

# FWC

## Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



**March 23, 2018 through March 29, 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 Pestka was conducting patrols in the Eastpoint area and observed a vessel returning from harvesting oysters. A resource inspection found the subject to be in possession of undersized oysters. After counting and measuring each individual oyster, she determined the bag contained 62% undersized oysters. Officer Pestka cited the subject and returned the oysters to the water alive.

##### **OKALOOSA COUNTY**

Officer Corbin was on land patrol off Highway 98 on Okaloosa Island and approached a public access parking lot and observed a white van stuck in the protected sand dunes. The driver drove the van off the parking lot and over a parking stop block to access the beach. The vehicle's rear bumper, was almost touching the ground, and its rear tires and axle were buried in the sand from attempting to get unstuck. The vehicle created a large hole and had driven over vegetation in the sand dunes. The vehicle had also driven over vegetation to get to its location causing damage to the vegetation. The driver was issued a notice to appear citation for driving on coastal dunes or vegetation and damage to public lands.

Officer Corbin was on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections in the Destin Harbor and observed a 28-foot Chaparral vessel displaying no vessel registration or

decal. The vessel's stern displayed a hailing port of Destin, Florida. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation for no vessel registration.

Officer Corbin was on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections near the entrance to Destin Harbor and officer observed two kayaks, both occupied with an adult and a small child. The life jackets on the children were oversized and not fitting properly. An inspection of the children's life jackets showed they were U.S. Coast Guard rated for individuals 90 pounds and above. Both children were under 65 pounds. Both kayaks were rented. Due to rough seas and a strong current, Officer Corbin assisted both kayaks in getting back to the dock. The owners of the rental company met Officer Corbin and the renters at the dock. The owners admitted they did not have youth size life jackets for the children. The officer conducted a livery inspection and determined the business was in violation of several statutes and rules. The owner was issued a notice to appear citation for renting a vessel without the proper safety equipment, person providing pre-rental/pre-ride instructions has not completed approved safety course, and boating safety information not properly displayed at livery.

Officer Jarvis responded to a boating accident in the Destin Pass. An operator of a rented personal watercraft (PWC) was ejected off the PWC by rough seas/waves. The operator was separated from the PWC. Good Samaritans from the shore assisted the operator back to the beach. For precautionary measures, the operator was taken to a local hospital and later released with no injuries.

## WAKULLA COUNTY

On opening morning of spring turkey season, Officer Hofheinz was working a baited site that had been located. On approach, he heard two subjects using turkey calls as they were actively hunting. The subjects were found to be actively hunting within 60 yards of the baited site and both were cited accordingly.

## WALTON COUNTY

Officer White located two subjects turkey hunting in a closed portion of Eglin Wildlife Management Area. The subjects had previously been told at an Eglin check station that the area they were in was closed for the day due to an active military mission. Both subjects were charged for entering the closed area and Eglin Security Forces personnel issued a suspension from Eglin property.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### CASES

## MADISON COUNTY

Officer Ransom worked opening day of turkey season. While on foot patrol, he found a blind that was less than 100 yards from an active feeder. Officer Ransom saw two subjects put out turkey decoys, enter the blind and begin calling turkey. A citation was issued for attempting to take turkey within one hundred yards of bait.

Officer Vazquez has been monitoring a baited site since the opening day of youth turkey season. One morning, Officer Vazquez observed two subjects enter the baited blind and begin calling for turkey. A citation was issued for attempting to take turkey within one hundred yards of bait.

#### SUWANNEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Humphries and Officer Boone received information from a local constituent of possible illegal turkey hunting on state property. While on foot patrol, Lieutenant Humphries and Officer Boone discovered the suspected vehicle close to the state property boundary. After an hour of tracking, two subjects were observed illegally hunting turkeys on state land that was closed to hunting. The subjects admitted to hunting turkeys and that they were on closed state land. The appropriate citations were issued.

#### COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Kiss was off duty and received a call from FWC dispatch regarding armed trespass in progress on private leased property. A lease member told the two men to leave and that law enforcement would be called. Lieutenant Kiss met with the complainant who stated that they had encountered two armed men hunting on their private 80-acre lease. Lieutenant Kiss searched for the men but was unable to locate them. He called K9 Officer Bret Gill, K9 Friar and Officer Lee Yates for assistance. When they arrived, Lieutenant Kiss showed the officers the last location the trespassing men were seen. Within two hours, K9 Friar alerted on the scent of the men, hiding just 30 feet from the front gate of the lease. Both men were handcuffed and detained. One of the subjects was a convicted felon from a firearm charge in 2010 and was arrested for possessing a firearm by a convicted felon, attempting to take deer during closed season, and trespass. The father was charged with trespass. All firearms, holsters, and ammunition were seized as evidence.

#### BAKER COUNTY

Officer Tyler was working turkey hunting on a piece of property where he had previously located active bait sites. Shortly after daylight, two subjects were seen sitting in different spots, overlooking bait that had been placed for turkeys. One of the subjects was actively using a recorded game calling device to call for turkeys. Both subjects were cited for attempting to take turkey over bait and one subject was cited for attempting to take turkey with recorded game call.

K-9 Officer Gill was on patrol when he heard three shots come from a hunting club. He responded to the area of the shots and deployed K-9 Friar to look for violations. K-9 Friar located feathers from a freshly killed turkey and three spent shell casings. The turkey was killed from a blind overlooking a feeder that was broadcasting corn. Officer Gill tracked the vehicle's tire sign to a hunting camp and located the subjects who had killed the turkey. The subjects admitted to killing the turkey over the bait and both were charged with taking turkey over a baited area.

## DUVAL COUNTY

A passerby observed someone hosing what appeared to be yellow paint into a storm drain at a Jacksonville shopping center. The storm drain leads to a nearby retention pond, which overflows into the Intracoastal Waterway. Further investigation revealed that a full five-gallon bucket of parking lot marking paint had spilled and the suspect had flushed the material into the storm drain with a water hose. Appropriate criminal charges were issued.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Thomas conducted JEA patrol out of St. Augustine Inlet and boarded numerous recreational commercial fishing vessels out to 10 miles. During one vessel stop in federal waters, she located one red drum and more than the allowable bag limit of vermillion snapper. Officer Thomas issued a federal citation for possession of red drum in federal waters and over the bag of vermillion snapper. During another boarding, Officer Thomas located an undersized Cobia and an undersized Mutton Snapper. State charges were filed accordingly.

#### ORANGE COUNTY

Officer McConnell was on patrol in an area he had previously discovered to be baited with corn in a manner to attract turkeys. Officer McConnell set up in the area and soon heard a subject calling from a nearby blind. Officer McConnell contacted the subject and found that he was within 100 yards of the corn. The subject admitted to the violation and was cited for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of bait.

#### PORT CANAVERAL

Lieutenant Bonds and Officers Lejarzar and Hallsten were working offshore patrol and encountered a vessel that was fishing on a popular fishing structure in federal waters. A resource inspection revealed three red snapper onboard on ice. It is prohibited to be in possession of red snapper in federal waters during this time of the year. The fish were

photographed and the subjects were issued a federal citation for possession of red snapper out of season.

## MARION COUNTY

Officer Rice was on patrol in the Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he observed a large amount of trash freshly dumped off a forest road. Upon further investigation, Officer Rice observed a large amount of household garbage, wood, furniture, televisions, various other debris, and a large quantity of materials used to manufacture methamphetamine. Officer Rice located a document with a name and multiple receipts for purchases of Sudafed at local pharmacies in the dump pile. Investigator Miller and Officer Rice went to the local pharmacies and obtained names of the individuals that made the purchases. The officers also obtained surveillance photographs of possible suspects and a vehicle leaving one of the pharmacies. During their investigation, Officer Rice observed the possible suspect vehicle drive past him. The driver of the vehicle was one of the possible suspects and the officers knew that he did not have a valid driver's license. The officers conducted a traffic stop for the suspended license violation and conducted an interview in regard to the illegal dumping. Post Miranda, the subject admitted to dumping the trash in the forest. With the help of the Marion County Drug Unit and U.S. Forest Service, 6,950 pounds of trash was cleaned up from the site. This included the proper disposal of 23 "one pots", 9 meth generators, an excess of 200 used syringes, and various meth lab trash. Charges were filed for driving while license revoked, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, felony dumping, manufacture of methamphetamine, possession of pre-cursors to manufacture methamphetamine, and nuisance injurious to health.

## PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Jones and Lieutenant Dickson were on patrol in Ravine Gardens State Park when they observed two male subjects in a restricted area. While the officers addressed the violation and paperwork was being completed, a strong smell of cannabis was noticed emitting from inside the subjects' vehicle. Upon questioning, it was found that one of the subjects had under 20 grams of cannabis and a smoking pipe inside the vehicle. Both subjects were issued citations for being in the restricted area and one was charged with the cannabis and paraphernalia.

Officer Jones and Lieutenant Dickson responded to a complaint of illegal hog hunting at Murphy Creek Conservation Area. Upon arrival, a subject was located inside the conservation area with three dogs that had collars with throat guards on. The subject admitted to hog hunting in the area as was issued a notice to appear for hunting without a valid permit.

## OSCEOLA COUNTY

While patrolling turkey season on the upper St. Johns Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer Stelzer heard a gobble off in the distance on private lands. While on the

Deseret fence line, a subject walked up to the fence posted "No Trespassing." The subject stood at the fence line, looked both ways, and continued to the private property. After interviewing the subject, the subject had knowledge that he was on private lands and it was not his first time trespassing. The subject was placed under arrest and charged with armed trespass.

Officer Stelzer was on patrol of Bull Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he observed a vehicle whose tag appeared to be altered. Upon running the tag, he noticed it did not belong to the vehicle to which it was attached. During an interview, the subject admitted to having illegal substances in the vehicle. After searching the vehicle, he found methamphetamine, controlled substances without a prescription, and drug paraphernalia. The subject was placed under arrest for the drug charges.

## BREVARD COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Cybula was dispatched to Sebastian Inlet State Park regarding a suspicious person in the area. After contacting the person, it was discovered he had an active warrant out of Osceola County. The man was arrested and turned over to the Brevard County Jail.

Officer Cybula received information that a man had kept undersized fish near a local canal. Once the officer arrived he could see the man fishing and conducted a resource inspection. The man was found to be in possession of one undersized sheepshead and one undersized snook. The man also did not have a fishing license or snook stamp. A citation and multiple warnings were issued.

While on night patrol at Sebastian Inlet State Park, Lieutenant Lightsey and Officer Dubose observed a group of people fishing in a secluded area. After conducting a resource inspection, the group was found to be in possession of undersized gray snapper. While addressing the violation, the officers discovered more of the group was still wade fishing in the area. After finding that group, numerous violations were discovered including undersized gray snapper and illegal method of take for snapper (cast net). A citation and multiple warnings were issued.

While conducting patrol of BC49 Critical Wildlife Area (CWA), Lieutenant Lightsey observed three men in the clearly marked closed area. Officer Cybula responded by vessel, issued a citation, and explained to the men the reason for the CWA designation.

While on foot patrol in Port Canaveral, Officer Balgo conducted a resource inspection on an incoming vessel. Five yellowfin tuna and several dolphin fish were located. A permit checked revealed an expired Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit, which is mandatory to possess for the yellowfin tuna. The individual was issued one federal citation for possessing yellowfin tuna without a valid HMS permit.

## INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

While on night patrol, Officer Dubose conducted resource inspections at a local bridge. One of the subjects was found to be in possession of five gray snapper, three of which were under the minimum ten-inch total length. A citation was issued for the offense.

Lieutenant Lightsey and Officer Dubose received information about a man with an outstanding warrant in Vero Beach. The officers contacted the man and encouraged him to turn himself in. The man was then delivered to the Indian River County Jail without incident.

While on water patrol in Sebastian, Officers Balgo and Kearney conducted a resource inspection on an incoming commercial vessel. 59 king mackerel were located in the ice box. The commercial vessel limit for king mackerel is 50. A federal citation was issued for possession of over the commercial limit of king mackerel.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Jones, Wester, Bernard, Chriest, and Lieutenant Dickson responded to a call for help heard coming from the St. Johns River at night during severe weather. Upon arrival, it was found that the subject was ejected from his vessel while going at a high rate of speed and hitting a wave. The vessel continued in circles as the subject treaded water for approximately two hours. The subject was taken to the hospital with a possible broken shoulder and concussion. The vessel was recovered the next morning due to the weather. A boating accident investigation was conducted.

