

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



February 23, 2018 through March 1, 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

BAY COUNTY

Patrolling one evening in St. Andrews State Park, Officer Basford detected the odor of burnt cannabis coming from the playground area. She observed and contacted two male subjects. While talking with the individuals, she smelled cannabis and asked where it was located. One subject stated it was in his truck and the other subject disclosed a vape cigarette which contained hashish. She asked the owner of the truck if she could search and he gave her consent. Hashish oil concentrate, drug paraphernalia and under 20 grams of cannabis were found in the truck. Both subjects were arrested and taken to the Bay County Jail for the violations.

Reserve Officer Cooper was on patrol in the St. Andrews Pass when he approached a vessel to conduct a fishery inspection. As Officer Cooper approached the vessel, a subject dumped two empty beer bottles over the side of the vessel. During the subsequent fishery inspection, a 30-inch redfish was in an ice chest and the harvester was found to have an outstanding warrant from Monroe County. The subject was cited for the oversized redfish and transported to the Bay County Jail for the warrant. A second subject on the vessel was cited for littering.

GADSDEN COUNTY

A complainant identified three males in a 16-foot fishing boat that had been out all-day fishing on Lake Talquin with at least two of them drinking since 7:30 a.m. When the owner/operator of the vessel started to drive around the lake, the complainant notified

Lieutenant Hall and Officer Fletcher directly by cell phone. Lieutenant Hall and Officer Fletcher were off duty and contacted Officers Brower, Henderson and Hildebrand to respond and check vessels in the area. The vessel owner of the suspected BUI violation had switched operators to an individual who had not been drinking alcohol. The three occupants were made aware that our officers are very professional and thorough in their inspections. The complainant reported later via 'praise email' that he could hear the way the officers spoke to the occupants of the vessel and was impressed by how professional and courteous they were.

Officer Johnson made contact with two trespassers who were on a private hunting lease near Iron Bridge. Officer Johnson checked the individuals through dispatch and found that the female subject had an active warrant out of Leon County. She was arrested and booked into the Gadsden County Jail without incident.

GULF COUNTY

Officer Webb received a complaint of a white male catching over the limit of black drum under the Highland View Bridge. When he arrived, he saw an individual fitting the description actively fishing. A resource inspection revealed the subject was in possession of 15 black drum, six of which were undersized, and one grossly undersized red fish. Appropriate charges were issued for the multiple violations.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Jones issued a citation to a subject for the charges of entering a closed area and attempting to take deer over bait on a management area on the Eglin Wildlife Management Area. Lieutenant Berryman and Officer Mullins assisted Officer Jones in the investigation which led to the charges.

FWC Dispatch received multiple complaints regarding a subject who shot a gray fox. Several officers began working the case and gathering information including Officers Mullins, Hoomes, Roberson and Jones. Officer Mullins contacted the subject and met with him about the fox. The subject admitted to Officers Mullins and Jones that he shot the fox. The officers went back with the subject to where the carcass had been discarded and located the fox, as well as the spent buckshot casing. After reviewing the evidence, charges were filed on the subject by Officer Mullins for killing a gray fox.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Hofheinz observed an individual in Dickerson Bay culling oysters and placing them into a bucket. He approached the subject and identified himself as a Fish and Wildlife Officer. The subject had a bag nearly full of oysters and a five-gallon bucket that was about half full. The subject was issued a citation for harvesting oysters from a prohibited area. The oysters were photographed and returned to the resource.

Officer Hofheinz observed two individuals leaving a wooded area off Mashers Sands Road. After a dispatch check for felony history, it was discovered that both individuals had felony conviction histories. Officer Kossey arrived on scene to assist. The officers asked the individuals to step out of the vehicle due to a rifle and ammunition being in plain view. They searched the vehicle and found assorted ammunition and two rifles. The subjects each also had a pack of cigarettes with marijuana inside in their possession. The search of the vehicle also revealed a set of scales in the glove box and the driver advised he used the scales to weigh marijuana. The two individuals were booked into the Wakulla County Jail for possession of a firearm and ammunition by a convicted felon and possession of marijuana.

