

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

January 24, 2020 through February 6, 2020

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 Forehand responded to a landowner complaint regarding a shot he heard on his property. The complainant confronted the subject while he was dragging an eight-point buck toward his truck. The complainant was able to get the truck tag number and Officer Forehand identified the suspect. He reviewed the case with the assistant state attorney and the appropriate citations were issued.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Clark received information of deer being shot in a residential golf course community. The complainant found two separate deer shot in her driveway four days apart. Officer Specialist Clark and Officer Long went to the residence and talked to the homeowner. As they looked around the property, they noticed a fresh blood trail from the complainant's residence extending across the road to one of the neighbor's back yard. There they found a hole with fresh corn and a salt block commonly used to attract deer. There was also evidence of fresh blood trails in the property owner's driveway. Officers Clark and Long contacted the owner who admitted to shooting the deer and possibly another one that ran off. The subject had deer meat in a cooler outside his front door and a fresh head of a six-point buck buried by his sidewalk. The subject was cited accordingly.

GULF COUNTY

Senior Officer Specialist McMillion conducted an inspection on a vessel that came off the Apalachicola River after dark. A 5-gallon water cooler was found underneath the bow of his vessel with a freshly quartered out deer and back straps. The subject was cited accordingly.

HOLMES COUNTY

Officers Yates, Parrish, Gore, Land and Cushing responded to assist the Holmes County Sheriff Office (HCSO) and the Holmes and Walton Correctional K-9 Teams track two subjects who fled from the HCSO investigators. The male and female fled into the Ponce de Leon Springs State Park recreation area. The tracking lasted several hours and led into Walton County to a residence where Officer Parrish and a Holmes County deputy apprehended the two subjects.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Hollinhead and Officers Rockwell and Letcher received information that a subject had killed an antlerless deer. The officers met the subject at his residence and determined the subject had recently started deer hunting. He showed the officer's a cleaned antlerless deer in a cooler. An inspection of the area he hunted and further questioning determined he lost sight of a legal buck and shot the doe by accident. The subject had attempted to report the antlerless deer harvest. The subject was issued a warning.

Investigator Pifer was on patrol near a local bridge when he observed an individual carrying an oversized redfish towards the parking area at the base of the bridge. The individual placed the redfish in the bed of a truck with a bed cover, shut the tailgate, and began walking back towards the bridge. An inspection revealed the fish was approximately 33" long. The appropriate citation was issued, and the fish was returned to the water alive.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rockwell and Officer Brown spoke to the Outdoor Education Class at Baker High School. Officer Specialist Rockwell brought his patrol vessel and the officers explained the importance of each piece of equipment and safety gear. The officers also discussed hunting safety, the new deer regulations and answered numerous questions from 43 students.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Shearer conducted unmarked surveillance on an area where duck hunters were possibly trespassing. A small camo boat was pulled into the marsh grass and he watched and listened as two men hunted ducks on the private property. An inspection revealed they did not have permission to be on the property. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Troiano and Reith were on patrol when they received information regarding individuals trespassing and fishing on a mining location. The officers arrived at the location and found the two individuals. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Stanley was on patrol when he received information regarding a recent dumping violation involving several old televisions and other appliances. Officer Stanley was able to locate the subject responsible and appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Stanley was on patrol when he heard multiple shots by a nearby pond. He responded to the location and found five individuals duck hunting. A license check revealed several violations including missing federal migratory bird hunting permits. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Reith was on patrol at Newnans Lake Boat Ramp when he observed two individuals loading their boat on the trailer. A fisheries inspection revealed the individuals were 20 fish over the legal limit of speckled perch. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Stanley and Troiano received information about several individuals harvesting over the legal limit of ducks. The officers located four individuals who admitted to taking over the daily bag limit of wood ducks. Several of the individuals were also missing their federal duck stamp and other required licenses. Appropriate citations were issued.

