike race, a 50K bike race through the state park. With more than 800 registered bicyclists and a large crowd of spectators, the event went well.

Officer Stanley attended career day at Santa Fe High School. Nearly 1,200 students attended the event to ask questions about various jobs and careers.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer Johnston was the guest speaker at Columbia High School's bass fishing club monthly meeting. Officer Johnston spoke about boating safety and answered questions from students and parents. Approximately 50 students and parents were in attendance.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officers Boone and Colasanti spoke with approximately 100 students at the Branford Elementary School career day event. They spoke about the many possibilities of a career within FWC and incorporated a boating safety demonstration.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Aswall was on afternoon Joint Enforcement Action (JEA) patrol in the area of the Vilano Boat basin when she conducted an inspection of a recreational vessel which had just returned from offshore. The inspection revealed the subject was in possession of 10 vermillion snapper, five over the daily bag limit on the Atlantic coast. The subject was issued a citation for the fisheries violation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Harris participated in a joint training exercise with marine unit members of the City of St. Augustine Fire Department and St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, along with servicemen from the US Coast Guard (USCG). The exercise and training included lowering a rescue swimmer from a USCG helicopter onto the FWC patrol vessel, then lowering and hoisting a basket back to the helicopter. The exercise/training provided useful insight into understanding how training partnerships between area public safety agencies can lead to effective and efficient rescue operations during maritime emergencies.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Zampella was conducting fisheries inspections when he stopped a charter boat captain returning from a fishing charter. During his inspection Officer Zampella found several trout on board. After measuring the fish, he determined three of the fish were undersized. A misdemeanor citation was issued for the violation.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol in Plant City, Officer Wilkins observed a vehicle parked by a locked fence leading into a farm. The land owner had issues in the past with people trespassing to fish in the pond on the property. Officer Godfrey arrived to assist, and the two officers walked the property and found a subject fishing at the pond. The subject was cited for trespassing and escorted off the property.

Lieutenant Holcomb and Officer Guerin observed some individuals duck hunting near the mouth of the Alafia River. Officer Guerin observed that they were hunting too close

to Bird Island, which is closed to such activity. The individuals were made aware of the violation and were properly educated. The individuals left without incident.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Hardgrove was on uniformed patrol on Pine Island when he observed a vessel violating a manatee zone. He stopped the vessel and asked the two occupants if they had caught any fish. They both stated it was a slow day and they only had bait onboard. The vessel had blood and scales on the deck consistent with multiple fish having been caught. Officer Hardgrove asked the occupants to open the live well. The captain opened the stern live well which only had shrimp and baitfish onboard. Officer Hardgrove asked again if there were any fish on the vessel and once again the subjects stated that they hadn't had any luck. An inspection of the vessel revealed a second hatch at the bow of the boat which contained 12 sheepshead and a gag grouper. The subjects were issued notices to appear for undersized sheepshead, undersized gag grouper, and interference with an FWC officer, as well as multiple warnings.

Officer Hardgrove was on uniformed patrol at the Pineland boat ramp when he observed a vessel with three occupants returning to the dock. A resource inspection revealed 16 spotted seatrout; four of which were undersized. The captain of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for undersized seatrout.

While on uniformed patrol at the Pine Island Co-Op boat ramp, Officer Hardgrove observed a subject putting his vessel on a trailer. Officer Hargrove asked him if he had caught any fish and he pointed to a bucket in the back of his truck. A resource inspection revealed 35 stone crab claws, 24 of which were undersized. The subject was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersized stone crab claws and shown how to properly measure the claws.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at the 4th St. Boat Ramp, Officer Bibeau observed a person carrying a cast net walking across the bridge. He approached the subject to conduct a fisheries inspection and observed him placing a plastic bag on the ground. A resource inspection revealed eight extremely small sheepshead. The individual was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized sheepshead.

Officer Martinez and Bibler were on the water when they received a call from dispatch stating that a subject was catching and keeping undersized and over the bag limit spotted seatrout. A resource inspection found the man to be in possession of 11 spotted seatrout, nine of which were undersized. The man was told he was only allowed four per day and that they had to be at least 15 inches. The subject was cited for his violations, and cited for a major violation for being in possession of excess of three or more trout over the limit.

Officer Alvis was on patrol in South Pinellas and observed a vehicle doing doughnuts on Gandy Beach at a high rate of speed. Additionally, Officer Alvis observed the vehicle drive towards a flock of protected shore birds causing them to scatter. The driver was issued a notice to appear for damage to public lands, and was educated about the protected status of the shore birds.