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Hollinhead and Officer Bradshaw checked a subject fishing while conducting fishery inspections on the Choctawhatchee Bay. The subject stated he had caught some mullet and a legal-size redfish. An inspection of his cooler revealed the redfish was well over the legal slot limit. The subject was issued a citation for oversized redfish.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officers Gore and Coker were on patrol in Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area when they observed a vehicle traveling slowly with the occupants displaying a light in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. A stop of the vehicle revealed firearms. After a short interview, the subjects were cited for attempting to take deer at night by gun and light.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Lieutenants Cook and Kilpatrick along with Captains Pearce and Wood attended a meeting at the Florida State University Coastal and Marine Laboratory organized by aqua-culturists from Franklin and Wakulla Counties. The meeting was also attended by Investigative Captains from the Franklin and Wakulla County Sheriff Departments, representatives from the Department of Aquaculture and others from the public. The meeting was to discuss ongoing/emerging issues within the aquaculture industry. Close to 40 individuals were in attendance for the meeting.

LEON COUNTY

Officer Pekerol attended a public outreach event at the Griffin Middle School in Tallahassee. The presentation was attended by 30 Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students and faculty. The students learned about conservation law enforcement and had the opportunity to touch a small alligator.

Officers from Leon, Wakulla, and Franklin Counties participated in the Ducks Unlimited Greenwing youth event at the Ayavalla Plantation on Lake Carr. FWC Pilot Able and Recruiter Stephens landed in a helicopter. K-9 team Anderson and Scout were on display and were a big hit with the crowd. Two agency airboats were on display and Investigators Johnston and Bryant were on scene to answer questions and assist with the event. Officer Brookes brought an applicant ride along to the event so the potential new hire could see how important the community outreach part of our job is. Approximately 300 kids and their parents attended the annual event.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Brooks and Rockwell attended an outreach event for Crestview High School. The officers talked about what it takes to become an FWC officer and the agency's missions. They also answered questions about their job. There was a total of 65 students in the two classes the officers attended.

WALTON

Officers Tison and Bradshaw attended the Walton County 4H Farm Safety Day and spoke to approximately 110 children about boating safety. The officers also answered various questions about the daily role and responsibilities of an FWC Officer.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

UNION COUNTY

K-9 Officer Gill received information about several illegal deer harvested at night by illegal method. Another call reported hearing a rifle shot coming from a piece of property during the muzzleloading season. Officer Gill and K-9 Friar responded to the area. K-9 Friar discovered a freshly spent shell casing from a rifle and blood from a freshly harvested deer. Officer Gill identified a suspect and interviewed them reference to the illegally harvested deer. It was determined the individual had indeed killed the deer with a rifle. The investigation continued and it was discovered the subject had killed several deer during the archery and muzzleloading season with the rifle. In addition, the investigation revealed the subject had harvested a deer at night with a rifle. Several charges of taking deer during the closed season and taking deer at night will be direct filed with the State Attorney.

ALACHUA COUNTY

K-9 Officer Gill obtained information about two alligators harvested during the closed season. Photographs and video showed the suspects catching the alligators and taking them with a handgun. One of the suspects admitted to setting out baited hooks to catch

the alligators and then shooting them with the handgun. Two alligator heads, two bags of alligator meat, and a handgun were seized as evidence. The suspects will be charged with possession of untagged alligators, taking alligators with set hooks, taking alligators with an elevated line, and taking alligators with a firearm.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Christmas was on routine patrol when he saw a subject operating a vessel as he pulled up to the dock at Jim King Ramp. The subject got off the vessel and walked over and got into a vehicle, maneuvering the vessel trailer down the ramp. The subject appeared unsteady on his feet, using the guard rails for support. The vehicle tag was expired and the display of the vessel's registration numbers were improper. As Officer Christmas spoke with the driver, the officer could smell a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage on the driver's breath and his speech sounded slurred. The subject was requested to do field sobriety exercises. He performed poorly. The driver/operator was arrested and booked at the Duval County Jail. He was charged with DUI, BUI, expired tag and improper display. He had an additional charge added at the jail because he refused to submit to a breath test and had a prior refusal against his license.

RESCUES

TAYLOR COUNTY

A man and young son were 2½ hours into an 8-mile hike in the Econfinia River State Park trail system when the son began experiencing medical problems. He was incoherent and unable to walk. The father had to leave his son after realizing he had lost his phone on the trail. The father located his phone and returned to find his son on the ground. Officer Wilder responded, located the two hikers, and brought them to a waiting ambulance for treatment.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

MARION COUNTY

Officer Seiler responded to the Whispering Pines RV Park in the Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) about the alleged killing of a gopher tortoise. Witness accounts and evidence suggested one of the residents used a handgun to shoot and kill a gopher tortoise as it grazed near the suspect's RV. Officer Seiler contacted the suspect and during a post-Miranda interview, he admitted to killing the gopher tortoise. Charges were filed for unlawfully taking a gopher tortoise.