DIXIE COUNTY

Officer Sheffield was working night hunting adjacent to the Suwannee River when he observed the occupants of two vessels shining lights into the water. It appeared they were gigging fish. Officer Sheffield located the boat ramp where the vessels had been launched and waited for them to return. An inspection of the returning vessels revealed a hidden snook and bass that had been illegally gigged. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Butler received information of illegal night hunting that had taken place and located the vehicle in question. Fresh blood and hair from a recently killed deer was in

the vehicle. The subject admitted to killing the deer at night in a field and K-9 Officer Wiggins, along with K-9 Chase, located the dumped deer carcass. The subject will be charged accordingly.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officers McDonald and Boone conducted an inspection on several hunters actively shooting waterfowl at a pond. One subject was found to be shooting migratory waterfowl with an unplugged shotgun and had been cited the previous day for the same violation. The man was cited accordingly.

CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Browning was on state park patrol in the Crystal River Buffer Preserve State Park when he observed fresh vehicle tracks in area closed to vehicles. Following the tracks, the officer located a vehicle stuck in the mud. As he approached, Officer Browning observed an open rifle case and determined one of the men had been hunting in the park. Appropriate citations were issued.

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Bell and Robson were on night patrol in the area of Shell Mound when they noticed a commercial oyster harvester pulling his vessel out of the water with multiple bags of oysters on board. The officers stopped the harvesters to conduct a resource inspection which revealed 35% of the oysters were undersize. The harvester was cited appropriately, and the oysters were returned to the water.

Officer Willis and Lieutenant Johnston were patrolling near the Highway 40 boat ramp in Yankeetown when they noticed a subject trespassing and fishing on private property. Officer Willis noticed a spotted seatrout on a stringer in the water which measured under the legal-size limit. The subject was cited and warned appropriately.

Officers Hilliard and Willis were on water patrol in the area of Cedar Key when they conducted a resource inspection on a vessel with two people on board. The inspection revealed that they were in possession of five bonnet head sharks which is over the vessel possession limit of two. The appropriate citation was issued.

OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL SENTINEL

Officers Geib, Read and Lieutenant Givens, were conducting federal fishery patrol offshore of Jacksonville when they observed a vessel with three people on board at anchor near Montgomery Reef. Officer Geib boarded the vessel to perform a fisheries inspection and found 10 red snapper and three undersize black seabass. A federal citation was issued for the violations and will be submitted to NOAA for prosecution.

Officers Read, Gilmore, Mandrick and Lieutenant Givens located a fishing vessel with two people on board, anchored in the North Florida Marine Protected Area (NFL MPA), actively bottom fishing with lines in the water. The NFL MPA is located approximately 60 miles east of the St. Johns River entrance, and the fishing for or possession of snapper grouper species inside the MPA is prohibited. Officers Read, Gilmore and Mandrick boarded the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. In addition to illegally fishing for reef fish inside the MPA, the two fisherman were also in violation of several federal fishing regulations. The appropriate citations were issued.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Stanley, Troiano, Reith and Lieutenant Justus participated in the Newberry High School Criminal Justice Recruiting Expo. The officers and members of other agencies spoke to over 200 students regarding their career path in the law enforcement field.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice was on patrol when he observed two vehicles parked near Silver Springs State Park. He recently received information about illegal hog hunting on park property. Both vehicles contained empty dog kennels in the truck beds. Officer Rice contacted Officer Specialist Dias to assist. They heard a single gunshot originate from within the state park and observed five subjects exit the park by crossing over the boundary fence. As the subjects cleared the wood line, the officers could see they were dressed in camouflage clothing, possessed several hunting dogs wearing GPS tracking collars, and one subject had a revolver handgun. The subjects admitted to having been inside the state park looking for hogs. They were charged appropriately.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officers Fletcher and Vanas observed two men throwing cast nets in a freshwater pond. As they approached, one man threw several fish in the water from a bucket. The officers located several dead gamefish floating in front of the men. The appropriate citations were issued.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Edson was checking shoreline fishermen at the Dunlawton Bridge in Port Orange when he encountered a man in possession of undersize sheepshead. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Thornton was on water patrol on the St. Johns River when he conducted a vessel safety inspection. The operator of the vessel exhibited signs of impairment and was arrested DUI and transported to the Volusia County Jail.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Platt inspected three waterfowl hunters returning from hunting Fellsmere Area 1 on a day closed to hunting. The individuals were cited accordingly.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Hallsten was patrolling the area of the Indian River at the Florida Power and Light power plant in Port St. John when he observed two fishermen in the no entry zone. He addressed the no entry violation and found the fisherman to have no fishing license and expired registration of the vessel. Appropriate citations were issued.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigators McDaniel and Saunders provided hands-on training to twelve staff members at the Nature Conservancy Center in Osceola County on how to safely handle and relocate venomous and non-venomous reptiles. Staff of the center are often called to relocate reptiles within their park when they are observed in public areas.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on patrol near the Tampa Bypass Canal, Officer Specialist Caldwell observed an individual fishing with a cast net. Once the individual was done fishing, a resource inspection was conducted. The individual had nine large-mouth bass and one red-eared sunfish. The individual was cited for possession of over the bag limit for large-mouth bass for possession of freshwater gamefish while in simultaneous possession of gear prohibited for taking freshwater gamefish (the cast net).

