

# **FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS**

**WEEKLY REPORT  
October 2 - 8, 2009**

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

## **NORTHWEST REGION**

### **GADSDEN COUNTY**

Officer Ben Johnson received information from Officer Alton Ranew in reference to an individual taking gopher tortoises. Officer Johnson located the suspect's residence and he and Lieutenant Harry Parker interviewed the individual. The officers seized six live gopher tortoises located behind the subject's home and two dressed tortoises in the freezer inside the home. The subject was cited for illegal possession of gopher tortoises and driving on a suspended license.

Officer Shon Brower cited two Liberty County men for taking a wild hog during the closed season. The men admitted to taking the hog from the Apalachicola National Forest.

### **FRANKLIN COUNTY**

Officer John Allen was conducting license and fisheries inspections in the Bald Point State Park. During one inspection Officer Allen found an angler in possession of undersize mangrove snapper and red drum, as well as over the bag limit on red drum. The angler was issued a misdemeanor citation for the undersize red drum, written warnings for the undersize mangrove snapper (released alive) and the bag limit violation on the red drum.

On the night of September 28, Officer Chasen Yarborough and Lieutenant Charlie Wood conducted a search-and-rescue mission in Apalachicola Bay in the area of Porter's oyster bar. A fifteen foot commercial oyster vessel occupied by two individuals had been reported overdue. Utilizing night vision equipment, the officers began a search grid just west of Porter's oyster bar. With no vessels in sight, Pilot Frank Utermohlen was summoned to assist in the search from the air, along with another commercial oyster vessel. Just before 1:00 a.m. Officer Yarborough and Lieutenant Wood spotted a signal fire on board the overdue vessel. After arriving at the overdue vessel and ascertaining that the motor would not start and that no one was in need of medical attention, the disabled vessel was towed into Eastpoint.

On the night of September 30 Officers Travis Huckeba, John Allen, and Jason Carroll were on water patrol in the area of Lanark Reef. Utilizing night vision equipment, the officers located a gill net boat fishing the area. While attempting to stop the vessel one of the crewmen pushed the illegal gill net overboard. After stopping the vessel, and retrieving the illegal net from the water, the two fishermen admitted to the officers that the net was theirs. The two fishermen were each charged with possession of a gill or entangling net, possession of a net with mesh size larger than two Inch stretch, possession of a gill or entangling net on a vessel under twenty-five feet in length with the motor in the forward half of the vessel, and carriage of a gill or entangling net across state waters. Felony charges are also pending the outcome of the measurement of the net's square footage.

## LEON COUNTY

Officers Matt Bell and Jeff Babauta located a dove field in southern Leon County that was baited prior to opening of dove season. Surveillance was set up on the field over opening weekend, but no one showed up. The following Monday, four individuals showed up and started hunting and shooting dove. The officers cited the subjects for attempting to take migratory birds over bait. One individual was cited the prior year for the same violation.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY

U.S. Fish and Wildlife K-9 Officer Eddie Brannon was assisting Lieutenant Harvey in Aucilla Wildlife Management Area checking archery hunters. Officers stopped two trucks exiting the management area near the sinks area. While Lieutenant Harvey was inspecting licenses, Officer Brannon walked his narcotics detecting K-9 partner around the trucks. The dog alerted for the presence of narcotics and a subsequent search revealed the hunters in possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and drug paraphernalia. The subjects were cited for the violations.

Lieutenant Kent Harvey received information of individuals hunting deer over bait in Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Upon arrival, the subjects had left but Lieutenant Harvey found several subjects fishing on one of the entry roads in the management area. While conducting fishing license inspections on four subjects, Lieutenant Harvey noticed an odor of cannabis coming from the truck of one of the individuals fishing. Further investigation revealed two of the subjects in possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and none of the subjects in possession of a valid fishing license. Subjects were cited for the fishing license violations and possession of cannabis.