FLAGLER COUNTY

In response to a request from the Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO), Officers Harris and Greenier met FCSO personnel at the Bings County Park Boat Ramp on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) in northeast Flagler County. Officers Harris and Greenier were asked to assist the FCSO with recovering a body discovered by a commercial blue crabber earlier in the morning. Officers Greenier and Harris operated the FCSO airboat and took members of the Flagler County Fire Department and an FCSO detective to a shallow creek off the ICW. The body was recovered and taken to the medical examiner.

BREVARD COUNTY

While on patrol in Sebastian Inlet State Park, Officer Kearney conducted resource inspections on the north jetty and discovered that a man had a large snook in his cooler. A measurement of the fish revealed it was over the 28-32 inch slot size. A citation was issued for possession of over the slot size for snook.

While on water patrol in Port Canaveral, Officers Balgo, Rasey, and Wehner were conducting resource inspections on incoming vessels. During one inspection, the officers located an undersized cobia in a cooler bag on the vessel. The individual was issued a citation.

While on foot patrol at US1 and the Sebastian River, Officer Balgo observed two individuals cast netting. A resource inspection located an undersized sheepshead, an undersized snook, and illegal method for harvesting snook. Citations for the violations were issued accordingly.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Marroquin was conducting resource and vessel safety inspections at the Stick Marsh Boat Ramp when he observed a vessel returning to the ramp with no navigation lights. A resource inspection revealed two individuals on board with nine black bass. Four of the bass were over 16 inches. No black bass may be possessed on the Stick Marsh. Both individuals were cited accordingly.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Saint Augustine Police Department (SAPD) asked for assistance to help search an area located off San Sebastian Way about human remains being found by a surveyor. FWC, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office (SJSO) Crime Scene Techs and SAPD assisted Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in scouring the area for the remains. The remains found were documented by Forensic Anthropologists from Florida Gulf Coast University and logged into evidence. SAPD and FGCU were very appreciative of Officers Lawshe, Ramsey, Greenier and Harris' local knowledge of the wooded area and skill in locating items of interest.

RESCUES

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Jones, Chriest, and Lieutenant Dickson responded to a plane crash on the St. Johns River. The ten-seat plane was found upside down in the water and two occupants were found deceased among the wreckage. FWC is providing security and transportation for FHP, NTSB, and the FAA. This case is under investigation.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Lawshe received information about an 18-year-old autistic male subject missing from his home. He was last seen swimming in the St. Johns River, 100 yards north of Palmo Fish Camp Road Boat Ramp. Saint John's County Sheriff's Office (SJSO) requested two FWC vessels to help search the St. Johns River in the area near Palmo Fish Camp Road Boat Ramp. FWC Officers Greenier, Harris, Lawrence, and Ramsey, and one SJSO deputy began searching by water. FWC Officers Meade, Campbell and Lawshe along with Investigator Brechler were assisting with land efforts to find him. After searching for two hours, a report of a person matching the description was seen at Shands Bridge. Both FWC vessels were sent to the east side of the Shands Bridge where the missing subject was located safe.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Norris was driving on US 41 in Port Charlotte when he noticed a vehicle that was drifting in and out of its lane. After observing the vehicle drift into the lane of another vehicle almost hitting it, he conducted a traffic stop. While talking to the driver he could smell alcohol and noticed the driver slurring his speech. Officer Norris conducted field sobriety exercises and determined the driver was under the influence of alcohol and impaired to the point he could not safely drive. The driver was arrested for DUI and for driving on a suspended driver's license.