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

While on water patrol near the Boca Grande fishing pier, Officer Morrison observed two subjects fishing on a nearby island. Officer Morrison approached the subjects to conduct a resource inspection and found them in possession of one redfish each during a time when possession of redfish was prohibited. Both anglers were issued a Notice to Appear.

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Scinta was on patrol when he located two subjects fishing and keeping several undersized fish. The subjects had twenty over the bag limit of redfish, nine undersized redfish, one over the bag limit black drum, one undersized black drum and one undersized sheepshead. Both subjects were issued appropriate citations.

While on patrol, Officer Moschiano conducted a safety and resource inspection on a vessel. The operator of the vessel showed signs of impairment. After the subject performed poorly during Field Sobriety Exercises, he was placed under arrest and charged accordingly.

Officer Holcomb was on patrol when he noticed a vehicle parked on SWFMD property after hours. Upon contacting the operator of the vehicle, Officer Holcomb smelled a strong odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle. Officer Holcomb discovered a half-pound of a green leafy substance in a backpack that field-tested positive for cannabis. The two subjects were arrested and charged accordingly.

MANATEE COUNTY

While checking people fishing from the South Skyway Fishing Pier, Officer Klobuchar found a man in possession of an out of season and undersized gag grouper. He was issued the appropriate citation.

Officer Miller conducted a fisheries inspection on two subjects fishing at New Pass. During the inspection, Officer Miller observed several fish fillets near the subjects' belongings. The fillets were from a snook harvested during the closed season. Appropriate citations were issued.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Rothchild was on land patrol in the Fillman's Bayou area conducting resource inspections. He observed a group of anglers that had finished fishing for the day. A check of their catch revealed numerous undersized mangrove snapper, black drum and sheepshead. In addition to the undersized fish, Officer Rothchild determined several of the individuals did not have valid fishing licenses. Appropriate citations were issued, and the fish were seized as evidence.

Officer Swindell and Officer Tsongranis received information about a deer that was harvested after the closure of DMU C1 in the Trinity area. They spoke with the complainant and another witness and were able to identify a suspect from a neighboring landowner. The individual admitted to harvesting the deer out of season. Charges are pending.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau observed two individuals fishing from the shoreline. An inspection found the individuals in possession of an undersized black seabass and a fifteen-inch redfish. The appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

While on land patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau observed a vessel return to a nearby boat ramp. A fisheries inspection found three undersized and out of season triggerfish. The appropriate citation and warning was issued.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

LEE COUNTY

FWC officers teamed-up with FWC biologists and Lee County Sheriff's Deputies to search for a dolphin which had been reported as being entangled in line for several weeks. With the assistance of a Good Samaritan and a Lee County Sheriff's helicopter, the team was able to locate the injured dolphin and assess its injuries. The biologists determined the injuries were not life threatening and it was allowed to stay in the wild.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

MARTIN COUNTY:

Officer Brevik was conducting water patrol in the area of Timer Powers Park when he observed a vessel without a state registration displayed. Officer Brevik conducted a stop and found the subject to be fishing without a license, operating an unregistered vessel, failing to have his trailer registered and having improper lighting on his trailer. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Kirkland received a complaint in reference to multiple RVs camping in Hungryland Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA). When she arrived, she found two separate parties camping in recreation vehicles in primitive camping areas. She issued warnings to each group and educated another driving into the area pulling a camper.

