

# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

## Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



***Patrol, Protect, Preserve***

**January 4, 2019 through January 17, 2019**

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

### **NORTHWEST REGION**

#### **CASES**

##### **CALHOUN COUNTY**

Officer Baber was off duty when he saw a truck broken down on the side of the road. He stopped to see if he could render aid to the driver. As he walked up to the truck, Officer Baber saw a dead alligator in the truck's dog box. Officer Burkhead arrived to assist. The truck owner admitted to shooting the alligator earlier that morning with a .22 caliber rifle. He was cited for illegal possession of American alligator.

Officer Baber received a complaint from a landowner who heard two shots on his property earlier that morning. When the landowner went to the area of the shots, he found a fresh corn pile on his property near the adjacent property line. Officer Baber responded and located a tree stand near the corn. He followed a well-worn trail to a nearby residence. He interviewed a suspect who admitted to shooting at a deer earlier that morning on the complainant's property. He was cited for trespass at the landowner's request.

##### **ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

Officer Cushing was on patrol in the Perdido Wildlife Management Area. He entered a gated area and smelled a strong odor of marijuana. Officer Cushing located a vehicle nearby and contacted two subjects who admitted to smoking marijuana and later discovered more marijuana in a plastic bag. Officer Cushing issued a citation for possession of marijuana less than 20 grams.

Officer Cushing was on patrol in the Perdido Wildlife Management Area. He saw an unoccupied truck parked in an obscure place after dark. He saw hunting equipment in the front seat and a few kernels of corn in the bed of the truck. Officer Cushing waited for the operator to return to the vehicle. He contacted the owner walking down the road toward the truck. The individual denied hunting but admitted to placing corn in the management area. He took Officer Cushing back to the baited site and to a location where he hid the bag of corn. He admitted to baiting the area multiple times over the past weeks anticipating hunting deer there. The appropriate citation was issued.

#### JACKSON COUNTY

Officer Forehand checked a subject that he knew to be a convicted felon hunting with a 12-gauge shotgun. The suspect had a friend who was also a convicted felon hunting at another location. Officers Little and Scott responded to assist. The officers located the second suspect who was also hunting with a 12-gauge shotgun. A record check of both suspects confirmed that they were both convicted felons. Both were cited for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

FWC dispatch received a complaint from a landowner who stated someone was night hunting along the roadway near his property. Officers Forehand, Baber and Burkhead responded to the scene. Once on scene, Officer Forehand located two freshly killed doe deer in the ditch along the roadway. The officers went to the residence associated with the suspect vehicle. They conducted an interview with one suspect who admitted that he and a second suspect had been night hunting and killed the two deer. He stated that he dropped off the second suspect after they shot the deer so that he could drag the deer back to the roadway. At that time, the landowner confronted the suspect in the truck and he left the area and left the second suspect on the property. The officers met with him, conducted an interview, and brought him back to the scene. This suspect led the officers onto the property where he had hidden the gun. Both suspects were cited for two counts of taking deer at night with gun and light, two counts of road hunting and trespass.

#### WAKULLA COUNTY

Officers Hughes, Korade and Schulz were using the deer decoy in the Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area in response to complaints of illegal deer being shot. The officers set up the decoy deer on Forest Road 352 and had a hunting crew come by while pursuing a deer with dogs. No attempts were made to shoot the decoy. A short while later, one of the vehicles that passed earlier returned, stopped and the driver exited the vehicle and fired two shots at the decoy deer (approximately a five inch spike buck). The officers approached the subject safely, disarmed him and cited him for taking an antlered deer that did not have at least one antler with two or more points.

#### OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Wilkenson and Lugg were contacted about two subjects catching and keeping 10 undersized and over the bag limit of red drum. Upon the officers' arrival, the subjects had left the dock. A witness provided the officers with the description of the vehicle the individuals left in. Another witness provided a townhouse in Navarre where he believed the individuals' families were staying. The officers located the described vehicle and contacted the renters. They admitted that they were fishing earlier and had returned the red drum back into the water. When the officers headed back to their vehicles, they both detected a strong odor of fish emanating from a dumpster located just 125 feet away. Upon inspection, the officers located 38 pieces of cut up gutted redfish, 11 of which were tail sections. The officers went back to the residence to interview the individuals about the red drum found in the dumpster. Both individuals admitted they caught the red drum, cut them in pieces and disposed of them in the dumpster. Charges were filed for a major resource violation, over the bag limit, and undersized red drum.

Officers H. Rockwell and P. Rockwell were working a night hunting detail when they heard five rifle shots near their location. The officers conducted a vehicle stop on a truck that was leaving the area. They saw fresh deer blood in the bed of the truck and on the tailgate. The driver stated the deer blood was from two deer that he just dropped off at a deer processor. An interview was conducted with all three occupants. The passengers' statements conflicted with the driver's. Officers Maltais and P. Rockwell located two freshly killed doe deer in a cotton field just down the road from where the traffic stop occurred. K-9 Officer Hutchinson, along with Officer Hahr and Officer Schmitt, deployed K-9 Zara and located a blood trail/kill site of the two deer and five 25-06 shell casings. Lieutenant Molnar and Officer H. Rockwell went to the subject's house and interviewed the driver's son. A full confession was obtained from the driver's son and the 25-06 rifle was in the trunk of a car on the suspect's property. The suspect shot five times out the passenger side window killing two does. The vehicle was then driven to the suspect's house where the rifle was placed in the trunk of the car. The subject was attempting to retrieve the illegally killed deer when he saw the officers in the area. He removed the deer from the bed of the truck and started to drive away when the officers conducted the traffic stop. The suspect was cited for night hunting and two counts of possession of doe deer.

Officer Specialist Bartlett and Officer Schmitt were on vessel patrol conducting resource inspections of duck hunters in the Santa Rosa Sound in the Fort Walton Beach area. The officers heard a gunshot 21 minutes after legal shooting hours for ducks. The officers located the subjects and conducted surveillance. The subjects were still actively hunting over their duck decoys. The officers conducted a vessel stop to address the after-hours shooting. One of the two subjects admitted shooting and was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officer Corbin was on land patrol conducting boating safety/resource inspections on duck hunters returning to Misty Water Boat Ramp in Mary Esther. The officer saw a boat returning with no navigational lights displayed on the vessel. The operator was wearing camouflage, had duck hunting equipment (decoys), and two dogs on board the vessel. He stated he was training one of the dogs to retrieve ducks. He also stated he

was attempting to take ducks but was unsuccessful. During the inspection of the 12-gauge shotgun, the officer saw the firearm was not plugged. A notice to appear citation was issued.

Officer Corbin was on land patrol conducting resource protection at Liza Jackson Park. He saw a vehicle parked during closed hours with two individuals sleeping inside the vehicle. The officer ran the vehicle registration. The registered owner had an active FWC warrant for a derelict vessel violation. The Fort Walton Beach Police Department was contacted to address the violation for parking during closed hours. The owner of the vehicle was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed.

Officer Hahr was on land patrol conducting resource protection in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area off Rock Hill Road. He saw a truck and trailer parked at the intersection of Forest Road. It appeared that a vehicle had been off-loaded and driven into the management area. Officer Hahr followed the tire sign and saw a white truck parked but the tire sign continued down an unnamed road. A short distance later, he saw a parked Jeep. Officer Hahr heard two men talking about shooting at two deer and tracking to see if they killed them. One of the men was carrying a crossbow and the other was carrying a semi-automatic shotgun. After identifying the two men through their hunting licenses, Officer Hahr recognized the name of one of the individuals in possession of the shotgun as a convicted felon. FWC Tallahassee Regional Communication Center confirmed that the individual was a convicted felon. He was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed.