## ESCAMBIA COUNTY

FWC officers assigned to Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties responded to a request for assistance from the Escambia County Sheriff's Office to the area around the Gulf Power Plant on the Escambia River. A murder suspect fled from his worksite at the power plant when Escambia deputies attempted to serve an arrest warrant. The power plant is adjacent to the University of West Florida campus causing the school to lock-down. K-9 officers responded to search the river swamp around the power plant and university. FWC officers assisted with setting and monitoring a perimeter on the Escambia River. After several hours and negative results with K-9 searches, the search was halted. The suspect, Bruce Day, remains at large.

## ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Captain Mary Sumner, Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead, and Officer Howard Jones attended the quarterly bear issues committee meeting. During the meeting with Northwest Regional biologists, wildlife technicians, and public information specialists, updates on

on-going public outreach, bear aversion training for FWC personnel and local law enforcement, and recent nuisance bear issues were discussed.

Officer Andy Maltais participated in a public safety day at Woodham Middle School in Pensacola. Officer Maltais set up a display and spoke to several children and parents about the role of an FWC officer.

Officers Steve Hoomes and Kenneth Manning spoke to a group of approximately 25 hunters before a dove hunt in the Walnut Hill area. The officers discussed hunter safety and the various rules concerning dove hunting.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers assigned to Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties worked the opening day of dove season. Numerous hunters were checked and several were pleased with the large number of birds in the area. There were a few violations noted. One subject was found hunting with an unplugged shotgun and received a citation for the violation. Another man was charged with hunting over a field baited with corn.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Matt Webb stopped a vessel in Destin Pass to conduct a fishery inspection. The inspection revealed undersize trigger fish. The captain of the vessel was cited for the fish violation.

FWC officers assigned to Okaloosa and Walton Counties worked a detail the opening day of the first phase of dove season. The detail was organized to maintain compliance with migratory bird rules and regulations. During the detail, 93 hunters were checked and several warnings issued for minor violations.

Officer Alan Kirchinger and Captain Mary Sumner were working a detail on opening day of dove season when they heard an all terrain vehicle (ATV) operating within Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. The officers tracked down the ATV and located the operator now stuck almost waist deep in a clay pit. The subject was issued a citation for unlawfully operating an ATV within the management area.

## OKALOOSA COUNTY COPS

Captain Mary Sumner and Lieutenant Mark Hollinhead attended the quarterly Air Force Security Services meeting concerning Eglin Wildlife Management Area. Increased development on Eglin Air Force Base with base realignment bringing the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces group and the F35 Wing to Eglin was discussed.

## WALTON COUNTY

Officers Don Walker and Espy Letcher were patrolling private hunting leases when they encountered two subjects trespassing. The officers recently increased patrols on the property due to receiving numerous trespass complaints. The officers issued written warnings to both subjects and instructed them to exit the property.

## BAY COUNTY

Officers worked a detail targeting the opening day of dove season. Officers Joe Chambers and David Brady heard shooting coming from an area and later found around 30 hunters in a grass field that was baited with cracked corn. Lieutenant Jay Chesser, Officer Mark Clements, and Reserve Officer Joey Miles responded to assist. Fifteen citations were issued for hunting dove over bait and several written warnings were issued to juveniles for the same offense. As the officers were wrapping up, several shots were heard about a mile away and Officers Clements and Miles responded and located two hunters on a clear-cut hunting over cracked corn. Each was issued a citation for the violation.

Officers Joe Chambers and David Brady checked two hunters who were shooting doves over a dirt road scattered with bait. Citations for hunting dove over bait were issued.

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION

### ALACHUA COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Bonds were working a night detail on the Alachua and Union County line when they observed a vehicle travel past them with sparks flying out from underneath the vehicle. Officer Johnston followed the vehicle and noticed he was driving on two flat tires, both on the passenger side. Officer Johnston activated his emergency lights and siren making an attempt to stop the vehicle to render assistance. After following the vehicle for several miles, the driver finally pulled into a residence. The driver exited the vehicle and came up with several excuses as to why it took so long to pull over. Both officers noticed signs of impairment and a strong odor of alcohol. The driver failed all field sobriety tasks and was transported to the Union County Jail where he refused a breath test. He was charged with refusal to submit to a breath test, driving under the influence and refusal to sign a citation.