Officer Hudson observed a commercial vessel coming in from fishing with cast nets lying all over the vessel. A resource inspection found the commercial fisherman to be in

possession of approximately 70 pounds of Spanish mackerel not on ice. The officer began to measure the cast nets on board and found two nets to be over the 14-foot maximum size limit. The subject also had three commercial boating safety violations. The subject was cited accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Partelow and Langley were on land patrol when they were dispatched to a boating accident in Delray Beach. Upon arriving on-scene, they learned that the boating accident occurred the day before and was caused by boat wake from another vessel. The officers contacted a bridge tender in the area who provided a name of the vessel. The officers tracked down the owner of the vessel and a report was made.

Officers Defeo, Mann, and Trawinski conducted water patrol in the Jupiter area and inspected several charter fishing vessels. Violations included an expired charter fishing license and vessel registration violations. The appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

Officer Brodbeck investigated a commercial fisherman selling fish without the appropriate licenses. The investigation revealed nearly 400 pounds of fish were sold illegally to locations that were not licensed as saltwater wholesale dealers. The fisherman was cited accordingly.

Officers Luna and Brodbeck were on vessel patrol at night near Boynton Inlet when a vessel passed by at a high rate of speed on the wrong side and outside of the marked channel. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a boating safety inspection and the operator displayed numerous signs of impairment. At the completion of seated field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence and transported to the Palm Beach County Jail.

Lieutenant Hankinson and Officer Hudson responded to a boating accident on the Intracoastal Waterway in Jupiter. One of the operators exhibited signs of impairment and standardized field sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence and transported to the Palm Beach County Jail. The operator was also cited for numerous navigation law and boating safety violations.

While on patrol in the Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer Norbrothen contacted a subject camping in violation of the management area rules. During his investigation, the officer found the subject had a suspended driver license, an expired tag on his vehicle and six active felony warrants out of Palm Beach County. The officer conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle as it drove away from the camp and the subject was arrested.

Officers Norbrothen, Webb, and Stone placed notices on abandoned property and litter left behind at the camps in Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) after the close of general gun season. The notices to the owners stated that the property needed to be

removed from the WMA or face possible criminal prosecution. The tagged property and litter, totaling approximately 4,000 pounds, was removed from the WMA without further law enforcement action.

Officer Webb stopped a vehicle in Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and smelled a strong odor of cannabis emitting from the truck. He spoke to the driver and received consent to search the vehicle. Officer Webb found a handgun in the vehicle and with information from dispatch, it was determined that the subject was a convicted felon. He was arrested without incident.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Payne was on land patrol conducting license and resource inspections at local spillways. As he approached a subject fishing, the man tossed a snook over the edge of the spillway. The snook appeared to be undersized and it was closed season. The subject was identified, and it was determined this was his second violation for the same offense. The subject was taken into custody and booked at the St Lucie County Jail.

While conducting vessel water patrol, Officer Bingham observed a vessel enter a posted manatee slow speed zone at a high rate of speed. A stop was initiated to address the violation and the officer observed the lack of an ignition key and a wire wrapped around the outboard motor kill switch – signs that may indicate the operator may not have permission to be using the vessel. A computer check of the operator revealed an active warrant out of Indian River County. The vessel ownership was determined to be a business in Vero Beach, and they did not know the operator and he did not have permission to be on the boat. The subject was transported and booked into jail for the active warrant. The vessel was returned to the rightful owner who also wanted to press charges in reference to the vessel theft. The subject was charged with grand theft and trespass.

Officer Payne conducted multiple commercial fishing vessel inspections, checking for proper saltwater resource harvesting paperwork/permits as well as individual and vessel licensing. The inspections also provide an opportunity to check for quality control issues, such as proper icing, storage of fish, and cleanliness of surfaces. Several saltwater products license (SPL) violations were observed as well as expired vessel registrations. Violations were addressed with both citations and warnings. One subject was found to have an active warrant for his arrest. He was taken into custody and booked in jail.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Hudson and Trawinski were approached by a subject stating his wife had fallen and broken her foot. The officers found she fell getting out of her car and then got onto the boat but couldn't walk on her foot. The 72-year-old female had a fractured foot and

multiple other injuries. She was safely removed from the vessel and taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Hudson and Rogers assisted FWC manatee biologists with saving a manatee and its calf. The manatee and calf were safely removed from shallow water and taken to be treated accordingly.