Investigators responded to an internet complaint of someone selling shrimp on the side of the road without a license. Investigators contacted the subject and further investigation revealed that the subject was illegally selling product without a retail license. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for the violation along with a court date.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Fagan and Scinta attempted to stop an ATV and motorcycle who were operating in the Chassahowitzka WMA. The operators fled, and after a short pursuit

were apprehended by Lieutenant Grover who arrived to assist. The operators were taken to the Hernando County jail and charged accordingly.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Infante was working Alico groves for night hunting activity with a ride along near the Highlands and Polk county line and spotted a car working a light out of the driver's window in a manner to disclose wildlife. After observing the car for a while, Officer Infante activated her blue lights and conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle. There were four occupants inside with two rifles in the back seat in plain view. The occupants admitted that if they had seen a hog or deer, they would have taken the wildlife. Officer Infante seized two rifles and a spotlight. The individuals were charged appropriately.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on night water patrol in Old Tampa Bay, Officer Godfrey and Lieutenant Van Trees stopped a vessel to complete a safety inspection and noticed signs of impairment from the operator who was stumbling and slurring his words. Officer Godfrey initiated field sobriety exercises, and at the completion arrested the operator for boating under the influence. Officer Godfrey, who is a breath tech operator, assisted with the breath test at the Hillsborough County jail where the test revealed the operator was a .11 breath alcohol content (BAC). The subject was booked into the Hillsborough County jail.

Officers Godfrey and Wilkins were on water patrol near the Gandy Bridge when they stopped a vessel that was fishing. A subsequent resource inspection revealed a subject had three black drum well over the maximum size of 24 inches. One black drum over 24 inches is allowed and the subject had three that were all over 30+ inches. The subject was cited accordingly for his violation.

Officers Godfrey and Wilkins were on night water patrol in Apollo Beach when they stopped a vessel operating with no navigation lights and noticed signs of impairment from the operator. After field sobriety exercises were completed, Officer Wilkins arrested the operator for boating under the influence (BUI). The operator, who had been arrested twice for DUI, refused to give a sample of his breath and was booked into the Hillsborough County jail for BUI. He was also cited for refusing to submit to a breath test.

While on land patrol at the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Officers Pettifer and Caldwell observed two individuals fishing and a cooler near the two men. An inspection of the cooler revealed 16 undersized mangrove snapper, and one undersized snook. After conducting interviews, the two men admitted to catching the fish. They were cited for possession of undersized and over the bag limit of mangrove snapper. Additionally, the individual who caught the snook was cited for possession of an undersized snook during a closed season.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Hardgrove and Lieutenant Ruggiero responded to a search and rescue call. There were two men on an ATV inside a piece of private property and one of the men was having a seizure. The second man was lost and couldn't find his way out to get help. A police department helicopter located the men and a fire and rescue truck got to them and brought them out for medical attention. Once back in the ambulance, the man regained consciousness and refused any medical attention. The officers also observed several other people exiting the private property and began asking questions because no one was supposed to be there. During the questioning both officers smelled the odor of marijuana. When asked about the odor everyone denied possessing any drugs, however, the officers found a small plastic baggie on the ground where they were sitting. One of the men admitted he tossed it because he didn't want to get caught with it. He was issued a notice to appear for possessing marijuana and paraphernalia. All the people were issued trespass warnings for being on the private property without permission.

While on land patrol Officer Hardgrove conducted a fisheries check on a vessel returning to Pineland Marina. He located a plastic bag containing multiple fish fillets inside a small cooler on the boat. The fish were identified as spotted seatrout due to the skin still attached. The two occupants of the vessel were issued notices to appear for possession of seatrout not in whole condition.

Officer Hardgrove was on uniformed patrol at Pineland Marina and conducted a resource check on a recreational fishing boat. An inspection of the vessel revealed seven trout in the cooler – the daily bag limit is four. The operator was issued a notice to appear for over the bag limit of seatrout.

While on uniformed patrol at D and D Bait and Tackle, Officer Hardgrove conducted a resource inspection on an individual who had just placed a bucket and fishing pole in the back of a pickup truck. The individual stated that he had two mangrove snapper. An inspection of the bucket revealed seven mangrove snapper, most of which appeared to be under the legal minimum size limit of 10 inches. The individual stated that the fish belonged to someone else. No other individuals were present. Officer Hardgrove measured the mangrove snapper and five were determined to be undersized. The individual was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersized and over the bag limit of mangrove snapper.

Officer Thompson was working in plain clothes maintaining cover as a recreational fisherman while observing a group fishing at a popular local bridge. Two men caught undersized mangrove snapper one after the other and placed them in a container instead of returning them to the water. Officer Thompson called in Officer Hardgrove to contact the two men. When Officer Hardgrove arrived in uniform, the men attempted to hide the container in the bushes before he got to them. The container was located and found to have nine undersized mangrove snapper. Appropriate citations were issued.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Davidson was on land patrol around the South Skyway Fishing Pier and stopped and performed a fisheries inspection on a man fishing off the pier. During the course of the inspection, Officer Davidson found that the man had caught and kept several undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was issued one citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Gonzales was on water patrol near Long Boat Pass and stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel near the pass. During the inspection, Officer Gonzales became suspicious that the operator of the vessel may have been under the influence of alcohol and that his normal faculties may have been impaired. The operator performed several field sobriety tasks poorly. After the tasks were completed the operator was arrested for BUI. The subject blew a .136 BAC, well over the legal limit of .08.

PASCO COUNTY

Officers Smith, Balfour, Pulaski, Alvis, Hughes, and Lieutenant Wells participated in a multi-agency detail involving the inspection of commercial bait shrimp boats off Hudson. On the first shrimp boat inspection, the captain was arrested for possession of methamphetamine and less than 20 grams of cannabis; one crewmember was arrested for possession of methamphetamine and less than 20 grams of cannabis; and the other crewmember was arrested for possession of scallops during closed season, illegal methods of harvest for scallops, possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis, and paraphernalia. The officers escorted the shrimp boat back to land. The second shrimp boat inspection involved Officer Alvis working on a Coast Guard boat. The officer arrested the captain for possession of methamphetamine, an active warrant, and being in possession of commercial quantities of shrimp without having a saltwater products license. FWC also assisted Paco Sheriff's Office and USCG with the arrest of another crewmember on a different boat for a warrant and paraphernalia. All in all, five persons on three separate commercial bait shrimp boats went to jail for felony and misdemeanor charges.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol near Fort Desoto, Officer Bibeau and Lieutenant Van Trees observed a vessel with fishing gear returning to the boat ramp and quickly maneuvered to intercept them as they arrived at the boat ramp. Officer Bibeau began a resource inspection with the four men on board and was told there was only one sheepshead and one spotted seatrout. As Officer Bibeau inspected the vessel, Lieutenant Van Trees noticed that the captain of the vessel got increasingly nervous as Officer Bibeau made his way to the front of the vessel. Lieutenant Van Trees asked the captain again if there were any other fish besides the two fish they claimed. Again, the officers were told there were just two fish. Officer Bibeau then found numerous undersized sheepshead in a livewell that was separate from the seatrout and one legal sheepshead. The subject was cited for possession of undersized sheepshead.

Officer Bibeau and Lieutenant Van Trees were watching subjects near the Skyway Bridge when one of the subjects returned to their vehicle. The officers made contact to conduct a resource inspection and the subject immediately became nervous and defiant as the officers spoke with him. A subsequent search of his name revealed he had a warrant for his arrest in Hillsborough County. The subject was arrested and booked into the Pinellas County jail for the warrant.

While on water patrol outside of Johns Pass, Officers Bibler, Bibeau, and Wilkins stopped a vessel returning from fishing offshore to conduct a resource inspection and found one of the subjects to be in possession of an out of season and undersized gray triggerfish. The subject was cited for his violations.

Officers Bibler, Bibeau, and Wilkins stopped another vessel returning from offshore near Johns Pass that had numerous rods and reels. Officer Bibeau initiated a resource inspection and found porgies, snapper, and a gray triggerfish. The triggerfish was measured and was undersized, as well as out of season. One subject was cited for possession of undersized and out of season gray triggerfish.

While on night water patrol near Tierra Verde, Officers Martinez and Bibler stopped a vessel to complete a resource inspection and noticed signs of impairment from the operator. Officer Martinez conducted field sobriety exercises with the operator, who was belligerent and cursing at the officer, and found him to indeed be impaired. The subject refused to give a sample of his breath. He was arrested for boating under the influence and cited for failure to provide a breath sample.

While on water patrol at Johns Pass, Officer Bibeau was checking a vessel when another passed by violating the speed restriction. Officer Bibeau motioned to the subject twice to slow down, and even though he saw Officer Bibeau motioning to him, he failed to slow down. Officer Bibeau caught up to the vessel and stopped it to address the violation. Officer Bibeau immediately noticed signs of impairment from the operator and subsequent field sobriety exercises determined he was impaired. Officer Bibeau, who is also a breath tech operator, arrested the subject for boating under the influence and administered a breath test. The test revealed the operator was a .14 BAC, well over the .08 legal limit. The subject was booked into the Pinellas County jail.