Officer Specialist Pifer and Officer Matechik were at a wholesale dealer location in Destin to conduct a commercial inspection of a federally licensed vessel. The crew were offloading gulf reef fish: red snapper, vermillion snapper and amberjack. During the inspection of the required licenses, Officer Pifer noticed the operator's commercial saltwater products license did not have the required restricted species endorsement to harvest gulf reef fish. The fish were seized and sold to the highest bidder per Florida Statutes. The operator was issued a notice to appear citation.

#### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

K-9 Officer Hutchinson and Officer Schmitt were on land patrol conducting resource protection in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. The officers saw a truck being operated with the driver and passenger not wearing their seat belts. The truck's right passenger side taillight was inoperative. During the vehicle stop, the officers saw two 12-gauge shotguns in the truck, one next to the driver and the other next to the passenger. FWC Tallahassee Regional Communication Center confirmed that the passenger was a convicted felon. The passenger was arrested for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The passenger was transported to the Santa Rosa County Jail where the intake process was completed. K-9 Officer Hutchinson recognized the driver as the individual he was currently investigating for violating the antlerless deer

possession limit. After his Miranda Rights were read, the driver admitted to killing two does and led the officers to the location of the deer carcasses. K-9 Officer Hutchinson later secured an arrest warrant.

Officer Ramos received multiple complaints regarding Jeeps and four-wheel-drive vehicles off-roading in Blackwater River State Forest. The complainants alleged that the vehicles were intentionally damaging state lands, driving carelessly and disrupting legal hunting. Over the course of a couple hours, Officer Ramos tracked and located three vehicles in two separate locations and issued the appropriate citations and warnings for the violations.

K-9 Officer Hutchinson along with K-9 Zara and Officer Schmitt were patrolling the Blackwater State Forest when they saw a vehicle parked on a closed forest road. Officer Hutchinson recognized the vehicle as belonging to a suspect of an illegal bait site in the Blackwater State Forest. He deployed K-9 Zara who tracked the suspect to his hunting blind. While interviewing the subject, Officer Schmitt discovered the subject was hunting without a valid hunting license, deer permit and management area permit. The subject also admitted to placing bait in the management area and hunting over it. The subject was issued the appropriate citations for the hunting violations.

Officer Hutchinson received a call from a property owner who informed him that he saw a truck with a subject standing in the bed of it shoot into his property. Officer Hutchinson obtained a description of the vehicle from the property owner. He recognized the vehicle description as belonging to several subjects that he contacted earlier while enroute to the complaint. K-9 Zara was deployed and conducted an area search for more evidence. During the search, they located several trees that were struck by bullets along with other evidence. After collecting all the evidence, Officer Hutchinson drove to the suspect's residence and interviewed them. All three subjects admitted to shooting at deer from the right of way and onto the private property. The following day, the property owner located a dead deer with buckshot in it on his property. The driver was cited for road hunting. The passenger who had recently gotten off probation for night hunting was charged for using an illegal method to take deer, discharging a firearm from a right of way and a felony charge for trespass by projectile.

Officer Hutchinson and K-9 Zara responded to a complaint of road hunting and trespassing. Upon arrival, Officer Hutchinson saw fresh boot tracks leading into the private property. He deployed K-9 Zara to conduct a search of the area. During the search, K-9 Zara located where the suspect shot into the private property, several pools of fresh blood and a wounded deer. Officer Hutchinson interviewed the suspect who admitted to shooting an antlerless deer from the right of way. Warrants were issued for the violation.

Officer Ramos was in south Santa Rosa County checking local landings when he saw two men fishing. He conducted a fisheries inspection of the two men and found them in possession of several mullet and two red drum. One of the red drum measured 30

inches, three inches over size. One citation was issued to the individual who caught the fish for possession of oversize red drum.

#### **WALTON COUNTY**

Officer Jarvis responded to Topsail Hill Preserve State Park regarding a traffic crash involving a fifth-wheel recreational vehicle (RV) trailer. While the RV was in tow, the driver turned too close and the trailer struck the Park's entrance fence line damaging the slide-out and the door of the trailer. The trailer sustained approximately \$4,000 in damage. The state park property and fence sustained about \$650 in damage. A traffic report was completed, and the driver was issued a warning for careless driving.

#### **COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING**

#### **HOLMES COUNTY**

Officer Yates and Reserve Officer Kinney instructed the law portion of a subject safety class in Bonifay. Approximately 35 people were in attendance and the information was well received.

### **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

#### **CASES**

#### **LAFAYETTE COUNTY**

Officer Davenport was working in Steinhatchee Springs WMA and saw a vehicle displaying a light in a manner capable of locating deer from a nearby county highway. Upon stopping the vehicle, a spotlight and multiple firearms were discovered next to the occupants. Further investigation revealed that the subjects had been shining deer and were cited for attempting to take deer with a gun and light at night.

#### **SUWANNEE COUNTY**

Officer Boone while on patrol in Suwannee County, located a dumped deer carcass on the side of the road. The head of the carcass was missing but identifiable tire sign was leading away from the area. Officer Boone tracked the vehicle sign back to a nearby house where the head was found. Further investigation resulted in a confession and charges being direct filed with the state attorney's office for taking a short-antlered buck.

#### **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

Officers McDonald, McGrath, Nichols and Captain Huff conducted a hunting inspection on a dove field. Millet seed was documented several days earlier by Officers McDonald and RJ Starling on the field. At the time of the inspection, there was millet seed still

present. The subject responsible for the field admitted he oversaw the field and took responsibility for it. A notice to appear was issued to the subject. A total of nine warnings were issued to the remaining subjects for violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Officer McDonald was on patrol in Sandlin Bay WMA when he encountered three subjects. One subject was wet from his waist down and several fishing poles were in the back of the truck. The fishing poles had large hooks and sinkers on them and weeds were on the hooks. He suspected the men were trying to snatch something with the poles. One man said he was trying to get a turtle. A loaded 270 centerfire rifle was also located in the truck. One occupant claimed to be going hog-hunting later in the day. One subject was cited for possession of center fire rifle during the small game season.

Officers Yates, Nichols and McDonald responded to a complaint in Sandlin Bay of dogs being run in the still hunt area. Several subjects and dogs were found in the WMA still hunt location. Several of the subjects were repeat offenders. Two misdemeanors citations for dogs in the still hunt were issued. Also, an additional infraction and four warnings were issued to the hunting party.

Officer Nichols was on patrol when he drove up on a recent single vehicle accident and was the first emergency responder on scene. After calling 911, he rendered aid by providing CPR to the unconscious and injured man. After a short period, EMS personnel arrived and took over CPR. Unfortunately, Officer Nichols learned later that the man died from his injuries.

#### HAMILTON COUNTY

Officer McDonald was conducting fisheries inspections at Eagle Lake Fish Management Area. He approached a subject at the boat ramp who was returning from fishing. Officer McDonald located eight black bass with three over the daily bag limit. The man was cited, and three fish were returned alive to the lake.