Officer Hudson was conducting fisheries inspections when he observed a large alligator acting very aggressive, taking fish off fishermen's hooks, and sitting in the edge of the grass a few feet from where fishermen normally sit on the bank. The officer called a trapper and was able to safely remove the 9-foot alligator from the common fishing area.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Mann responded to call in reference to an osprey that was hit by a car. The injured osprey was transported to Busch Wildlife rehab facility in Jupiter.

While conducting vessel patrol in the Jupiter Inlet, Officer Schroer was informed about a sea turtle in apparent distress, unable to dive for more than 30 seconds at a time. With the assistance of Investigator Sierra and Officer Boyd, they were able to pull the four-foot-long loggerhead sea turtle into their vessel and safely transport it to the Loggerhead Marine Life Center.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Riggs and Ames took part in the Juno Beach Night Out Against Crime. The officers used the outreach event to discuss sea turtle nesting and manatee speed zones in the area, as well as distributing information about living close to Florida's wildlife. Approximately 100 individuals were in attendance.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Davis participated in the local Touch-A-Truck event where he had an airboat on display representing one of the many duties of an FWC officer. The free event provided kids of all ages with the opportunity to get a hands-on experience with real vehicles from many types of trades. Some of the trades at the event included local and state law enforcement, local fire department, forestry and air medical evacuation. Approximately

200 children stopped by to ask Officer Davis questions about his job duties and to get pictures taken on the airboat.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Miano attended an outreach event held at George Le Strange Preserve in coordination with the Saint Lucie County Environmental Resource Department. The event is a community outreach and educational family event and is part of the Prescribed Fire Awareness Week. Many activities were available for children to enjoy, along with a nature hike along the lake. Fire awareness was the focus, with a small controlled burn occurring on a small plot of land. Firefighting equipment was showcased along with methods to combat the flames. The event was well-attended by the community.

Officer Arnold addressed approximately 15 youth at a youth hunt. Parents and other adults were also in attendance. He encouraged the young hunters to be active sportsmen, responsible gun owners, and ethical hunters. Officer Arnold discussed common hunting laws, regulations, and violations frequently encountered.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Cartaya was on water patrol near the Crandon Marina in Key Biscayne when he observed a vessel returning with fishing poles in the rod holders. A resource inspection revealed a bone fish located in the starboard stern live well. Bonefish are a restricted species for catch and release only. The appropriate citation was issued.

COLLIER COUNTY

FWC officers assisted the Collier County Sheriff's Office and the National Park Service in a search and rescue of a missing person in Everglades National Park. The kayaker was multiple days overdue, and some of his belongings were found floating in a remote part of the park. A helicopter pilot spotted what appeared to be a man in a life jacket and relayed the information to the units on vessels. Officers Kleis, Curbelo, and Georgevich were among the first to reach the subject. The subject displayed signs of severe dehydration and was extremely hypothermic. The subject was transported to land and turned over to paramedics for further treatment and transport to the hospital.

Officer Knutson was recognized by the Naples Chapter of the Florida Coastal Conservation Association as their regional Officer of the Year. Officer Knutson received the award in recognition of his outstanding efforts working to protect Florida's valuable natural resources.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers Almagro, Sample, Hedgepeth and Perez conducted federal fishery inspections from the OPV Fearless. They performed a resource check on a vessel which revealed an undersized sailfish. The appropriate citations were issued.

MONROE COUNTY

Operation Liveaboard was conducted in the Upper Keys, targeting liveaboard vessels for compliance with state and federal regulations. This Interagency Task Force is comprised of USCG, MCSO, and FWC assets. The mission is to check liveaboard vessels for USCG safety equipment, registration requirements, nighttime anchor lighting requirements, and marine sanitation device compliance within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's No Discharge Zone. Areas with the highest density of liveaboard vessels in the Upper Keys were targeted.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube was the guest host on a local Keys radio show on A1A FM station. He talked about recent high-profile resource arrests and convictions involving out of state poachers from Alabama and Georgia during the lobster mini-season. Officer Dube also discussed recent law changes associated with fishing regulations.