RESCUES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Zampella, Birchfield, Stasko, Price and Lieutenant Ruggiero responded to a suspicious vehicle inside the Webb Management area. The vehicle was abandoned with the windows open, keys in the ignition, and a cell phone. According to a witness, the vehicle had been at the location since the day before. After identifying the owner, the officers went by the last known residence to find he hadn't been seen in two days, and had left the front door of his house open when he left. As a precaution, the officers

began searching the area just in case he was injured or lost. The sheriff's department sent a helicopter and deputies to assist. FWC K-9 performed an area search and no one could locate the person. The subject's mother said she didn't know where he was and was going to file a missing person report with the local authorities. Fortunately, the subject arrived at home the next morning uninjured.

HARDEE COUNTY

A subject was working in waist deep water on private property when he was bitten by a large alligator. The subject sustained bite injuries to his hand, armpit, upper chest, and leg. He freed himself by pushing the alligator away while yelling for help. After the bite occurred, the alligator retreated into deeper water and disappeared. Nearby workers assisted and transported him to a local hospital. This is an ongoing alligator bite incident.

PINELLAS COUNTY

During a busy Sunday at Honeymoon Island State Park, Officer Ferguson responded to numerous calls to include two lost children calls, a medical emergency call where a man was found unconscious, and a complaint from the park staff about visitors refusing to obey park staff commands. Officer Ferguson assisted in each call, assuring that there was a positive resolution in each case.

Officer Ferguson assisted FWC and Sea World biologists in the capture/rescue of a dolphin in Clearwater that had fishing line entangled on its tail fin. The entanglement was so bad that it had started to imbed in the skin of the dolphin. Officer Ferguson provided a security zone for the biologists to work and the rescue was a success with the dolphin being captured and the fishing line removed.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

POLK COUNTY

Officer Adams, Cloud, Stephens, Cristofaro, Salem, Stanley, Pulaski, Lieutenant Bontrager and Lieutenant Fugate assisted with safety and scoring at Florida's National Archery in Schools Program Championship that was held in Bartow. There were 245 students that attended in person and an additional 658 students participated virtually.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Ryan discovered an abandoned boat submerged at a boat ramp along Alligator Alley. Pursuant to an investigation, he was able to identify the owner of the boat. Upon contact with the owner it was learned that he knowingly dumped the 23-foot vessel as garbage. Officer Ryan will be filing several charges against the owner with the Broward State Attorney's Office.

Officer Banks was on patrol in western Broward near the border with Palm Beach County. She conducted a fresh water fisheries inspection on a large group of individuals that were fishing. With the assistance of Officer Ryan and the FWC dispatch center, they discovered that one subject had several outstanding warrants including grand theft out of Broward County. With information gathered, Officer Banks placed the individual under arrest and delivered him to the Broward County jail.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Crosby was conducting water patrol in the rim canal of Lake Okeechobee and observed a vessel with subjects actively fishing. As Officer Crosby approached to conduct a resource inspection, a subject on the vessel looked at him and began to retrieve fish from a bucket on the boat and throw them overboard. After being given several verbal commands to stop, the subject ceased. One fish thrown overboard was recovered. The fish thrown overboard were found to be a Black Crappie less than 10 inches in length. In the bucket a second Black Crappie was found that measured less than 10 inches. On Lake Okeechobee the minimum requirement for Black Crappie are 10 inches or more. The subject was cited accordingly for possession of undersized Black Crappie.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Nasworth was on foot patrol in the area of Canal Point Locks conducting freshwater fishery inspections and discovered one subject to be in possession of several undersized Black Crappie less than 10 inches in length. Officer Nasworth issued the subject a citation for the violation and a court date. Officer Nasworth seized the fish for evidence.