Officer Nichols was on patrol in Hamilton County when he heard numerous shotgun shots coming from a nearby field. He responded to the area and noticed three subjects hunting dove. The subjects hastily left the dove field and travelled to a nearby barn when they saw Officer Nichols. When he caught up with the men he saw that the subjects had been hunting over a baited field of millet and cracked corn. Officer Nichols issued three citations for hunting dove over bait, one citation for no hunting license and a written warning for an unplugged shotgun.

#### UNION COUNTY

Lieutenant Douglas was patrolling late at night when he came upon a group of people aiding a stabbing victim. Lieutenant Douglas checked on the victim and requested EMS. According to witnesses, the suspect entered a camper after stabbing the victim and threatened to get a gun. Union County EMS and Sheriff's Office arrived and transported

the victim to be treated for injuries. Lieutenant Douglas assisted the Union County Sheriff's Office and took the suspect into custody without incident.

## CITRUS COUNTY

Lieutenant Griffis and Officer Ulrich were on water patrol in the area of mangrove point, south of Crystal River, focusing on waterfowl hunting enforcement. Officer Ulrich was conducting surveillance with binoculars from a concealed position in the mangroves and saw multiple duck decoys in the water west of his location. Waiting there after sunset, several shots were fired and Lieutenant Griffis and Officer Ulrich moved toward the shots and encountered three subjects. All subjects were cited for violation of the migratory bird act-shooting after designated hours.

Officers Creel and Ulrich have been working an ongoing commercial license detail primarily in Citrus County and spanning other counties. They have inspected numerous locations offering freshwater bait, saltwater bait and raw seafood for sale. The officers have encountered numerous violations during the detail and have issued three misdemeanor citations for no retail saltwater license and no freshwater fish dealer's licenses. They have issued multiple written warnings for quality control and licensing.

Officer Ulrich gained information via social media about the harvest of an illegal buck. Officer Ulrich and Officer Browning identified the subject and contacted him at his residence. While speaking with the subject, Officer Ulrich saw fresh blood on the subject's vehicle. Officer Ulrich asked to see the deer recently harvested and was provided the deer's head. The deer management unit in which the subject was hunting requires three points at one inch or greater or a main beam of 10 inches. Measurement of the deer revealed one antler at 1 7/8 inches and the other 6 inches. The subject was cited accordingly and issued written warnings for licenses and permits.

Officer Crane was on water patrol in Crystal River where he saw two individuals fishing. He pulled alongside to perform a boating safety and fisheries inspection. He inspected the live well and found five undersized mangrove snapper and one undersized black drum. One of the individuals threw one of the mangrove snapper overboard and was directed to stop immediately. Officer Crane cited the subject accordingly and issued written warnings.

Officer VanNess was on water patrol in Crystal River where he saw an individual fishing. He pulled alongside the individual to perform a fisheries and boating safety inspection. Upon inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of three undersized spotted seatrout. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer VanNess was on state park patrol in Crystal River Buffer Preserve State Park. He began foot patrol in the "mullet hole," a popular shoreline fishing destination and encountered two individuals fishing and performed a fisheries inspection. The individuals were found to be in possession of undersized mangrove snapper, spotted

seatrout and black drum—totaling 14 undersized fish. The subjects were cited accordingly.

## DIXIE COUNTY

Lieutenant Humphries' squad worked an enforcement detail targeting night hunting. During the detail, Officer Ransom saw a vehicle displaying a light in a manner capable of locating deer from a nearby county highway. Upon stopping the vehicle, a spotlight and multiple firearms were discovered next to the occupants. Further investigation revealed that the subjects had been shining deer and were charged for attempting to take deer with a gun and light at night.

## ALACHUA

Investigator Bembry and Officer Troiano were conducting resource-related patrols along Lake Tuscawilla when they saw a vessel equipped with a surface drive engine heading out to possibly hunt waterfowl near the end of legal shooting hours. Investigator Bembry and Officer Troiano conducted surveillance on the vessel and shortly after, heard shooting after the legal shooting hours. Contact was made, and the individuals were issued citations for the violation.

## DUVAL COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Doricchi received an email from the Jacksonville Sheriff's office concerning a truck involved in a traffic crash that had a deceased black bear in the bed. The deputy advised it appeared to have a gunshot wound to the head. Investigators Terrones, Starling and Doricchi went to the subject's residence and Investigator Holleman went to where the vehicle was towed and processed the vehicle for evidentiary purposes. While at the subject's residence, he advised that the bear was shot in Clay County and that he was in possession of black bear meat. Evidence was seized, and the subject was issued the appropriate citations.

Officers Schirbock and Shearer were conducting JEA patrol off shore Jacksonville when they encountered a vessel whose operator adamantly claimed to have no fish on board. A thorough inspection revealed 25 undersized black sea bass, an undersized vermillion snapper and an undersized grey trigger fish. The operator was known to be a previous violator and four misdemeanor notices to appear were issued.

## OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL (OPV) SENTINEL

Officer Geib and Lieutenant Givens conducted a federal fisheries patrol offshore Jacksonville aboard the OPV Sentinel. They saw a fishing vessel near a popular fishing area and as they approached, one of the fishing vessel's occupants threw a red snapper overboard. The dead fish floated next to the boat and was retrieved by Lieutenant Givens who then boarded the fishing vessel to conduct a boating safety and fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed that the operator of the vessel did not have

the required registration documents or visual distress signals aboard the vessel. When asked why he threw the snapper into the water upon the approach of the law enforcement vessel, the subject said because he knew better. The operator of the vessel was issued written warnings for the registration and boating safety violations. A federal citation was documented and will be provided to NOAA for the processing of charges of possession of red snapper, which is illegal to possess in the federal waters of the South Atlantic, and for discarding the fish upon approach of a law enforcement vessel.

Lieutenant Givens boarded another fishing vessel offshore with two people on board. The lieutenant completed a boating safety inspection and found that the operator of the vessel did not have serviceable fire extinguishers or visual distress signals. During the fisheries inspection, Lieutenant Givens discovered that the two occupants of the fishing vessel had a total of 19 black sea bass. The possession limit is seven black sea bass per person. Twelve of the 19 black sea bass were under the minimum 13-inch size limit for possession. There was also one bluefish not in whole condition, one bluefish under the minimum 12-inch size limit, and two fish fillets in a cooler. Written warnings were issued for the boating safety and bluefish violations. A federal citation was documented and will be provided to NOAA for the processing of charges of being over the bag limit of black sea bass and possession of undersized black sea bass. The fish fillets were seized as evidence and will be tested to determine the type of fish taken. Further charges are pending the results of those tests.

Officer Geib responded to a report of a derelict vessel in the Intra Coastal Waterways (ICW). Upon arrival he confirmed that the vessel met the requirements to be designated as a derelict vessel. Officer Geib began the process of documenting the status of the vessel and locating the individuals who are responsible for the vessel. Officer Geib was able to meet with both the vessel owner and the individual who had been tending the vessel. Both were issued citations and must appear before the court on the charge of leaving the vessel in a derelict condition on the waters of the state. Officer Geib is monitoring the status of the vessel and will follow the agency's SOP through completion of the incident.

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Albritton and Dasher were called to assist Taylor County Sheriff's Office with a trespassing complaint. When the two officers arrived on scene, it was determined that there was too much water on the road for the sheriff's deputies to reach the subjects who were trespassing. Officers Albritton and Dasher waded through the water to the stuck vehicle. There was a male and a female inside the vehicle. When they saw the officers, the male subject ran from the area. Officers Albritton and Dasher transported the female out of the area and back to the sheriff's deputies for transport to jail. The male subject showed up at the jail later that day and was arrested by the sheriff's office.

Officers Albritton and Dasher were working illegal night hunting in a concealed location and saw a vehicle pass their location traveling slowly. The vehicle turned around with its

headlight shining into the woods and shots were fired. Officers Albritton and Dasher conducted a traffic stop and found the subject had shot at a deer but missed. The appropriate charges for night hunting and road hunting were filed.

## **SEARCH AND RESCUE**

### **LAFAYETTE COUNTY**

Officers Boone and Fowler responded to a missing person assistance request from the Lafayette County Sheriff's Office. Three individuals had walked up to a nearby hunting camp to report their co-worker missing. Officer Boone and Fowler were able to quickly locate the missing person who had walked away from his stuck vehicle. The missing individual was reunited with his co-workers and they were assisted to the nearby county highway

### **TAYLOR COUNTY**

Lieutenant Loyed was contacted by the Taylor County Sheriff's Office about a subject who was hunting somewhere in Taylor County and had not been heard from since Wednesday. There was very little information to start a search but using the only name the sheriff's office had, Lieutenant Loyed was able to find a location that matched their description. Lieutenant Loyed and the sheriff's deputies located the subject's vehicle and camper on the property and then located the subject deceased inside the camper.

Jacksonville Regional Communications Center (FWC Dispatch) received a complaint regarding three individuals taking on water near the spoil banks, north of Crystal River. Officers Carroll and Peterson responded by water. The individuals were able to make it to the spoil banks, where Officer Ulrich was able to use his patrol vehicle and get them to safety. All individuals were returned safely and were unharmed.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **VOLUSIA COUNTY**

Officer Sapp was on patrol during the small game season in Tiger Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he encountered a subject using a centerfire rifle, which is prohibited during small game season. The subject advised the officer that he was deer hunting. The WMA was only open for small game. The subject was issued a citation for using a centerfire rifle during small game season and a warning for hunting deer during the closed season.

Officer Pelzel was checking shoreline fishing activity in the New Smyrna Beach area. She approached an adult male who was in possession of under the legal size limit of pompano. He was issued the criminal notice to appear citation for the violation.

Officer Bertolami inspected the catch of adult males fishing the three bridges area of New Smyrna Beach. During the course of the inspection, one of the adult males was found to have an active arrest warrant for domestic battery in addition to possession of snook out of season, under the legal-size limit of black drum, mangrove snapper and sheepshead. He was transported to the Volusia County Jail.

Officers Malicoat and West were on vessel patrol in the Oak Hill/Edgewater area when an adult male was stopped for violation of the regulated slow speed zone. The inspection of his catch revealed that he was in possession of snook which is out of season, and spotted seatrout that were under the legal-size limit. He was issued criminal citations and mandatory notice to appear in court.

#### SUMTER COUNTY

Officer Fahnestock was patrolling Lake Okahumpka Park Boat Ramp after official sunset when he heard shooting. Shortly after the shots, a vessel came to the boat ramp with shotguns, shotgun shells, and duck decoys. While conducting resource and vessel safety inspections, the two subjects admitted to shooting after sunset and one had an unplugged shotgun. One was cited for the plug violation and they were given warnings for shooting after hours.

#### LAKE COUNTY

Officer Fahnestock was patrolling Area 3 of Emeralda Marsh Management Area when he saw a subject fishing. While checking the subject's fishing license, Officer Fahnestock noticed a drop of blood on the cooler. The subject told Officer Fahnestock he caught a bass there last night. An inspection of the cooler revealed him to be in possession of two black bass, which are required to be immediately released while fishing in Area 3. The subject was cited accordingly.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Cheshire was on patrol near Subject Road in Caravelle Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when he saw a vehicle spinning donuts in the roadway and tearing up the road. He stopped the vehicle and found all four occupants were in possession of open alcoholic beverages. Only one of the subjects was of legal drinking age and admitted to providing the alcohol. That subject was cited for giving alcohol to persons under 21 years of age and the remaining three were cited for possession of alcohol under 21 years of age.

Officer Bernard was conducting fisheries inspections in Palatka when he checked a male subject fishing. Upon inspection it was found that the subject was in possession of

three black bass over 16-inches. The subject was cited for two black bass over the size limit and the fish were returned to the water.

Officer Cheshire was on patrol when he saw a vehicle driving slowly and shining a spotlight in a manner capable of revealing deer through several farm fields. The officer followed the vehicle continuing to observe the working spotlight until it crossed into St. Johns County and a traffic stop was initiated. The driver was found to have a loaded .22 magnum rifle next to him in the vehicle. The subject was cited for attempting to take deer at night by use of gun and light.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officer Chriest responded to a residence near Mill Dam in the Ocala National Forest that had several bags of trash in the yard drawing black bears and other wildlife. He found the garbage bags and evidence that wildlife had been in it. A records check revealed that the subject at the residence had previously been issued a noncompliance letter and a noncriminal infraction for leaving trash out and attracting bears at this address from two recent complaints. Officer Chriest issued a misdemeanor notice to appear for leaving the trash out.

#### OSCEOLA COUNTY

While conducting foot patrol in Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer McLendon saw a vehicle stop along the WMA fence line. A subject exited the vehicle and retrieved three dead squirrels from the trunk and then tossed them into the thick palmettos. The subject then looked around, closed his trunk, and re-entered the vehicle to leave. Officer McLendon approached the vehicle on foot and conducted a resource inspection. Upon questioning, the subject said he shot the squirrels on the WMA earlier that morning and did not check them at the check station. The squirrels were still in whole condition and freshly shot. The subject was issued a misdemeanor citation for wanton/willful waste of wildlife.

While conducting patrol on Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer McLendon stopped a vehicle with four subjects hunting from a pickup truck. The driver of the vehicle did not possess a management area permit or a valid driver's license. The driver was cited for operating a vehicle without a valid driver's license and hunting without a management area permit.

Officers Mendelson and Hocker conducted water patrol on West Lake Tohopekaliga. Resource inspection/license checks led to several individuals not being able to produce a Federal Duck stamp. The individuals were all issued a notice to appear.

Officers Mendelson, Fletcher, and Hocker took part in an internet crimes detail. The officers received information about an individual selling a mounted black bear head and located the seller. The individual was issued a notice to appear.

Officer McLendon received a complaint involving a suspicious vehicle parked along an undesignated entrance for Triple N Ranch Wildlife Management Area (WMA). As the officer arrived on scene, he heard several shots nearby and located two subjects hunting migratory birds. Upon conducting an inspection, two subjects were in possession of several doves and snipe. One of the subjects did not have a plug in his shotgun and five rounds were able to slide into the magazine tube. The two subjects were charged for illegal entry of a WMA and the subject with the unplugged shotgun received an additional charge for hunting migratory birds with a shotgun capable of holding more than three rounds.

#### SEMINOLE COUNTY

Officers Mendelson, Fletcher, and Hocker took part in an internet crimes detail. The officers received information about an individual selling coral on Craigslist. An inspection led to the individual not being able to produce valid wholesale or retail licenses. The individual was issued a notice to appear.

#### ORANGE COUNTY

FWC was notified by the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) of an unattended van located in the parking lot of a Disney World Resort containing three monkeys in pet carriers. A person walking through the parking lot heard the animals and believed dogs were inside the vehicle. They reported it to hotel staff and hotel security responded to assess the situation. Security saw the animals to be monkeys and contact the OCSO, who contacted FWC. Investigators from the FWC Captive Wildlife Section responded to the hotel. Upon their arrival, the OCSO had located the owners of the van and monkeys. The owners were visiting from out of state and did not have any of the required permits to have the monkeys in Florida and did not meet Florida caging or transport requirements for the monkeys. Captive Wildlife Investigator McDaniel issued a notice to appear and several warnings for the violations. The owners were leaving the state with the monkeys immediately, so the monkeys were left in their possession.

Officers Stelzer and Summers were on foot patrol on Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Deseret Ranch property boundary when they saw three individuals hog hunting Tosohatchee during the hog/dog hunt. The subjects allowed their five dogs inside Deseret Ranch while they walked the fence line of the WMA. During the hunt you are only allowed to have three free running dogs. The individuals were charged accordingly.

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Balgo, Hallsten and Hocker performed a resource inspection on an incoming vessel in Port Canaveral. The inspection located five undersized cobia and one undersized kingfish. The captain of the vessel was cited accordingly.

While on foot patrol in Satellite Beach, Officers Balgo and Hocker saw an individual surf fishing. A resource and license inspection located one undersized black drum and one undersized sheepshead. The individual was cited accordingly.

Officers Kearney and Dubose were on patrol when they saw a vessel in violation of a manatee zone. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation. During the stop, the operator showed signs of impairment. After conducting Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks, the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and issued a citation for the manatee zone violation. Later, the operator provided a breath sample of .182 which is more than double the legal limit.

Lieutenant Lightsey and Officer Delano were watching an area where illegal night hunting has occurred. The officers watched as a truck stopped in the middle of the roadway, illuminated the nearby wood line, and the driver exited the vehicle. After a short period of time, the driver jumped back into his vehicle, turned off his headlights and quickly sped off. A vehicle stop was conducted to address the violations. Inside the truck, officers saw a shotgun and ammunition commonly used to take deer. The operator had been stopped two months prior by the officers and warned about using a light while in possession of a firearm customarily used to take deer. A notice to appear was issued for the violation and the shotgun was seized as evidence.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

Officer Lejarzar was on water patrol when he saw a commercial vessel fishing in an area which was closed to commercial fishing. He followed the vessel for a while until its operator returned to a nearby boat ramp and then Officer Lejarzar began a fisheries and boating safety inspection. Officer Hardgrove and Officer Thompson arrived to assist. During the inspection, the officers inspected his cast nets and determined the subject was fishing with a cast net that was bigger than legal size. He was issued a notice to appear for fishing with a cast net bigger than fourteen feet in length and for fishing in a closed area.

#### **HARDEE COUNTY**

Officer Karr and Officer Specialist Cloud were on patrol in north Hardee County when a truck slowly drove by their location. A spotlight from the truck began to illuminate the side of the road. They followed the vehicle as it traveled north towards Polk County. The driver braked many times to slow down and continued to shine the spotlight on property on both sides of the road in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. After following the truck for several miles, Officer Karr conducted a traffic stop. The driver admitted to having two firearms in the backseat of the vehicle. Officer Specialist Cloud secured two

scoped rifles from the driver and passenger. One rifle was loaded with multiple rounds and the second rifle was unloaded, but there was a live round underneath the rifle. Both occupants of the truck were cited for hunting with a gun and light. Both rifles and the spotlight were seized as evidence.

Officer Karr was on foot patrol near an orange grove when he saw a truck drive by slowly. He watched the truck drive east, towards a dip in the road until he could no longer see the vehicle. Officer Karr heard what sounded like a gunshot from the direction of the vehicle and drove towards the last location he saw the truck. The truck was stopped in the road when Officer Karr pulled up to the truck and could see the driver place a scoped rifle into the backseat. Officer Karr activated his emergency lights and had the driver step out of the vehicle. The driver said he did hear a shot near their location but did not know where it came from. The driver gave Officer Karr consent to search his vehicle. On the backseat, was an empty rifle carrying case and a scoped rifle under the case. Officer Karr removed the rifle from the truck for safety reasons and realized that the barrel was warm to the touch. He read the driver the Miranda warning and the man agreed to continue talking to Officer Karr. The driver admitted to shooting his rifle onto private property from the roadway while in his truck. The driver was arrested for felony trespass with a projectile and hunting from the roadway. The rifle was seized as evidence.

#### HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer DeWeese saw two individuals entering a portion of private land known for trespassing and poaching of wildlife located within Plant City. Officer DeWeese advised Officer Munkwitz and Officer Earls of the possible violations and arranged to meet. The three officers arrived on scene and located a vehicle parked off the roadway. The officers searched the property for approximately a half hour when they located two individuals fishing in a pond. Upon Officer Munkwitz announcing her presence, one individual attempted to flee by running across the field, while one waited on the shore. The fleeing subject was apprehended and had four active warrants for his arrest. The other subject was in possession of a pistol. The individual with active warrants was arrested, transported and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail. Charges have been direct filed for one count of armed trespass and one count of trespass.

While on patrol near the Hillsborough River, Officer Caldwell saw an individual fishing from land. He initiated a resource inspection and discovered the individual to be in possession of an undersized snook during the closed season. The individual was issued a citation for the violations. During the inspection, it was discovered the individual also had an arrest warrant out of Hillsborough County for a traffic violation. He was taken into custody, transported and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail.

#### SUMTER COUNTY

Officer Lebreton responded to the check station at the Green Swamp Wildlife Management Area about a short-horned buck that had been shot. Upon further

inspection, the left antler measured nine inches and the right antler measured nine and one-half inches. Pursuant to Florida Administrative Code, it is unlawful to take an antlered deer not having at least one antler with three or more points or one antler with a main beam of ten inches or more in length. The deer was seized, and the subject was issued a notice to appear.

Officer Munkwitz, Officer Earls, and Officer Livingston responded to a deer hunting complaint at the Green Swamp Wildlife Management Area check station. Upon arriving, all three officers saw a dead deer with one antler on either side hanging upside down at the cleaning station. A check station employee advised that he measured the longest antler of the deer to be 8.25 inches. Officers measured the antlers and verified that the longest main beam measured 8.5 inches in length, 1.5 inches below the legal limit. The subject admitted to taking the illegal deer and was issued a notice to appear.

#### LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton was on patrol in Matanzas Pass when he saw a vessel being operated without the required navigation lights. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation, at which time the operator of the vessel switched positions with one of the vessel's occupants. During the stop, the original operator exhibited signs of impairment. After performing poorly on field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The operator was transported to the Lee County Jail, where he refused to provide a breath sample. The operator was also issued a boating citation for navigation light violations.

Officer Winton was on patrol in the Caloosahatchee River when he saw a vessel being operated without the required navigation lights and with an expired registration. Officer Winton conducted a vessel stop, at which time it was determined that the vessel had been recently purchased, but the new operator did not have a bill of sale onboard. During a boater safety inspection, the operator exhibited multiple signs of impairment. After performing field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The operator was transported to the Lee County Jail, where he refused to provide a breath sample. The operator was also issued additional citations and warnings for related violations.

Officer Winton was on patrol in New Pass when he saw a vessel being operated without a valid boater safety decal. A vessel stop was conducted, at which time the operator of the vessel exhibited signs of impairment. After performing poorly on field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. Once at the jail, the subject refused a breath sample. Since the subject had been previously cited for refusing a breath sample, he was also cited for misdemeanor refusal to provide a lawful breath sample. Officer Bell and Officer Gray also responded to assist with the investigation and transport of the subject.

#### MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Davidson was on land patrol in the area of Coquina Boat Ramp. While on patrol he stopped and performed a fisheries inspection on an individual fishing from the dock at the ramp. During the inspection, Officer Davidson noticed that the man had a redfish swimming around in his bucket next to him. Officer Davidson measured the redfish and found it to be fifteen inches long. The man was cited for possession of undersized redfish and given a warning for possession of redfish during the executive closure because of red tide. The subject will have to appear in court for his violation.

#### PINELLAS COUNTY

While on offshore water patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau and Lieutenant VanTrees stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. After inspection, the officers located two red grouper in a hatch near the bow of the boat. Both fish measured under the minimum size limit of twenty inches, one of which measured only fourteen inches. Officer Specialist Bibeau issued the operator of the vessel a misdemeanor citation for possession of undersized red grouper.

While on offshore water patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau and Lieutenant VanTrees stopped a commercial crab vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. While conducting the fisheries inspection, Officer Specialist Bibeau located a tripletail. Officer Specialist Bibeau asked the individuals onboard how they caught the tripletail and one individual advised that he had caught it with a dip net. Officer Specialist Bibeau measured the tripletail and found that it measured under the minimum size limit of eighteen inches. After conducting a query through agency files, Officer Specialist Bibeau found that the subject had a lengthy FWC history. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the subject a misdemeanor citation for harvest of an undersized tripletail and a warning for harvest of a tripletail with the use of a dip net.

Officer Caldwell watched from a concealed position four individuals fishing with cast nets. He saw the individual's fish for approximately an hour. He then located their vehicle and waited for them to return. Upon seeing the subjects return to their vehicle, Officer Caldwell initiated a resource inspection. During his inspection, he found six undersized snook hidden under legal fish in a bucket. The individuals responsible for catching the snook were cited for possession of snook during a closed season, possession of undersized snook and illegal method of taking snook. They were also issued warnings for possession of two undersized black drum.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual actively fishing from a pier. He conducted a fisheries inspection and located eleven whole stone crabs and twenty-one undersized stone crab claws. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of whole stone crabs and possession of undersized stone crab claws.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual actively fishing from a pier. He contacted the individual to conduct a fisheries inspection and the individual advised that he had a bad day fishing and hadn't caught any fish. Officer Specialist Bibeau inspected a nearby five-gallon bucket and located a small redfish. The individual told Officer Specialist

Bibeau that he was given the redfish earlier in the day by another subject. Officer Specialist Bibeau measured the redfish and found that it measured only fourteen and one-half inches. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of an undersized redfish and a warning for violating the executive order pertaining to the closure of redfish.

#### **POLK COUNTY**

Officer Kobs, Officer Jarrett and K9 Officer Gaudion located two subjects who were shining a light out of their truck window while driving down the road. The two subjects admitted to shining the light in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. Inside the truck was a loaded .22 rifle. The driver admitted the rifle was his. Both subjects were given a notice to appear for hunting off the roadway and hunting with a gun and light.

#### **DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS**

#### **LEE COUNTY**

Officers from Lee and Charlotte Counties have been conducting multiple directed conservation patrol operations targeting illegal commercial fishing during mullet season. Officers utilized both overt and covert patrols to deter and detect fisheries violations. Throughout the operation, officers made arrests in ten separate net fishing cases, including: the use of monofilament gill nets, the use of entangling nets, the use of more than two nets from a vessel, the use of oversized cast nets, and commercially fishing in closed areas. In addition to netting violations, the officers also made arrests for quality control and licensing violations. The subjects charged in these cases face both criminal and civil fines, jail time, the forfeiture of the fishing gear and the suspension or revocation of their saltwater licensing privileges.

#### **SOUTH REGION A**

##### **CASES**

##### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Officers Grant and Brock, with the assistance of Investigator Corteguera were able to successfully capture two mongooses that were found in Port Everglades. Their origins were unknown but are thought to have been stowaways onboard a freighter. They were taken to a licensed location for housing and care.

Officers Brock and Grant were on patrol in the southern section of the C-10 canal when they saw a small vessel on the side of an embankment. They were able to retrieve information off the vessel and discovered it was stolen out of Hialeah. They notified Hialeah PD and will provide assistance notifying the owner. The vessel was towed by a tow truck to an impoundment area.

Captive Wildlife Investigators Corteguera, Smith, Howell, and Toby responded to a report of a puma in a residential area. Investigator Corteguera was able to successfully chemically immobilize the animal, allowing for a safe capture and transfer to a licensed facility. An investigation is underway to determine the cat's origin. Lieutenants Garzaniti and Laubenthaler, along with Officers Tarr, Armstrong, and Cornell assisted on this incident. Local law enforcement responded as well.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera responded to a request for assistance from a local agency. A subject was found deceased and left approximately 70 animals without care. Investigator Corteguera & Officer Grant captured a fox, a raccoon and a skunk and transferred them to properly permitted facilities. Various other wildlife was also placed, and proper medical care was provided to those in need.

#### MARTIN COUNTY

In Jonathon Dickenson State Park, Investigator Luher operated an unmarked patrol vehicle while working plain clothes in conjunction with FWC marked units and uniformed officers Webb, Pecko and Morrow. Investigator Luher spotted drivers with expired tags, speeding, and no seat belts. Those violations were relayed to the marked units and arrests were made. One male was taken into custody for knowingly driving while his license is suspended. His vehicle tag was seized by court order and was expired from September 2018. A four-year-old child was also in the vehicle, not in the proper seating for a child 4 years old. The vehicle was towed from the park. Officer Pecko took a driver into custody with a suspended license as well. His vehicle was turned over to a licensed driver with him. A total of 5 misdemeanor arrests, 3 infractions for speeding and 9 warnings issued for various violations of dog not on leash, seatbelts and speeding were issued by these four officers.

Officer Hudson saw someone collecting crabs along the shoreline of the Stuart Causeway. During the inspection of the subject's crabs, the subject was given a lawful command not to touch the stone crabs. The subject disobeyed the command and threw one of the stone crabs into the water, which was retrieved by the officer. The subject harvested a total of 16 whole stone crabs and 32 undersized claws. He was cited for three misdemeanor charges.

Officer Hudson was conducting fisheries inspections on the Stuart Causeway when he found a person in possession of 11 mangrove snapper. The subject had six mangrove snapper over the state legal limit, and four of the mangrove snapper were undersized. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Pecko and Rogers were on water patrol when they received a complaint that two subjects were catching and keeping snook behind a waterfront residence. A resource inspection and fishing license check were conducted. Two undersized and out of season snook were located. The individuals did not have valid fishing licenses or snook stamps. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Hudson conducted a vessel inspection on a vessel anchored inside of the channel, fishing near the St. Lucie Inlet. The subject was found in possession of a bonefish. Bonefish are illegal to possess in Florida. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Morrow, Rogers, Hudson, and Lieutenant Hankinson responded to a complaint from state park staff about a subject trespassing on park property and discharging sewage from an RV onto park grounds. Upon their arrival, the officers noted a strong odor of human waste coming from under the RV and noted a large area of human waste on the ground. Officers stood by until the owner arrived, driving an unregistered motor vehicle. The subject was placed under arrest and cited for discharging sewage from an RV and driving an unregistered vehicle. He was booked into the Martin County Jail.

Officers Morrow, Pecko, and Rogers were conducting foot patrol at a local causeway. While walking through the parking lot, Officer Morrow detected a strong odor of cannabis coming from a vehicle in the parking lot. Upon contacting the person in the vehicle, he admitted to having a smoking pipe. A search of the vehicle yielded a plastic bag of cannabis. A check of the subject revealed that he was wanted for assault and leaving the scene of an accident. The subject was arrested and was booked into the Martin County Jail.

#### PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Trawinski and Ames were on water patrol when they received a call about a vessel that had struck the jetty at the Lake Worth Inlet. Officers Trawinski and Ames responded to the location of the accident and found two subjects with injuries standing outside of the vessel that was now stuck in the rocks. Due to the water conditions, Officer Trawinski could not drop Officer Ames off at the jetty by water and advised the subjects to stay by the vessel while they found land access. It took Officer's Trawinski and Ames less than 10 minutes to find an access and when they got to the vessel both subjects had run away from the scene of the accident. With the assistance of Officer Morrow, Officer Pecko, Officer Defeo, Officer Langley, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and Palm Beach Police Department, both subjects were found. The operator of the vessel was located an hour and a half later, hiding under the bushes at a nearby home on Palm Beach Island. The operator of the vessel was cited for reckless operation of a vessel, resisting without violence, fleeing the scene of accident and violation of a navigational rule resulting in an accident.

#### OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby completed an investigation relating to the illegal possession and transportation of several primates. The investigation revealed an unlicensed individual transported two capuchin monkeys, a spider monkey, and a macaque to a facility that was not licensed to possess these animals. These animals were seized and placed at a licensed facility. The spider monkey and macaque required chemical immobilization to be safely captured and relocated. A total of twelve

misdemeanor citations were issued to two individuals for the illegal possession, transportation and other related violations. Numerous other captive wildlife staff and Officer Crosby assisted with this incident.

## **DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL**

### **MARTIN COUNTY**

Lieutenants Carcasses and Steelman, Investigator Teems, Officers Arnold, Brodbeck, Keen and Boyd were deployed to Panama City for two weeks to assist with Hurricane Michael disaster relief efforts. While deployed, the team focused on derelict vessel removal from state waters. The deployment team worked with the United States Coast Guard and contractors to remove vessels from state waters and relocate them to a nearby landfill. The team identified and contacted owners to retrieve their vessels or waive their rights to the vessels. This necessary task after the immense destruction caused by Hurricane Michael greatly assisted the area during hurricane cleanup efforts. The team received a commendatory email about their excellent work during the deployment.

## **COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING**

### **ST. LUCIE COUNTY**

Lieutenant Laubenberger and Officer Trawinski attended the 50th Anniversary of the Indian River State College Police Academy in Ft. Pierce. They participated in the Multi Agency Honor Guard portion of the ceremony, which included carrying the FWC Division flag and commanding the ceremonial U.S. Flag raising.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **MIAMI DADE COUNTY**

Officer Stanton was on water patrol with Officer Delgado when they saw a vessel anchored in the no entry zone Virginia Key area marked by white buoys which display "no entry zone" on them. Upon conducting a vessel safety and resource inspection, the subject was found to be in possession of 3 undersized triggerfish and 2 undersized mutton snapper. The subject took responsibility of the undersized fish and was charged for the undersized triggerfish, undersized snapper and being anchored in the no entry zone.

Officer Stanton and Officer Delgado were on land patrol at the Rickenbacker Fishing Pier. Officer Stanton saw a subject actively fishing with rod and reel. Upon receiving consent to search his cooler Officer Stanton uncovered 7 undersized lane snapper, 1

undersized mangrove snapper, 1 undersized yellowtail snapper and 1 undersized triggerfish. The violator was charged for the undersized fish and issued a warning for not having a valid fishing license.

Officer Perez was on water patrol near Bear Cut when he stopped a recreational subject to conduct a resources inspection. One misdemeanor was issued for more than one Barracuda over 36" inches to the fork-length per vessel.

Officer Cartaya was on land-based water patrol from Rickenbacker fishing pier when he stopped a vessel which had one undersized yellowtail, one mangrove and seven undersized lane snapper. The operator had no valid saltwater shoreline license. He was cited appropriately.

Officer Sample saw a boat with numerous fishing rods and reels returning to Crandon Park Boat Ramp. He initiated a stop on the vessel, and the 3 subjects on board stated that they had about 18 or 19 Spanish mackerel in the cooler. Upon inspection, 14 of the fish were identified as king mackerel (kingfish), all of which were undersized. The subjects were also 8 fish over their bag limit. The subjects were cited accordingly for the violations and educated on how to properly identify different species of mackerel.

While on water patrol 1 mile east of Miami Beach, Officers Sample and Saavedra saw fishing equipment on a fishing vessel. The inspection revealed 6 undersized mutton snapper. They were cited for possession of undersized mutton snappers.

Officer Moschiano and Officer Blanco initiated a resource vessel inspection on a vessel near Caesars creek. The men had undersize yellowtail snapper and schoolmaster snapper in a cooler on their boat as well as a tied-up trash bag near the transom with undersize mutton snapper in it. The men were cited accordingly.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Conroy, Araujo, and Yurewitch were patrolling offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. The officers saw a commercial vessel returning and conducted a resource inspection. The officers saw approximately 30 king mackerel on the deck in open air with no ice. Further inspection revealed another 100-king mackerel with no ice and an internal temperature ranging between 62- and 70-degrees Fahrenheit, making them unfit for human consumption. The officers estimated that the fish would be well over the 1250-pound commercial daily limit and followed the vessel back to the dock. Officer's Wagner and Knutson, and Collier supervisors met the patrol boat at the dock to finish the inspection. They arranged for a certified scale to properly count the fish and assisted with measuring the total weight. The officers confirmed that the total weight was greater than 1250 pounds – with 1637 pounds of fish being seized, and the subject was cited accordingly for going over their quota allowance and for quality control.

Officer Yaxley was on patrol when she noticed a sign advertising the sale of stone crabs out of a private residence. Upon further investigation, she found that the individual was

selling stone crab claws, including several undersized claws that he pulled from his recreational traps. The individual was processing the claws in his garage in direct violation of quality control rules. The Individual had none of the proper licensing or permits and was cited accordingly.

Officer Yaxley was on patrol with a National Park Service Ranger in the Big Cypress Preserve when they came across fresh tire tracks on a restricted trail. They followed the tracks and located an unpermitted trailer on Big Cypress property, with a drain pipe set up to discharge human waste directly onto the ground. Upon further investigation, the owner of the trailer was found to be operating unpermitted heavy machinery in the preserve and had been stealing fill dirt from the preserve's maintenance pile. Officer Yaxley cited the individual for the illegal dumping and the NPS Ranger cited the individual for numerous federal park violations.

Officer Conroy and Officer Wagner were on water patrol in the Faka Union canal. They saw a vessel anchored and saw two males actively fishing off the bow of the vessel. Officer Wagner discovered 4 undersized spotted seatrout and Officer Conroy cited them appropriately for the violation.

The offshore patrol vessel Fearless and crew were patrolling federal waters off Miami. Several vessels were checked for compliance and educated on permit requirements for recreational vessels. One vessel was found in possession of an undersized swordfish and was issued a federal citation for the violation. The owner of the vessel did not have the proper permit required for the area he was fishing, and the information will be forwarded to National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

While on a Dry Tortugas patrol, crew onboard offshore patrol vessel CT Randall received information of a vessel returning to Key West with commercial quantities of reef fish without the required federal commercial permit. Officers Richards, Foell, Hettel and NOAA/NMFS Officer Robb gathered further information on the vessel and awaited dockside. Upon arrival, the officers conducted a marine fisheries inspection. Four male subjects were onboard the vessel claiming to be on a commercial spearfishing trip from South Atlantic federal waters. A total of 560 pounds of snapper-grouper species were located onboard. The vessel did not have a valid NOAA South Atlantic snapper-grouper commercial permit. The snapper-grouper species were seized by the National Marine Fisheries Service and sold, after bid. The operator of the vessel was issued a federal citation.

Officers Conroy, Araujo, and Yurewitch were on water patrol near Gordons Pass. They saw a vessel operating with no red or green navigational lights. After stopping the vessel for the violation, officers noticed signs of alcohol impairment by the operator. Officer Conroy administered standardized field sobriety exercises. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported to the Naples Jail Center.

Officer Knutson and Officer Wagner were on water patrol near Indian Key Pass in Ten Thousand Islands and saw a fishing vessel come out from behind a mangrove island

into the pass. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. During the inspection, Officer Knutson found 1 undersize red drum and 2 mangrove snapper fillets. The operator was advised of the violations and the illegal fish were seized as evidence. The individual was charged appropriately for the violations.

While on land patrol Officer Knutson was forced to slam on his brakes to avoid a collision. Officer Knutson followed the vehicle that pulled in out in front of him and watched as it drifted over the solid white line multiple times and drifted to the left into the middle lane multiple times. Officer Knutson initiated a traffic stop. The driver seemed confused and Officer Knutson could smell alcohol coming from the driver's breath. Officer Curbelo and Officer Kleis arrived on scene to assist. Once out of the vehicle, the driver agreed to submit to field sobriety exercises. He also agreed to provide a breath sample that Officer Kleis obtained and concluded the driver was under the influence, blowing a .238, triple the .08 legal limit. The driver was transported and booked into the Naples Jail Center for driving under the influence, driver license never issued, and open containers in the vehicle.

Officer Yurewitch stopped a vehicle for driving erratically on US41. He noticed signs of alcohol impairment coming from the driver. Officer Yurewitch requested Officer Kleis to bring the intoxilyzer to his location. A breath sample was provided which registered .192 blood alcohol content and .184 blood alcohol content. The vehicle driver was subsequently arrested and booked into the Naples Jail Center.

While on water patrol in Naples Bay, Officers Johnston and Yurewitch saw a vessel traveling at a high rate of speed without functional navigation lights. They initiated a stop of the vessel to address the violation and to perform a boating safety inspection. While inspecting the vessel, the officers saw several signs of alcohol impairment from the operator. Seated field sobriety tasks were performed with the operator and he was subsequently placed under arrest for boating under the influence.

## MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Peters was assigned an FWC Wildlife Alert about a subject who livestreamed himself catching and keeping a bonefish. This livestream event was located near Marathon. During the livestream broadcast other users live commented that bonefish are protected, for sport only, and he needed to put the fish back. This comment was read aloud by a female to the individual. He sarcastically stated we let the fish go, but the fish was never returned to the water. The bonefish was clearly seen later in the video in an orange bucket. Lieutenant Peters had a positive identification of the white male and obtained an arrest warrant for the subject. The warrant was signed by a Monroe County Judge with a bond amount of \$5,000.00. The warrant also included a pre-trial stipulation that the man is banned from fishing or diving in Monroe County waters.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

## MONROE COUNTY

Officers Richards, Hoppe and Thompson encountered two notable violations during the offshore patrol vessel Trident's four-day Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary patrol in the Dry Tortugas. The officers saw a commercial snapper/grouper boat displaying fishing rods anchored within state waters of the Dry Tortugas National Park. The officers began a marine fisheries inspection and the captain stated he was fishing near Pulaski Shoal for the past two days where he caught approximately 500 pounds of yellowtail snapper and 300 pounds of kingfish. The captain was unable to produce valid permits that would allow him to harvest the species he possessed onboard. The fish were seized and transported to Key West where they were sold. The proceeds for the sale will be held in escrow until the criminal case is closed.

During a night patrol of the Tortugas North Ecological Reserve officers saw several large shrimp boats trawling along the Northern boundary line and one that appeared to be well within the reserve. The officers approached the stern of the boat and confirmed its nets were deployed. Due to the approaching cold front bringing increasing winds and the boat pulling very large nets, the boarding was very difficult. Two FWC officers and one NPS officer boarded the vessel. The federal violation of fishing in the closed area was documented federally and sent to the National Marine Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Yurewitch and Officer Kleis conducted speed enforcement in a panther zone. Night time speed limits are posted as 45 MPH in these areas. The officers conducted multiple traffic stops for speed with the highest recorded being 83 MPH. Officers issued 6 citations for speed and seatbelt violations as well as multiple warnings.

Officers Yurewitch and Kleis conducted water patrol and addressed complaints from the public regarding navigation light violations and careless operation of a vessels. Over a two-day period, the officers issued 10 citations, 27 written warnings, and educated the public on safe boating practice. The officers also encountered several commercial fishing vessels and conducted resource inspections. In all, citations were issued for navigation lights, boating safety violations, registration violations, and a 0.02 law violation. Warnings were issued for multiple violations including boating safety, fishing licenses, and resource.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Wagner, Knutson, Conroy, Araujo, and Yurewitch received a (MERT) Medical Emergency Response Team call in Rabbit Key Pass in the Ten Thousand Islands. The officers arrived first on scene to handle the medical emergency. The officers gathered information, made sure the subject was safe, and gathered belongings for transport to

the hospital. The officers prepared to load the victim aboard their 29' SAFE boat as Greater Naples Fire Rescue arrived on scene. The victim was assisted by officers aboard the fire boat and transported to the hospital.

## MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Wagner and Officer Knutson responded to a call of a goliath grouper (a protected species) that was acting strange under the Naples City Pier. Once on scene they noticed a very large crowd standing near the middle of the pier. As they approached they could see a 200-pound goliath grouper that looked like it was struggling at the surface of the water. The officers noticed many trap lines entangled around the pylons and thought the grouper might have been trapped. Officer Knutson operated the vessel while Officer Wagner used a boat hook to swipe around and under the grouper. After multiple attempts Officer Wagner hooked a trap line that was caught around the jaw of the grouper and cut it. The grouper was free, swam down and did not resurface.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### MONROE COUNTY

FWC officers participated in the annual Wounded Warrior Soldier Ride through the county over the weekend. Our officers provided traffic assistance and were among the other law enforcement and fire rescue vehicles in the procession. Marathon office staff and other officers stood by at attention as the 47 wounded bike riders made their way past our office. The soldiers rode through Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, and Key West. Their trip ended with a swim with dolphins in Marathon. FWC has proudly participated in this event annually – this being the 14th year.