### OSCEOLA COUNTY

Officers Stelzer and Summers responded to a call from the Osceola County Sheriff's Office in reference to a missing father and son. The father and son had been out scouting for turkeys in Herky Huffman/Bull Creek Wildlife Mangement Area (WMA) and got turned around. The father's cell phone battery had died and their last known location was near the L-73 levee. Officer Summers went on ATV patrol to search for them. Officer Stelzer located the two individuals by their flashlight in the woods and returned them safely to their vehicle.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Miller and Graves coordinated and led the annual St. Augustine Blessing of the Fleet public safety vessel contingent for this year. FWC is the lead agency for waterborne traffic safety and security for this event. Approximately 65 vessels – including commercial fishing, charter, and recreational boats participated the procession. In addition to the six FWC vessels providing security, marine crews from the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Fire- Rescue, St. Augustine Police

Department, St. Augustine Fire-Rescue, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Customs, and Border Protection also assisted with waterborne security for the detail. Other FWC participating officers included Lieutenants Yetter and Zukowsky, Investigator Brechler, and Officers McDonough, Demeter, Greenier, Harris, Lawrence, Thomas, Lawshe, Campbell, and Ramsey.

## BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Cybula participated in Community Helper Day at Calvary Chapel in West Melbourne. More than sixty kids were in attendance and were eager to see the FWC truck and airboat. Officer Cybula brought a small alligator as well and taught the children about living with alligators in Florida.

## SOUTHWEST REGION

### CASES

#### CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Price and Officer Perry were in Babcock Ranch Preserve. Several minutes before shooting light they heard multiple gunshots close to their location. A few minutes later they heard people walking through the woods towards them. Two men in full camo stepped out onto the trail the officers were standing on. One of the men was carrying a shotgun and a dead Osceola turkey; the other was carrying a turkey decoy and a small camo bag. The men were quickly heading toward a perimeter fence. The officers approached the men and identified themselves when they were close. The two poachers immediately ran through the woods attempting to exit the management area and evade the officers. The officers caught both subjects who had ditched the shotgun, turkey, and hunting equipment. The officers located all the items thrown, and K-9 Officer Stasko and his K-9 Pearson located the spent shells and feathers from where the men shot the bird before shooting light. One of the men was on probation for shooting from a roadway and the other man was in possession of marijuana. Both men were booked into the Charlotte County jail and issued several citations including hunting without a quota permit and hunting without a hunting license.

#### HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Canamero, Henry, and Little, as well as Lieutenant Grover responded to Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) property to a report of a subject pointing a gun at a walker. The subject was located and began dancing on a picnic table. The officers, as well as several deputies took the subject into custody where he was found in possession of methamphetamine and marijuana. The handgun he was pointing turned out to be a BB gun replica of a handgun. The subject was booked into jail accordingly.

Officer Canamero located two subjects on a closed portion of Weeki Wachee Springs State Park. One of the subjects was found to be in possession of Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), marijuana, and being a minor in possession of alcohol. She was booked into the Hernando County jail on the charges.

#### HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Godfrey responded to a call about suspicious people on SWFWMD property. Officer Godfrey made his way to their last known location and found tire tracks heading into the property. He waited for the subjects to make their way back to him. Officer Godfrey found two subjects on an ATV with hunting dogs on the back. He noticed one subject had a GPS in his hand and the dogs had GPS trackers on their collars. Officer Wilkins arrived to assist, and after reading the subjects their Miranda warnings, Officer Godfrey conducted interviews and the subjects admitted to hunting for hogs on the property. The subjects were cited for illegal hunting on SWFWMD property, being on the property after hours, and operating an ATV on SWFWMD property – all misdemeanor violations.

#### LEE COUNTY

Officers Price and Furbay participated in a joint-agency operation with NOAA to target illegal feeding of dolphins in the Pine Island area. Dolphin feeding has become more abundant and is causing the mammals to become habituated to being fed by humans. This practice makes the dolphins dependent on humans for survival, endangers them by associating boats with food, makes them a nuisance to law-abiding fishermen, and has negative effects on the resource. The officers observed boaters in various locations and will be following up with federal charges on individuals found in violation of intentionally feeding the mammals.

#### MANATEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Hinds was on land patrol around Bowlees Creek. While on patrol he noticed two men pulling a small vessel out of the water and loading it into the back of their truck. The men were also carrying a bucket with a cast net in it and a large cooler. Lieutenant Hinds performed a resource inspection and found that the men had cast netted and kept a variety of different fish, including one 14-inch snook, 8-inch gray snapper, and a 10-inch sheepshead. The men also had no fishing licenses and none of the required safety equipment was on the vessel. Lieutenant Hinds cited one of the men criminally for possession of snook taken by illegal method which will require a court appearance for the violation. The men were also given six written warnings for the other violations.

Officer Gonzales was on land patrol around the South Skyway Fishing Pier State Park. While on patrol he stopped and performed a resource inspection on an individual fishing from the pier. During his inspection, Officer Gonzales found several undersized gray mangrove snapper and sheepshead poorly concealed in some newspaper. The man was cited for possession of undersized gray snapper which will require a court

appearance for the violation. He was also given a written warning for undersized sheepshead.

## PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Hughes, Pettifer, and Lieutenant Wells were working offshore on fisheries patrol. Approximately 25 miles west of Tarpon Springs they stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries and boating safety inspection. The officers inspected the vessel from bow to stern and located two 30+ inch out of season gag grouper, several undersized red grouper, and undersized trigger fish. The boat captain and his friend both admitted to catching the fish. Both occupants were issued multiple citations.

While on water patrol in South Pinellas, Officer Bibler, Investigator Schefano, and Lieutenant Van Trees stopped a vessel violating a manatee slow speed zone. After educating the men about the manatee zone, a resource inspection revealed undersized mangrove snapper hidden at the bottom of a cooler underneath grunts. After reading the men their Miranda rights, two of the three men admitted to catching and keeping the undersized mangrove snapper. Both subjects were cited for the violations.

Officers Phillippi, Ferguson, Larosa, and Lieutenant Van Trees responded to a call of a vessel found drifting out to sea with no one on it near Tarpon Springs. As the officers responded to the area by water to begin a search with United States Coast Guard and Tarpon Springs PD, Lieutenant Van Trees went to the registered owner's last known address. Lieutenant Van Trees finally tracked down the last known owner who stated he no longer owned the boat. Lieutenant Van Trees discovered the vessel had been sold numerous times and no one had transferred the title or re-registered the vessel. The new owner was found and contacted and stated that his friends ran aground the night before and just left the vessel and went home. Lieutenant Van Trees had the owner meet Officer Phillippi at the vessels location where the officer interviewed the subject. Officer Phillippi found that the owner had bought the vessel eight months prior and never transferred the title or registration. The subject was cited for the violation of failure to transfer title.

While on water patrol in South Pinellas, Officers Martinez, Larosa, Pettifer, and Investigator Schefano stopped a vessel for violating a manatee speed zone. The operator exhibited numerous signs of impairment and odd behavior. Officer Martinez smelled the odor of marijuana coming from the vessel and later found a small amount of marijuana and paraphernalia on the vessel. Officer Martinez also smelled the odor of alcohol coming from the operator and asked the subject if he would consent to seated field sobriety tasks. The subject refused. Due to the subject's actions and the observations by Officer Martinez, the subject was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI). It was later discovered the subject had been arrested for BUI in the same area approximately a year earlier.

## POLK COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer DeWeese observed an individual turkey hunting in an orange grove. Officer DeWeese contacted the individual and observed that he was hunting within 100 yards of bird seed and scratch corn. Officer DeWeese issued the individual a notice to appear for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of a feeding station.

## SARASOTA COUNTY

While Officer Sierra was on water patrol in the area of New Pass, he noticed two men fishing underneath the New Pass Bridge from land. During a resource inspection, he found that the men had caught and kept nine undersized gray (mangrove) snapper and one undersized red grouper. Both subjects were cited for possession of undersized gray snapper and will have to appear in court for their violation. One of the subjects was also given a warning for possession of undersized red grouper.

Officers Ridgway and Grenz were on water patrol in the area of Big Pass and performed a boating safety and fisheries inspection on a vessel transiting the pass. During the inspection, it was discovered that the captain of the vessel had caught and kept eight undersized red grouper and one undersized and out of season gag grouper. The captain was issued four citations for possession of over the bag limit red grouper, undersized red grouper, undersized gag grouper, and out of season gag grouper.

Lieutenant Frantz noticed a roadside vender displaying blue crab and shrimp for sale. As he contacted the operator, he introduced himself and asked for a saltwater retail license. The operator was unable to locate his license. A computer check by Lieutenant Frantz and dispatch were unable to produce any such license. The operator couldn't find any bills of lading for the product he had on hand. The shrimp was not on ice, only in brown water. The operator was issued one citation for no license, received warnings for the other violations, and was told to discontinue sales until he had corrected his violations.

Lieutenant Frantz received a call concerning a boat operator that had broken down and was safely at a dock waiting for a friend to come tow him to his regular dock area. The operator then shot two flares, catching a field on fire. When Lieutenant Frantz arrived, the boat had already been towed from the area. Through witness statements, Lieutenant Frantz located the operator. Lieutenant Frantz will be meeting with the fire marshal to discuss appropriate charges.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### CASES

#### BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Holcomb and Armstrong, along with an applicant ride along, responded to a complaint of a subject with a Burmese Python on Las Olas Blvd during a busy Saturday

night. They observed a subject who was charging people to pose for pictures with the snake. The subject was unable to produce any of the required permitting for possessing and exhibiting the snake. The subject was issued a citation for not having the required permit to possess the snake. He was issued warnings for not having the snake microchipped, not having a critical disaster summary plan filed with FWC, not having a permit to exhibit the snake, and improper caging.

Officer Tarr was patrolling in Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 2 when he saw a vehicle parked at the entrance with no occupants inside. Officer Tarr ran the tag and discovered that the owner of the vehicle had been warned 3 months prior for illegally entering STA 3/4 and fishing inside of the STA. Officer Tarr entered STA 2 and located the subjects who were fishing. Both subjects had been warned prior for trespassing and fishing inside local STAs. Both subjects were issued citations for trespassing in STA 2 and warnings for illegally fishing inside of STA 2.

Officer Tarr was patrolling the area of Coral Springs and saw a subject putting a net in the water along a canal bank. As he approached the subject he watched him use a bass head to bait a handmade funnel shaped gill net and hide it under the grass along the bank of the canal. The subject was in possession of another bass that showed signs of being taken by a net which is an illegal method to harvest bass. The subject was issued two misdemeanor citations for illegal method of taking bass and using bass as bait. The bass and 7 nets that were in the water were seized as evidence.

Officers Holcomb and Armstrong were patrolling the area of Port 95 when they observed a vehicle in the back of a parking lot of a corporate complex after hours. It is also a common area for illegal fishing. Officers Holcomb and Armstrong approached the vehicle and observed 4 young male subjects and could smell the odor of marijuana. They continued to walk around the vehicle where they observed a wallet on the driver seat with a small clear baggie with a white powdery substance in it. Upon further examination, a second baggie of white powder was found. The powder was field tested and showed positive for cocaine. The subject that the wallet belonged to was arrested for possession of cocaine and transported and booked into the Broward County jail. All subjects were issued warnings for trespassing.

## GLADES COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on land-based water patrol conducting boating safety and resource inspections at the Harney Pond Canal boat ramp. The officer observed a vessel with three occupants and fishing equipment in plain view. A resource inspection was conducted and several black crappie were found in a compartment on the vessel, two of which were undersized. A citation was issued for the violation. The fish were photographed and returned to the water.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Moore Haven when he observed a vehicle operating in a careless manner. A traffic stop was conducted. Upon contacting the driver of the vehicle, a strong odor of marijuana was detected by the officer. After further

questioning, the passenger of the vehicle stated that all the marijuana was his, and produced a smoked marijuana joint, a container of marijuana, and drug paraphernalia. Officer Brodbeck issued the passenger a Notice to Appear (citation) for possession of marijuana less than 20 grams and a warning for possession of drug paraphernalia. The illegal items were seized as evidence. The driver of the vehicle was issued a written warning for careless driving.

#### MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Brevik conducted a vessel stop at Sandsprit boat ramp to perform a saltwater fisheries inspection. During the vessel stop, the subject was found to be in possession of eight undersized vermilion snapper. The subject was issued one misdemeanor citation for possession of vermilion snapper under 12 inches.

#### OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was conducting surveillance late at night on the Kissimmee River when a vessel was observed with a single occupant and fishing equipment in plain view approaching the docks of a nearby RV park. The officer relocated to the RV park and watched as the subject placed four black crappie into a bucket. A resource inspection was initiated and a total of 29 black crappie were found on board the vessel. The subject was issued a citation for possession of over the daily bag limit of black crappie. The fish were photographed and 4 black crappie were returned alive to the water.

Officer Hausler received information from Officer Crosby about individuals who would fish at Okee Tantie and throw all short crappie in the bushes and retrieve them as they left. These people have been known to leave every time an FWC officer comes into the area. Officer Hausler then received a call from unknown person that the individuals were back fishing again and had caught a good amount of fish. A resource inspection revealed that two individuals were in possession of several short black crappie. The individuals were cited accordingly.

Officer Allen observed a pickup truck parked at a gate at the Oak Creek Unit of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area (PUA). Someone entered the PUA at the location which is not a legally designated entrance. Approximately two hours later, two subjects who had been hunting turkey climbed back over the gate and were detained. A sign was posted at the gate stating that entry to the PUA was limited to designated points only. The men were issued citations for illegally entering and exiting the PUA.

#### PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers and investigators responded to a boating accident at Peanut Island. When Investigators arrived on scene, they were informed that a vessel had run aground that night. While trying to push the vessel off the sandbar, one of the passengers was caught in the prop and sustained injuries. The victim was transported to the hospital.

Officers Trawinski, Merizio, and Langley assisted the USCG in conducting a resource inspection of a vessel they intercepted 13 miles off the coast of Boynton Beach. The subjects were found to be in possession of 22 wrung lobster tails, 2 hog snappers, and 50 skinless fish filets. The subjects were in violation of multiple state and federal laws and were cited accordingly.

Officer Nasworth was on foot patrol in the area of Canal Point locks conducting fisheries inspections. A subject was actively fishing with rod and reel. Officer Nasworth contacted the subject who advised he didn't have a freshwater fishing license because it had been suspended. Officer Nasworth checked the subject's information through dispatch who confirmed that the subject had a suspended fishing license. Officer Nasworth issued the subject a court date and citation for the violation.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby concluded a long-term investigation into the illegal killing of an alligator on Lake Okeechobee. Further investigation yielded evidence that the individual illegally captured a juvenile alligator the day prior to the illegal killing of the larger alligator. After meeting with the State Attorney's Office, the individual was charged with two felony counts for the illegal possession and killing of an alligator.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Howell concluded an investigation regarding the death of a pet fox. The responding officers located a deceased pet fox at the scene. After a thorough investigation into the death of the fox and meeting with the State Attorney's Office, felony charges were filed against the subject for animal cruelty.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Trawinski participated as a member of the FWC Honor Guard funeral detail in Perry, Florida. Last honors were rendered to John Walker, former Colonel of the Florida Marine Patrol and Chief of Marine Enforcement – FWC.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### CASES

#### MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

An officer received a phone call from an FDA agent informing him that there was a shipment of snook that arrived at the Miami International Airport from Honduras heading to a Miami-based company. The officer investigated the company and found it did not have a wholesale dealer license. The officer arrived at the importers facility and inspected the shipment and found 3,200 pounds of illegal snook. The company received a warning for no wholesale dealer license and is working with FWC to ensure the shipment is sold outside of Florida.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Landa continued his enforcement efforts targeting the illegal display of wildlife on South Beach. One subject was observed exhibiting a large albino Burmese python to the public. After contact was made, it was determined that the subject did not have the required licenses to possess or exhibit the snake. Four misdemeanor citations were issued for the illegal possession and exhibition. The snake was seized and turned over to agency biologists. Investigator Almagro and Officers Martir and Osorio assisted on this incident.

## MONROE COUNTY

Officers Wagner and Rubenstein were on land patrol in the middle Keys and observed two individuals fishing from a rocky shoreline and conducted a resource inspection. Upon consent they searched a cooler and inside were grunts and jacks. The officers checked the nearby area and found a hidden bag of freshly caught fish in the rocks. The bag contained two undersized out of season black grouper, two undersized mangrove snapper, and legal snapper. One of the individuals claimed the bag and was cited accordingly.

Officers Rubenstein and Wagner were conducting water patrol around Big Pine Key when they saw an individual cleaning a large amount of fish at a residential fish cleaning table. While passing by, they noticed a large angelfish and other regulated species that appeared to be undersized. Officer Wagner dropped Officer Rubenstein off on land to contact the individual. He was found to be in possession of 1 undersized, speared snook with no stamp, 3 speared, oversized angelfish, 1 speared, undersized lobster with no stamp, 3 undersized mutton snapper, and 7 undersized and over the limit mangrove snapper. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer McKay received a tip from an off-duty John Pennekamp State Park ranger that a person was catching undersized lobster inside a park mangrove-lined channel. Officer McKay responded and found the subject who was now fishing from his anchored boat. Under the boat engines and on the sea floor was a catch bag that the officer could see containing lobsters. After having the subject retrieve the bag and finally admitting that it belonged to him, Officer McKay measured the catch where 4 of the 5 lobsters were found to be undersized. The subject was cited accordingly and the 4 undersized lobsters were returned to the water.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Arbogast were conducting night water patrol when they observed a commercial fishing vessel returning from offshore. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a resource inspection. The captain stated that he had been fishing for king mackerel but that he was unsuccessful and didn't have fish on board. An inspection revealed a gag grouper in one of the vessel's coolers. The captain stated that he kept the grouper for himself. Gag grouper season is open June 1st – December 31st. The

captain was charged with possession of an out of season gag grouper and the fish was seized as evidence.

Officer Thurkettle conducted a resource inspection on a vessel 20 miles offshore. During the inspection, four undersized red grouper were found inside the live well along with several other baitfish. The subject admitted catching the grouper and stated he planned on using them for bait. The subject was cited appropriately for possession of undersized red grouper and for over the bag limit of red grouper.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Alford concluded an investigation regarding an injury to a juvenile child at a captive wildlife facility. The previous month, an employee of the facility took the juvenile into a restricted area to feed a raccoon. While doing so, the child was bitten on the hand. The employee of the facility was issued a misdemeanor citation for creating the condition that led to the injury. Officer Curbelo assisted on this incident.

## SEARCH AND RESCUES

### MONROE COUNTY

A 911 call came in from a panicked woman stating that her boyfriend swam after their rental boat after it had drifted away from them into deeper water, and that she had not seen him for 30 minutes. The location was bayside near Islamorada. Officers Tafoya, Janzen, Larios, Rhoda, and Rafter responded by water. Officer's Tafoya, Janzen, and Larios rendezvoused with two USCG boats in Cotton Key Basin where vital information was passed along. The 911 caller's cell phone was pinged with a GPS location shortly before contact was lost. Two FWC patrol vessels and two USCG patrol vessels then plotted the coordinates and rushed to the scene. Once in the general area, the 4 vessels split up and began searching for the drifting vessel. Officer Tafoya and one of the USCG vessels spotted the vessel a short time later. USCG arrived first on scene and found the missing person still swimming behind the drifting vessel. USCG removed the man from the water and brought him back to the rental boat. The man said that he was ok, just sore from the swim. Officer Tafoya then followed the man back to where his friends were still stranded on a sandbar near Low Key in Everglades National Park. All persons involved were returned safely to shore.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### COLLIER COUNTY

Due to recent panther deaths, Officers Knutson, Yurewitch and Kleis enforced the 45-mph nighttime speed limit in a Panther Zone in Collier County. The officers issued over a dozen warnings, 9 speeding citations (2 mandatory court appearance for 30+ mph over the posted speed limit) and 1 misdemeanor citation for driving with no valid license. The top speed for the evening was 83 mph.

Officers Knutson, Yurewitch and Curbelo worked a directed patrol in the area of Wiggin's Pass checking commercial charter boats, subjects in the pass and other recreational vessels violating manatee zones. The officers checked over 40 users, inspected 11 vessels and issued 10 warnings, 1 Uniform Boating Citation and 1 Resource Citation.

Officers Thurkettle, Oldsen, Arbogast, and Tidwell conducted retail license and quality control checks at local farmers' markets and business in Collier County. In total, 15 vendors/establishments selling freshwater and saltwater products were inspected. Numerous violations were discovered during the detail, including one vendor who lacked both a saltwater and freshwater retail products license. Each violation was addressed accordingly.