RESCUES

GLADES COUNTY

A call was received of an overdue person operating an air-boat, last seen near observation island area on Lake Okeechobee. The missing person was 85 years old with some medical issues. Lieutenant Strenth, Lieutenant Brown, Officers Crosby, Davis, Hausler, and Fijalkowski responded with airboats. A FWC helicopter was requested due to the thick vegetation in this area. The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office responded with their Flair unit and assisted with the search until the search was called off at 3 am (to resume at daylight) due to hazards conditions. The subject was

located at 9 am the next morning in good shape. He was transported back to the boat ramp and turned over to EMS. He was then transported to the hospital for observation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Crosby went to the Moore Haven High School and gave a boating safety presentation. After the presentation, the students could get on a patrol vessel (that was on a trailer) and ask questions about the patrol truck, vessel and job. At the completion of the program all participants were given a free fishing pole with tackle. There were approximately 25 students that took part.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officers Davis, Crosby, Fijalkowski, and Hausler assisted with public safety and answered questions during the Seminole war re-enactment held at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

A German tourist couple rented unseaworthy jet skis from a livery through Air B&B. Upon inspection, the livery and employees failed to abide by all applicable rules and statutes. FWC officers rescued the victim on the disabled PWC from Sandspur island and with his full cooperation were able to charge and arrest the defendant. Miami-Dade County added civil charges and restricted the subject from all public county boat ramps.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera and an FWC officer from Miami Dade County were patrolling an area of Fort Lauderdale when they drove past a residence and saw a cage in the front yard of the residence containing several bunting birds. Upon closer inspection, they discovered that there were 17 painted bunting birds in a big cage in the front yard and another two cages containing two male painted buntings in the backyard. Several trap cages were scattered in the side yard of the home without any birds inside. The home owner was in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was given federal citations for a total of 19 birds and the traps and one bird cage were seized as evidence.

Officer Washington responded to the Broad Causeway in reference to a PWC half sunk, tied off to the bridge. Officer Washington located a phone number for the owner and left several messages on her voice mail while he was still on the scene. Officer Washington decided to drive to her residence to and made contact with the owner who advised him the PWC was stolen a few days ago, but she had not reported it to the police. Officer

Washington explained to the owner it was still her responsibility to remove the PWC from the state waters. While Officer Washington was on the scene, he ensured the owner made arrangements with Fast Response Towing, who advised her they would remove the PWC from the water and take it to the local landfill. Officer Washington advised her he would need photographs of the PWC out of the water and a copy of the landfill receipt for his incident report.

An arrest was made in connection with stolen jet skis from Miami that were recovered by FWC officers in August of 2017. After a thorough investigation, the defendants surrendered themselves at TGK on February 21st, and were placed under arrest for grand theft, dealing in stolen property, title fraud, altered HIN and registration fraud.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Tafoya was on the South end of Channel 2 Bridge conducting resource inspections on a fishing bridge when he saw a subject hauling a medium sized red cooler on wheels behind him, swelling from its contents. Officer Tafoya asked if he had any fish in the cooler to which he replied, "yes" and then asked him if he could look at his catch and he agreed to the inspection. The cooler contained 12 undersized mangrove snapper, 3 undersized lane snapper, 4 undersized yellowtail snapper, and a wrasse. The subject was cited accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

While conducting water patrol near Marco Island, Officer Plussa stopped a vessel displaying a foreign registration for a safety inspection. In addition to having multiple safety equipment violations, the operator provided conflicting documentation for the vessel. Officer Plussa determined that the operator was attempting to evade the registration and titling process and was operating the vessel with an expired Florida registration. The violator was cited and warned accordingly.

Officer Arbogast was patrolling a local panther zone at night when he observed a vehicle in front of him swerving in between the yellow lines of the two-lane road. The vehicle was observed, on several occasions, crossing the center yellow line in front of oncoming traffic before abruptly correcting itself. During the subsequent traffic stop, Officer Arbogast could immediately smell the odor of marijuana emanating from inside the vehicle. The operator was showing several indicators of impairment. Officer Kleis arrived on scene to assist. The operator and the single occupant were removed from the vehicle. The vehicle search did not yield significant results other than a large water bottle filled with a fruity alcoholic beverage inside. Officer Arbogast conducted FSTs on the operator. The operator did poorly. Officer Arbogast placed the operator under arrest for DUI and Officer Kleis transported her to the Naples Jail Center.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube, along with staff from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) had a joint information booth at the Annual “Gigantic Nautical Flea Market” held at Founders Park in Islamorada. Officer Dube answered questions about boating safety, resource laws and spearfishing. Officer Dube also answered questions to a dozen potential applicants that were interested in a career in the FWC. The weekend event saw approximately 800 people come by the booth.