RESCUES

LEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Ruggiero received a phone call from the Lee County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) regarding an unconfirmed plane crash in Bonita Springs and began coordinating a response to assist with searching a dense area of woods. Officers Collazo and Rogers along with the LCSO, Department of Forestry, and Fire and Rescue responded to assist. The LCSO helicopter pilots confirmed there was a plane crash after they located a debris field in the woods and guided officers to the location. Officers Collazo and Rogers made their way through the woods on foot to search for survivors but unfortunately the pilot was deceased. The investigation was turned over to the LCSO and the National Transportation Safety Board to determine the cause of the crash.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Lieutenant Holcomb visited an elementary school in South Tampa and talked with students about the job of an FWC officer and the importance of conservation. Lieutenant Holcomb brought an alligator for a demonstration and several educational handouts for the children to take with them.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Pulaski conducted an outreach event at Hacienda Village in New Port Richey. There were approximately 45 persons in attendance. Officer Pulaski spoke about feeding wildlife and the rules that prohibit certain activities.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Investigator Coffin arrested a boat operator involved in a 2015 boating accident fatality. During the accident, one subject was killed and two others sustained serious injuries. The subject turned himself in and was charged with a total of seven felony counts to include, vessel homicide, boating under the influence (BUI) manslaughter, BUI

manslaughter with unlawful blood alcohol limit, BUI manslaughter impairment, BUI serious bodily injury (2 counts).

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was conducting resource inspections when he observed multiple subjects fishing at the Moore Haven Locks. A resource inspection revealed two black crappie which measured less than the required 10 inches. The subject was checked through FWC records and it was discovered that the subject had previously received a warning for the same violation, as well as other citations related to freshwater fishing. The subject was issued a notice to appear (citation) for the violation, and the fish were photographed and returned to the water.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Hankinson conducted a derelict vessel investigation near the Burt Reynolds Boat Ramp. Through proactive investigative work, the owner has been identified, interviewed and cited for "vessel at-risk." Officer Hankinson is monitoring the issue daily and working diligently with the owner to have it legally removed from state waters. The owner will be criminally cited if the violation is not corrected within 30 days of notice.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FWC's Miami Port Investigation Team (Stiffler, Martir-Negron and K-9 Mag) assisted the USFWS at the Miami Airport. Inspection of boxes containing marine fish revealed one box containing four lionfish (2 *Pterois antennata*- Spotfin Lionfish and 2 *Pterois radiana*- Tailbar Lionfish). The fish were seized and the importer was issued a misdemeanor citation for the unlawful importation of lionfish.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Thompson and Officer Pino were on patrol conducting a retail inspection at a bait house in Key Largo. Officer Thompson requested the proper paperwork from the individual that was working in the retail store. He explained that he could not find the purchase invoices and contacted the owner, who stated that the invoices were located in another city. After refusing to comply with instructions, he was arrested and transported to the Monroe County Jail and cited for refusing to sign the resource citation, interference with two FWC officers, and failure to keep adequate records.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Amuso, Polly, and Kleis responded to a wildlife feeding complaint in Naples. According to the complainant, employees of a local car wash were feeding large numbers of racoons at the business every afternoon. The officers concealed themselves and observed a subject toss what appeared to be dog or cat food to racoons. The subject was educated and cited appropriately and the Collier County Health Department was contacted. Officers will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the feeding has ceased.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officer Washington presented information about FWC's law enforcement division to approximately 30-40 students from Fanshawe college in their 'Police Foundation' study program. We hosted the 16th annual field trip where students from Fanshawe College visit FWC, learn about our agency, and experience ride-alongs with marine officers to develop a better understanding of our daily operations. Investigator Smith and the owner of the South Florida exotic wildlife rehab center brought wildlife such as pythons, alligators and a lemur to teach the group about his duties as a Captive Wildlife Investigator.

COLLIER COUNTY

The Collier County FWC patrol team including a combination of patrol officers and lieutenants staffed the FWC Law Enforcement booth at the Naples Boat show this week. They provided information to the public and answered questions about boating safety and education, livery/boat rental safety, derelict and displaced vessels enforcement efforts, saltwater and freshwater fishing regulations, and hunting and land use regulations. Other topics included human-wildlife conflict mitigation for bears, panthers, alligators, pythons and other species local to Collier County. Hundreds of stakeholders interacted with our staff.

Officer Plussa and Lieutenant Mahoney conducted state park patrol during the annual beach arts and crafts show at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park. Hundreds of local stakeholders and visiting tourists were at the park during the event. Officer Plussa and Lieutenant Mahoney answered questions and interacted with the public, providing information about state park and saltwater fishing regulations. In addition to educating the public, they conducted speed and shoreline fisheries and boating enforcement and issued appropriate citations and warnings.

Officer Curbelo and Lieutenant Bulger joined members of the panther biologist team to represent the FWC at the annual AgVentures Day in Immokalee. More than 400 first graders from 5 area schools came out to learn about 4-H programs, animal husbandry, farming, and Florida panthers.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Plussa, Officer Thurkettle, and Lieutenant Mahoney conducted overnight offshore patrol between 5-9 miles off Marco Island. Their efforts focused on commercial shrimp boats potentially fishing inside state waters off southwest Florida. Also targeted were vessels engaged in commercial mackerel fishing and any vessel operating at night without required navigation lights. Their stops resulted in multiple violations including criminal commercial fisheries license violations, violations for safety equipment, registration, marine sanitation devices, and navigation lights. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued.