

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

April 5, 2019 through April 18, 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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Allgood received information that an individual posted a picture on social media of him holding two gag grouper in front of his home. Officer Allgood contacted the individual who still had parts of the fish in his possession. The individual was cited for possession of gag grouper during closed season.

Officer McHenry received information from the United States Coast Guard (USCG) that they saw an individual catching and keeping red snapper in Pensacola Bay near the USCG station. When he arrived on scene, the subjects had left the area, but the vessel's registration number was obtained from the USCG. Officer McHenry proceeded to the registered owner's home and located the vessel there. The individual admitted to catching the red snapper and was in possession of two freshly caught red snapper. Charges were filed for possession of red snapper out of season.

Officer Allgood was checking subjects at the Navy Point Boat Ramp when he noticed two divers returning to the ramp. They claimed they did not catch or spear any fish. During the fisheries inspection he found a red snapper on board the vessel. The individual who speared the fish was cited for possession of red snapper during a closed season.

GULF COUNTY

Officer H. Webb and Lieutenant Guy were conducting resource inspections near the Highland View bridge and saw two subjects catching over the limit of redfish. When one officer made his presence in the area known, one of the subjects was seen by the second officer removing contents from a cooler in the vehicle and then placing the cooler in plain view for inspection. During the inspection, the subject was found to have a legal redfish in the cooler and then admitted to a second oversized redfish that was hidden in the back seat and covered with clothing. The appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Gerber located a baited area near the Apalachicola Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA) with fresh turkey sign. A few days later he, along with Officer Lipford returned during hunting hours. Officer Gerber saw a subject walk in with a firearm, pour out a bucket of bait, get in a ground blind overlooking the baited site, and call for turkeys. The subject was issued a citation for attempting to take turkeys within 100 yards of a feed station with feed present.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Corbin received information of a subject fishing at Anderson Pond, which is currently closed for fishing while being stocked for a kid's fishing rodeo. There are numerous signs around the pond and on the walkways that say, "Closed to fishing." When Officer Corbin arrived on scene, Eglin Range Patrol was with the subject and had already contacted the subject while he was fishing. A notice to appear citation was issued for fishing in an area posted as closed.

Officer Corbin was on water patrol in the Destin Harbor when he saw the deckhand of a charter boat sorting through the catch. A resource inspection was conducted and found the triggerfish on board to be undersized. A notice to appear citation was issued for possession of undersized triggerfish.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw a vessel returning from offshore with fishing rods displayed. A vessel stop was conducted to perform a resource inspection. Upon inspection, two undersized triggerfish were located on the vessel. A notice to appear citation was issued to the captain of the vessel.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw a vessel in violation of the idle speed/no wake zone in the Destin Harbor. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation. During the vessel stop, the vessel owner stated he did not have the registration for the vessel because he had recently purchased it. He later admitted to not having a bill of sale onboard and purchasing the vessel in October of 2018. A notice to appear citation was issued for failure to transfer title and a warning was issued for the idle speed/no wake violation.

Officer Corbin was on patrol when he saw a vessel in violation of the idle speed/no wake zone by the Destin bridge. A vessel stop was conducted to address the violation. Throughout the vessel stop, the operator showed several signs of impairment. The

operator agreed to conduct field sobriety tasks and showed more signs of impairment throughout the tasks. The operator was placed under arrest and refused to provide a breath sample. Uniform boating citations were issued for operating a vessel while normal faculties impaired, refusal to submit to breath test, and violation of the idle speed/no wake zone.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer White checked a site on Eglin Wildlife Management Area where he had previously located a baited area containing cracked corn. Cracked corn is commonly used for baiting and attracting turkeys. While checking the area, Officer White saw a subject turkey hunting approximately 15 yards from the baited area. The subject was identified and cited for attempting to take turkey over bait.

FEDERAL WATERS

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson, Travis and NOAA Officer Robb boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel approximately 40 miles south of Panama City. During the resource inspection, they located amberjack and red snapper not in whole condition, undersized vermillion snapper, and use of reef fish for bait (cut up amberjack on the hooks). The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel "Guardian," Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Nelson, Travis, and NOAA Officer Robb boarded a commercial longline vessel approximately 60 miles south of Panama City. During the resource inspection, they located greater amberjack, yellowedge grouper, golden tilefish, shark, and swordfish not in whole condition. The season for greater amberjack is currently closed and the vessel did not have a permit to possess the swordfish. The officers located removed shark fins and a significant amount of amberjack, tilefish, and shark being used as bait. The crew of the vessel was also in possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

BAKER COUNTY

Officers Tyler and Fanelli received a complaint about a subject baiting turkey at a local hunting club. The officers located two active bait sites with hunting blinds within 10 yards of the bait. They monitored the sites for two weeks and were able to locate the subject actively hunting turkey at one of the bait sites. After interviewing the subject, they were told of a third bait site that he had nearby. The subject took responsibility for the violation and was charged appropriately.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Officers were dispatched to the Suwannee River at the Big Shoals State Park about a boating accident with injuries. Upon arrival, numerous FWC officers were told that nine kayakers attempted to cross the class 3 rapids at the shoals, resulting in at least one flipping over. The officers gathered witnesses while EMS and fire personnel tended to injuries. Several persons were transported to Shands Hospital in Gainesville and Lake City Medical Center for treatment. The group of kayakers started in Georgia and were on the way to the town of Suwannee at the Gulf of Mexico. Officer Lee Yates is the lead on the investigation.

Officer Cline received an anonymous complaint about an alligator being killed at the Florida Department of Transportation weigh station on Interstate 75 in Hamilton County. Officer Cline initiated an investigation and after conducting interviews, was able to identify the person responsible for killing the alligator. This person was interviewed, and post Miranda, admitted to his actions. The appropriate charges were direct filed with the Hamilton County State Attorney's Office.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officer McGrath discovered a subject had placed cracked corn on property close to a tree stand. The suspect's property adjoined the property line of Ichetucknee Springs State Park. Over the course of several weeks, both Officers McGrath and Yates worked this property, trying to catch the subject. On the following Saturday morning, both officers were working the property when, just after daybreak, they saw a subject walking on the property carrying a shotgun. They heard the subject calling for turkeys. Shortly thereafter, Officer McGrath left his cover and walked to the area where the subject was calling. He discovered the subject in a tree stand and approximately 28 yards from cracked corn. A citation was issued for attempting to take turkey over bait.

CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Crane received a complaint of several individuals mud bogging in Potts Preserve near the campground. Officers Crane and VanNess arrived in the area and stopped to listen. The officers heard vehicles revving their engines loudly west of their position. Officer Crane contacted the group and found one of the individuals to be in violation of several Southwest Water Management District rules. Officer Crane issued the subject a criminal citation and several warnings.

ALACHUA COUNTY

FWC dispatch received a tip with information needed to apprehend a convicted felon hunting with a suspended license. Lieutenant Ferguson, along with Officers Stanley and Harris worked the area where the suspect was hunting. Alachua County Sheriff's Office K-9 units were also nearby to assist in case the suspect attempted to flee. After hiding

in a concealed location, Officers Harris and Stanley saw the suspect cross over a fence and began walking back to his truck. Using the element of surprise, the officers quickly restrained the suspect and secured the shotgun without incident. The suspect was transported to Alachua County Jail and cited for hunting with a suspended license and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Additional felony trespass charges are pending.

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Fox was conducting water patrol by land at the Highway 40 boat ramp in Yankeetown when he saw a commercial oyster vessel returning. Officer Fox identified himself and saw 15 bushels of oysters onboard the vessel. He conducted a commercial fisheries inspection and saw that the 15 bags of oysters were green tagged. From April through October, all harvested oysters tagged "For Shucking Only by a Certified Facility" or "For Post-Harvest Processing Only" are to be delivered to a certified processing facility by 4 p.m. of the harvest day. Officers Starling and Willis arrived and assisted with the investigation while Officer Fox conducted a size tolerance check of the oysters. Following the resource check, all three subjects were issued notices to appear for the violation and the oysters were returned to the water alive.

DUVAL COUNTY

Lieutenant Bridwell was on water patrol in a marked FWC vessel when he saw a vessel heading south on the Intercoastal Waterway without navigational lights displayed. During dockside vessel safety inspection, numerous signs of impairment were observed. Each time the operator spoke the strong odor of an alcoholic beverage radiated from his breath. Lieutenant Bridwell conducted a field sobriety test and identified 29 clues of impairment. The operator was arrested and transported to jail where a breath test was conducted to determine his impairment. The operator provided a 0.102 and 0.105 sample about 2 1/2 hours after the arrest.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson and Officer Harris responded to a boater stranded on a rock shoal up river from Poe Springs. The disabled operator was unable to operate the boat back upstream to where they launched. The motor would not start, and the propeller was damaged due to hitting the rock shoal. The boater's trolling motor batteries were also dead. Lieutenant Ferguson was able to free the boat and escort them safely downstream to the nearest boat ramp where the officers also assisted with loading the vessel onto the trailer.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Boone participated in a public outreach event meeting with several members of the Fourth Battalion 3rd Infantry Division, 11th Brigade 23rd Infantry Recon America Division that served in Vietnam. Officer Boone presented information on boating safety, resource conservation, freshwater fisheries and the many opportunities that FWC offers to the public. The members of the division presented Officer Boone with a purple heart supporter pin, expressing their gratitude for FWC and its professional employees.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

MARION COUNTY

Officer Rice received information that a subject took two Osceola turkeys from Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on the same day. Officers Rice and Dias responded to the subject's address to investigate. The subject met the officers in his front yard and stated that he knew why the officers were there. He subsequently admitted to taking the two turkeys on the WMA on the same hunt. The subject surrendered the turkeys, and his Benelli shotgun used in the incident. Charges were filed with the State Attorney's Office for taking over the daily bag limit of turkeys and failure to check the birds into the WMA check station.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Marroquin and Delano were conducting patrol Sebastian Inlet State Park after receiving reports of violations occurring in the park. Officer Marroquin stopped a group he saw fishing returning to their vehicle to conduct a resource inspection. During the inspection, Officer Marroquin found one subject to be over the bag limit and in possession of undersized sheepshead. When asked if the group had any more fish with them or in the vehicle they stated no. Officer Delano arrived on scene to assist and found the group to be in possession of an over the slot limit snook and in possession of more sheepshead. The group was issued citations and warnings for over the bag limit of sheepshead, undersize sheepshead, over slot snook, no snook stamp, no fishing license, and failure to allow inspection.

Officer Marroquin was conducting resource inspections at a local causeway when he identified a subject actively fishing. During the inspection, the individual was found to be in possession of 14 stone crabs in whole condition and undersized. Officer Marroquin located three undersized sheepshead and one undersized mangrove snapper in the cooler as well. The individual was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Marroquin was conducting resource inspections at Sebastian Inlet State Park when he found an individual in possession of an oversized redfish. The subject was issued a citation.

Officer Marroquin was conducting resource inspections at Sebastian Inlet State Park when he saw two individuals returning to their vehicle with fishing gear. During the resource inspection, Officer Marroquin saw a cooler in the vehicle and asked if he could inspect the cooler. The subject removed the cooler and informed Officer Marroquin that he had two softshell turtles that he caught earlier in the day. In Florida only one softshell turtle can be taken per day. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation. The extra turtle returned alive to the resource.

Officers Wehner, Rasey, and Maslo worked the Banana River and Indian River to get derelict vessels removed that are littering the waterways. The officers identified many vessel owners who were not in compliance with state law. The officers issued multiple notices to appear to owners of derelict vessels in Brevard County. It is illegal to leave a vessel in derelict condition on state waters.

FLAGLER COUNTY

Officer B. Miller and Graves were on federal patrol out of St. Augustine inlet and stopped a vessel returning from offshore. An inspection revealed the occupants to be in possession of a red snapper. Officer Miller issued a federal citation for the violation.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Malicoat and North watched a group of adult males wading and cast netting in a back waters area of New Smyrna Beach. After the men returned to their vehicle, a resource inspection revealed several violations. One of the men was issued two misdemeanor notices to appear for possessing over the daily bag limit of snook and possession of snook under the allowed size limit. He was also issued an infraction for no fishing license as well as two more resource written warnings for illegal method of take and undersized mangrove snapper.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

SUMTER COUNTY

Officers Phillips and Morrow attended an outreach promoting fishing and boating safety at the Florida Bass Conservation Center Richloam Fish Hatchery. There were over 100 adults and children in attendance.

MARION COUNTY

Investigator Straub along with Officers Hargabus, Rice, Nichols, Wear, and Dias participated in a Marion County Youth Turkey Hunt at Halpata Preserve. The team of officers spent hours scouting and setting blinds up for success. Their efforts resulted in all five-youth participating in the hunt harvesting trophy long beards on the first morning. Two of the youth were able to harvest their second turkey as well.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Kearney and Balgo represented FWC at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station's Family Day. The event consisted of over 150 attendees and the officers were able to provide information about boating safety and living with Florida's unique wildlife.

SEMINOLE COUNTY

Officers Shaw and Fahnestock taught the legal portion for the Florida Park Service at their recent Ranger Academy. The officers spent a half day discussing the Florida Administrative Code and pertinent State Statutes.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Goggin, Officer Salem, Investigator McColgin and Lieutenant Ruggiero responded to a call about some people keeping illegal snook. Snook is closed in Charlotte County due to an executive order. Investigator McColgin identified two suspects and their vehicles. One vehicle left the area and Investigator McColgin notified Officer Goggin and Lieutenant Ruggiero (who were on their way to the area) about the subjects leaving. The vehicle was located at a nearby convenience store and Lieutenant Ruggiero approached the driver and asked if he had caught any fish. The man said no but admitted he had been fishing earlier. Lieutenant Ruggiero asked the man if he could look in the trunk of his vehicle and when the man opened the trunk, Lieutenant Ruggiero saw the tail of a snook sticking out of a five-gallon bucket. Officer Goggin photographed and measured the snook which was determined to be undersized. The driver was issued two misdemeanor notices to appear for possessing a snook during closed period and for possession of undersized snook. Lieutenant Ruggiero and Officer Salem found the second vehicle and determined the owner of the vehicle was also in possession of a snook. When the officers asked the man if he had any fish he said yes and told the officers he had a legal size snook, some blue gills and some cichlids. The man pulled out a ruler that he used to measure the fish and showed the officers the snook was within the slot size limit. An inspection of his license showed the man had just bought the license and snook stamp a few days earlier. When told the season was closed, the man promised he would not make that mistake again. The man was issued a warning for the violation and the snook was returned to the water.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Adams was working a site in Highlands County where he had previously located an elevated hunting blind that was approximately twenty-five yards from a game feeding station. A subject shot from the blind and killed a wild turkey located near the feeder. The subject was cited for taking wild turkey within 100 yards of a feeding station where feed was present.

Officer Smith and Officer Catalano saw a vessel on Lake Jackson being operated in an erratic manner with no navigational lights displayed. The officers contacted the operator of the vessel at the Veteran's Beach Boat Ramp and conducted a boating safety inspection. During the inspection they saw several empty alcoholic beverage containers on board the vessel and signs of impairment from the operator. Officer Smith conducted Seated Field Sobriety Tasks on the operator of the vessel and determined he was impaired. The operator was arrested and booked into the Highlands County Jail where he consented to a breath test, which resulted in a 0.132 and 0.134 B.A.C.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Garcia was on uniform patrol when she was approached by a concerned citizen who stated he believed two people were keeping over the bag limit of Spanish mackerel. Officer Garcia responded to the scene and located two anglers matching the description. She obtained consent to inspect their vehicle and located forty-one Spanish mackerel in a cooler. Both subjects received a notice to appear for violation of over the bag limit of Spanish mackerel. She also issued both subjects a current FWC Saltwater Fishing Regulation Handbook and showed them how to find bag limits and size limits. The two subjects were allowed to keep each of their bag limits and the eleven fish that were over the bag limit were seized as evidence.

Officer Winton was on vessel patrol in Mullock Creek when he saw a fishing vessel returning upriver. Officer Winton stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. He noticed that the 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 then transported to the Lee County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Winton was on vessel patrol in Matanzas Pass when he saw a sunken vessel that had washed up on a sandbar. Officer Winton initiated a derelict vessel investigation and was able to identify the vessel/owner. With the assistance of FWC's intelligence section, current contact information for the owner was located. When Officer Winton contacted the owner, he admitted that he knew that the vessel was underwater. Charges pertaining to storing a derelict vessel upon the waters of the state are being filed with the State Attorney's Office.

Officer Hardgrove was conducting resource checks at a local fishing hotspot when he encountered a man catching and releasing small mangrove snapper. The man started acting very nervous and kept trying to place a phone call instead of talking with Officer Hardgrove. The man stated several times that he had not caught any fish that day – but when they walked back to his truck to get his fishing license Officer Hardgrove found a cooler full of fish, including several undersized mangrove snapper, an undersized sheepshead and two snook. The man was cited for multiple criminal fisheries violations.

Officer Thompson was patrolling local fishing spots when he saw a familiar vehicle. He conducted a record check and found that the vehicle's owner had several previous arrests for fisheries violations. When the vehicle owner and another man returned after fishing in kayaks, Officer Thompson, Officer Stapleton and Officer Guy made contact with them. While conducting inspections, Officer Stapleton found a snook hidden in one of the kayaks. The snook was under the legal minimum size, was taken during the emergency snook closure and was harvested illegally with a cast net. The two men had also used their cast nets to harvest blue crabs. Both men were cited for the appropriate violations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Davidson was on water patrol in the Manatee River. While on patrol, he stopped and performed a boating safety and fisheries inspection on a vessel returning from a fishing trip. During the officer's inspection, he discovered that the captain of the vessel had caught and kept five sharks. The subject was cited criminally for possession of over the vessel bag limit for shark and will have to appear in court for his violation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau saw three individuals actively fishing from a bridge. He watched the individuals from a concealed location and contacted them as they were preparing to leave the area. Officer Specialist Bibeau found one of the individuals to be in possession of thirteen undersized lane snapper. He wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of the undersized fish.

While on patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau saw two individuals actively fishing from a seawall and contacted them to conduct a fisheries inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau saw a snook lying in the grass nearby and the individual talking on the cell phone admitted to catching the fish. He said was going to return the snook to the water but made a phone call instead. Officer Specialist Bibeau advised the individual that the season for the harvest of snook was currently closed by executive order due to red tide and the snook needed to be immediately returned to the water. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for violation of the executive order pertaining to snook and possession of an undersized snook.

Officer Alvis was working commercial reef fish vessels offshore of Pinellas County. He received a notification that one vessel was heading in from offshore without sufficient

allocation of Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) for grouper and snapper. An inspection of the vessel when it landed at the fish house revealed they did not have enough IFQ in its vessel/shareholder account to cover the large quantity of fish onboard. It was determined that the vessel was going to lease IFQ from the fish house, but this must be done before a vessel makes a landing notification and is made fast to shore. Two federal citations were issued for insufficient allocation of grouper and snapper IFQ.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Brown was on water patrol around the Venice Inlet. He stopped and performed a boating safety and fisheries inspection on a vessel returning from a fishing trip. He discovered that the captain of the vessel had caught and kept an undersized red grouper. The subject was cited criminally for possession of undersized red grouper and will have to appear in court for his violation.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PASCO/PINELLAS COUNTIES

Numerous officers responded to a search and rescue mission near Anclote Island where a vessel that had been carrying thirteen passengers started taking on water and eventually sunk. The quick action of the responding FWC officers and partner agencies in rough, windy conditions saved thirteen lives. Many on the vessel were not wearing life jackets and at least four were reported as non-swimmers. A boating accident investigation is pending.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

LEE COUNTY

Officer Thompson was working a directed conservation patrol in plain clothes in order to observe subjects who were reported to have been violating fisheries laws. He saw two men fishing late at night at a popular canal. He saw one of the men hide a fish in the bushes and then the two subjects moved to a different location further down the seawall. When the men suddenly hurried to return to their vehicle, grabbed the hidden fish and started driving back to the spot they had just left, Officer Thompson called in uniformed Officer Stapleton. As Officer Stapleton arrived, he saw the subjects retrieving a snook they had just caught and hidden behind a dumpster. When the men tried to claim they had not been fishing, they were surprised to learn the man they had been fishing beside that night was an undercover officer. As snook are currently under an emergency closure, both men were charged appropriately.

Officer Rob Hardgrove recognized a need for stronger enforcement of the slow speed zones surrounding Matlacha Pass in Lee County. In a directed conservation patrol, Officer Hardgrove stopped speeding vessel operators in the pass and wrote

approximately twenty citations and fifty warnings for manatee slow speed zone violations.

PASCO COUNTY

In a directed effort to promote safety on the water, numerous FWC officers patrolled the Pithlachascotee River during the annual Chasco Fiesta Boat Parade which is held in New Port Richey. Many vessels participated in the parade with bystanders staged along the parade route. The officers conducted inspections of numerous vessels to ensure boating safety compliance. During one inspection, an operator exhibited signs of impairment. Officer Specialist Pulaski directed the operator to participate in various field sobriety tasks. The operator performed poorly, and Officer Specialist Pulaski arrested the operator for boating under the influence.

HILLSBOROUGH/PINELLAS COUNTIES

Officers conducted “Operation Water Scooter,” a targeted enforcement detail focusing on PWC safety and education. Officers patrolled high PWC traffic areas including Rocky Pointe and Clearwater Beach to ensure that PWC operators were following the rules relating to boater safety identification and speed zones. Citations and warnings were issued as necessary and boating safety compliance stickers were also given to operators who met legal standards.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

LEE COUNTY

Officers Garcia, Price, Hazelwood, Rogers and Lieutenants Andriano and Ruggiero participated in the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run in Ft. Myers. The officers teamed up with other local sheriff’s deputies, highway patrol officers, and local police departments to support the Special Olympics as they ran several miles throughout the county.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Armstrong responded to a complaint from a homeowner who hired a company to trap a nuisance raccoon in his yard. The trapper showed up and set a trap. A few days later, a raccoon was trapped so the homeowner called the trapping company to advise them there was a raccoon in the trap. After approximately 2 ½ days without the trapper responding to remove the raccoon, the homeowner called FWC. Officer Armstrong

arrived and removed the raccoon. Officer Armstrong then tracked down the contracted trapper and issued him a citation for violation of Florida Administrative Code 68A-9.010(3)(a)- which says that live wildlife captured by any method shall be released or euthanized within 24 hours following capture or inspection of a trapping device containing wildlife.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson was conducting water patrol near the Jensen Beach Causeway when he saw a vessel pulling up stone crab traps. The officer conducted a vessel stop on the vessel and found it to be a commercial vessel. Upon inspection of the stone crab claws on board, the officer found 11 undersize claws. The subject was given a notice to appear citation for possession of undersize stone crab claws and 4 warnings for commercial safety equipment.

Officer Hudson was conducting water patrol near the Stuart Causeway when he saw an individual fishing from a vessel. As the officer began to approach, the subject threw a plastic bag into the water. The officer initiated a vessel stop and asked the subject to pull in his rods, so the officer would not damage them. When the subject pulled in his rods, the subject had an 8.25-inch mutton snapper hooked through the top of its body being used as bait. The state legal size limit for mutton snapper is 18 inches. The subject had previously been charged by FWC for undersized fish. The subject was given a notice to appear citation for possession of undersized mutton snapper and a warning for littering. When the officer was finished with the subject, the subject violated the slow speed zone directly in front of the officer and was pulled over again, educated, and given a warning for violating the slow speed zone.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Alford was unable to contact an individual licensed to possess venomous snakes on several occasions. After weeks of not being able to make contact, he located the subject at a different address than where he was licensed. The subject was in possession of 29 venomous snakes at an unlicensed location and admitted to avoiding Investigator Alford intentionally. Two misdemeanor citations and two warnings were issued for the violations. The venomous snakes were placed at a licensed facility. Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby assisted with this incident.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Lantana when a subject was fishing at a bridge. The officer approached to conduct a resource inspection and saw a black line with a bucket hanging into the water from the bridge railing. The officer pulled the bucket onto the bridge and saw 4 undersized mangrove snapper and a whole live stone crab. Officer Brodbeck instructed the subject to not touch any fish and dumped the fish and crab onto the ground to be measured. The subject immediately picked up one snapper and threw it back into the water. The officer placed the subject in handcuffs for the remainder of the inspection. The subject received three misdemeanor resource citations for possession of undersized mangrove snapper, possession of whole live stone crab, and

failure to allow inspection by an FWC Officer. The remaining fish were photographed for evidence and returned alive to the water.

Officers Pecko, Defeo, and Godward were dispatched to a vessel that had supposedly struck a bridge several times. The description was of a white center console vessel that was flying two flags. Officer Pecko located the vessel behind the Jupiter Office and initiated a vessel stop. Due to initial signs of impairment, Officer Pecko conducted Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks on the operator. The operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence

Officer Sellers was on patrol when she saw a vehicle parked suspiciously near a stormwater treatment area. She saw an individual in a kayak with fishing equipment inside a posted and fenced portion of the protected area. She contacted the individual and issued him a criminal notice to appear (citation) for illegal entry into a closed area. The individual had previously been warned for being in the same area a few months earlier by a different officer.

While on patrol in the Jupiter Inlet, Officer Norbrothen saw an operator of a vessel selling live bait to multiple other vessels. The officer conducted a commercial fisheries inspection and found that neither the captain nor the vessel was properly licensed to sell saltwater products. The captain was written several licensing violations including commercial retail licensing, commercial wholesale licensing, saltwater products licenses, and vessel registration.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Howell responded to a complaint regarding the illegal possession of a raccoon. He found an individual in possession of a raccoon without the required license. Three warnings were issued for the illegal possession and related violations. The raccoon was placed at a licensed facility.

While patrolling South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) property, Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby located one individual trespassing on the property. The subject was fishing and in possession of nine bass, four over the legal bag limit. One misdemeanor citation and one warning were issued for the violations. The four fish over the limit were returned to the water.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

BROWARD COUNTY

Lieutenant Laubenberger, Investigator Teems and Officer Matthews attended the annual Davie Police Department Memorial. They were part of the Broward Police Multi-Agency Honor Guard Rifle Party who shot a three-round volley during the memorial service.

Lieutenant Laubenberger and Officer Matthews attended the annual Broward Victims' Rights Awards Luncheon. They were part of the Broward Police Multi-Agency Honor Guard Colors team who presented colors at the beginning of the ceremony.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Due to the heightened maritime activity, FWC coordinated a targeted enforcement action to ensure compliance with boating safety laws – focusing on addressing impaired vessel operators. The mission was preventing or minimizing boating accidents around Haulover Sandbar. There were seven arrests for boating under the influence, numerous infractions issued and rescues. Officers from Collier County, Monroe County, and Broward County joined the detail on water patrol.

Officer Cartaya conducted fishery inspections on the Rickenbacker fishing pier. He stopped an individual with ten mangrove snapper in his possession. He was five over his bag limit. The subject also had one undersized yellowtail. He was issued appropriate citations for the misdemeanor violations.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Thompson and Larios were on patrol in Whale Harbor Channel. They saw multiple rental vessels that were tied together and pulling their anchors. While they were doing so, they began to collide with each other and channel markers. The officers stopped a vessel and Officer Thompson noticed multiple signs of impairment. Officer Thompson conducted SFSTs on the subject and determined that his normal faculties were impaired. He was placed under arrest for BUI and transported to jail.

Officer Larios saw a vessel that was operating carelessly and conducted a vessel stop. Officer Larios noticed signs of impairment and asked the operator to board their vessel to conduct SFSTs. He was placed under arrest for BUI and transported to the Monroe County Jail.

Officers Larios and Thompson saw a vessel drift into a channel marker and instructed the operator to drop the anchor and stay in place. Officer Larios conducted a safety inspection on the vessel and saw multiple signs of impairment. He asked the operator if he would submit to SFSTs and the operator agreed. Officer Larios determined that the operator's normal faculties were impaired and placed him under arrest for BUI. He was transported to jail.

Officer Hettel was on water patrol near Key West when he saw two male subjects in a dingy with no registration numbers pulling up to a houseboat. Upon checking all

required paperwork for both vessels, Officer Hettel determined that neither vessel was properly registered or had the titles transferred in the required time frame. Officer Hettel issued the appropriate citations.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Parker stopped a vessel returning to a local boat ramp to conduct a resource inspection and found that the individual had an undersized snook. The individual was cited accordingly.

While conducting land patrol in the Picayune Strand State Forest, Lieutenant Mahoney conducted a traffic stop to address a day use fee placard not being visible. During the conversation with the driver, Lieutenant Mahoney discovered a bucket containing non-native freshwater fish. A further inspection of the fish revealed two largemouth bass in the bottom of the bucket. During an interview of the driver he admitted to not paying the day use fee, having an expired freshwater fishing license and harvesting the largemouth bass with the use of a cast net. He was cited accordingly for all violations.

While on water patrol in Marco Island near the SS Jolly Bridge, Officers Yurewitch and McVaney received a call of two individuals keeping undersized mangrove snapper. The officers located and observed the individuals who were fishing and keeping the fish. One individual matching the description provided by the reporting party was observed throwing fish into the rock area of the sea wall. The officers spoke with the fishermen who claimed the only fish caught were the fish in their bucket. After being given consent to check the bucket, the officers found several undersize mangrove snapper. The rock area revealed several more undersize mangrove snapper. Witnesses told the officers that the fish in the rock area of the seawall belonged to the same individual the officers observed throwing the fish. The individuals were over the daily bag limit of mangrove snapper and in possession of 14 undersize snapper. Both individuals confirmed they had caught and kept undersize fish. Neither of them had a valid saltwater fishing license. Both violators were cited for possession of undersize mangrove snapper, fishing license violations, and over the recreational daily bag limit of mangrove snapper.

Officer Rubenstein responded to a complaint regarding a bear in a garbage can in the Logan Woods area of Naples. The homeowner showed the officer where the bear had removed garbage from the unsecured garbage can. The officer also observed areas where the homeowner was leaving food for wild rabbits. Officer Rubenstein educated the homeowner regarding the impact of leaving food (attractants) out and securing their garbage cans to prevent attracting bears. A letter of non-compliance was issued to the homeowner.

While working a detail at Delnor Wiggins Pass State Park, Officer Kleis observed a vehicle fail to stop at a stop sign and was exceeding the speed limit. The officer conducted a traffic stop and the operator stated that he did not have his driver's license with him. The operator had a suspended license out of another state and produced a

Florida identification card. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the license violation. He was also issued citations and warnings for state park rules violations.

Officers Yurewitch, Kleis, Araujo, and Curbelo along with Lieutenant Sushil and members of the Collier County Sheriff's Office participated in a detail in Delnor Wiggins Pass State Park. Patrolling on both land and water, the officers provided proactive law enforcement to ensure the safety of the park goers during a busy weekend. The officers educated the public on the dangers of the rip currents in the area. In total the officers encountered over 200 individuals, issued 20 citations, 29 warnings, and inspected 15 vessels. The officers also issued a criminal citation. During the detail there were no reported incidences of theft or accidents.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Yurewitch spoke at an outreach event at the Marco Island Fishing Club. He spoke to the members about “what we do” at FWC. Officer Yurewitch educated the members regarding law enforcement core missions, protecting Florida’s natural resources as well as proving a safe atmosphere for residents and visitors to enjoy. He also answered questions relating to resource regulations, boating safety, and environmental crimes. Officer Yurewitch received positive response from the club members and was asked to attend another meeting.

The offshore patrol vessel (OPV) CT Randall participated in a multi-agency maritime HAZMAT training exercise just off Marco Island. This exercise was comprised of FWC, Collier Sheriff's Office, Collier County Fire Department, Collier Hazmat Team, Lee County Hazmat Team, United States Coast Guard and the City of Marco Island Police. The exercise allows officers to work collaboratively on planning for potential emergency situations and communications procedures to ensure emergency responders are prepared should an incident occur.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Yurewitch, Kleis, Araujo and Lieutenant Sushil responded to Delnor Wiggins Pass State Park to search for a missing 5-year-old boy. The officers secured the park area by closing the entrance to the park. The officers utilized an agency utility terrain vehicle to assist with searching for the child. Greater Naples Fire Rescue and Collier County Sheriff's Office assisted in the search. Officers found the missing child unharmed and reunited him with the parents.