Officer Dustin Bonds stopped an airboat operating in the Cross Creek canal and asked the driver pull over to the shoreline. The operator started the airboat and turned in the opposite direction severely spraying Officer Bonds with water and driving in a reckless manner. Through a check of the vessel's registration numbers, Officer Bonds identified the operator who resided in Marion County. Later, with the help of the Alachua County State Attorney's office, Officers Bonds and Brad Stanley obtained a warrant for aggravated battery, resisting arrest and reckless operation. That night the individual's

father talked to Officer Bonds and advised him that he would have his son at the jail the next day to turn himself in.

Officer Brad Stanley found a dove field with several individuals shooting and noticed one hunter shooting extremely well. Officer Stanley checked the hunter as he left the field, finding him in possession of twenty- five dove. A citation was issued for over the daily bag limit of dove.

## COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Todd Hoyle, Darrin Whitaker, and Investigator Mike Pridgen were monitoring a baited dove field that had been “sweetened up” with millet and cracked corn. At approximately 2:30 p.m., shots were fired from the baited field. The officers witnessed a single shooter taking doves. Upon contact, the subject’s shotgun was unplugged and he had thirteen doves. He was charged with taking doves over a baited field and given a written warning for the unplugged gun. The birds were seized and donated to a local food service kitchen.

Officer Harold Barry received information that an individual had illegally taken a black bear. He arrived at the subject’s residence and collected physical evidence found in plain view of the subject’s truck. The suspect confessed to the crime and indicated an addition member who participated in the crime. Both men were cited for the illegal taking of a black bear. Bear hair, bones, and meat were seized as evidence.

## DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Jamey Stowell was on patrol in the Julington Creek area of Old Bull where he observed a commercial fisherman meandering around some crab traps that did not belong to him. Officer Stowell approached the vessel and conducted an inspection. During the inspection the fisherman stated that the other traps he was around belong to his brother, but he hadn’t pulled any of the traps out of the water. Also during the inspection, Officer Stowell discovered that there were no tags on the fisherman’s traps and that his salt water products license was expired. Citations were issued.

Officer Adam Small was on patrol in Pumpkin Hill Creek where he discovered a vessel with two people actively fishing from on board the vessel. As he approached the vessel, one of the occupants moved very quickly to the bow of the boat and sat on a cooler. Officer Small asked the fishermen if they had caught any fish. One fisherman stated that they had caught just one fish and proceeded to remove a spotted sea trout from a bucket. Officer Small asked again if there were any other fish on board, and specifically asked about the cooler. The subject quickly replied, “Oh yeah, the ones from earlier.” The cooler contained two more spotted sea trout that were undersize but still alive. Citations were issued and the fish were returned to the water alive.

Officer Adam Small was patrolling the Inconstination Creek area near Nassau River where he observed an individual walking from the bank of the creek back to a car that

was parked on Highway 17. Officer Small beached his vessel, approached the individual and asked if he had any fish in his cooler. The subject stated that he had a couple of drum and some catfish. After further investigation, Officer Small found the individual to be in possession three undersize black drum, one undersize red drum and one catfish. Citations were issued for the undersize fish.

Officers Jamey Stowell and Adam Small were on patrol offshore of Jacksonville and found a dive boat that was actively fishing. The officers approached the vessel and asked if the fishermen if they had any luck. The occupants stated that they had, so Officer Stowell boarded the vessel. One subject showed Officer Stowell some lobster and at the same time stated that the lobster had been taken by a spear. An inspection of the lobster revealed that they were indeed speared and citations were issued.

Officers Jamey Stowell and Adam Small were patrolling the St. Johns River entrance when they observed three individuals fishing from a vessel near the jetties. The officers approached the vessel and asked if they had caught any fish. One subject stated that all they had was a bunch of croakers. Officer Small inspected a cooler and found a 28.75" red drum underneath a bunch of croakers. The subject stated that he thought the fish was 27". Another person on the boat stated that he thought the fish was about a half inch too big. A citation was issued for the possession of oversize red drum.

#### NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Tom Tucker was on water patrol in Egan's Creek where he observed an individual fishing from a vessel near the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. Officer Tucker approached the vessel and asked the fisherman if he had had any luck. The subject stated that he had "a little luck." The defendant was found to be in possession of two undersize spotted sea trout and two undersize black drum. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Tom Tucker was on patrol on Amelia River in the area of the Dee Dee Bartles boat ramp when he saw a vessel coming in from the jetties and making way toward the ramp. Officer Tucker stopped the vessel and performed a boating safety and fisheries inspection and found three red drum on board the vessel, however there were only two people on board, and one of the red drum was oversize, measuring 43.5 inches. Citations were issued for the violations.

Officer Tom Tucker was patrolling on North 14<sup>th</sup> Street and found a subject fishing underneath the bridge on Egan's Creek. The subject appeared to be trying not to be noticed. Officer Tucker made his way underneath the bridge to where the individual was fishing and performed a fisheries inspection. He found the subject in possession an undersize red drum. A citation was issued for the violation.

Officer Hope McGregor received a complaint of shots being fired in the Nassau Management Area. Upon arrival, she found a man and his wife shooting from just outside the management area on a county road. The subjects had two twelve gauge

shotguns and a .45 ACP pistol in their possession. The man stated that there were target practicing and since there was no place to shoot in Jacksonville, they drove up to Nassau County. None of the weapons were stolen and they were returned to the defendant. Officer McGregor informed the subjects that they could not shoot from a county road or shoot into property that was posted or did not belong to them. Citations were issued for shooting from the right of way.

Lieutenant Tony Wright was traveling south on I-95 into Jacksonville when he observed a large S.U.V. coming up behind him at a high rate of speed. The S.U.V. passed and started to dart in and out of traffic. Lieutenant Wright conducted a vehicle stop and asked the defendant why he was traveling at such a high rate of speed and swerving in and out of traffic. The defendant stated that he was sliding on the road due to the rain. Lieutenant Wright asked the subject if he felt like his vehicle was sliding, then why was he accelerating and using turn signals. The defendant would not comment. A citation was issued for careless driving.

#### TAYLOR COUNTY

While patrolling a management area, Officer Randy McDonald located a ground blind which was baited before the opening weekend of archery season. Later, Officer McDonald observed a hunter enter the ground blind with a bow and arrow. The defendant was issued a notice to appear citation for placing food/ grain in a management area.

Officer Leonard Bailey received a complaint of trespassing and illegal taking of deer. He met with the complainant and discovered where a deer had been shot prior to his arrival and drag marks lead to the adjacent property. Officer Bailey followed the drag marks to a dwelling and saw a cleaning area where a deer was cleaned that day. An investigation revealed a juvenile harvested a doe with a .223 caliber rifle while trespassing. Officer Bailey issued a notice to appear citation for taking deer by an illegal method and a warning for trespassing.

Lieutenant Bruce Cooper and Officer Chad Albritton responded to a complaint of a dumped deer carcass on private land. The landowner felt the big buck was killed on his property the night before by a local poacher. A close inspection of the carcass revealed that the buck was shot with a rifle rather than an arrow which is in violation of the current archery season rules. Officer Albritton and Lieutenant Cooper interviewed suspects known to hunt the area and located one suspect's vehicle with fresh blood and hair in the bed of his truck. A subsequent interview of the suspect culminated in a confession and the name of a second poacher. An interview of the second suspect resulted in a second confession and the seizure of two deer racks, deer meat, a 7 mm rifle, and one marijuana plant taken from one of the suspect's back yard. Charges are being direct filed through the State Attorney's Office.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

### **FLAGLER COUNTY**

Officer Eric Meade received a call from Flagler Beach Police Department that someone on the Flagler Beach Pier was in possession of an oversize redfish. The fisherman caught a redfish above the legal slot limit and was told by other fishermen to throw it back because it was illegal. The subject became abusive to the other fishermen and the police officers responded. The officers advised Meade they measured the fish at 29 inches, but the suspect threw it back after they told him not to. Officer Meade issued the suspect a citation for possession of oversize redfish.

Officer Meade and K-9 Officer Jeff Gier assisted the Flagler County Sheriff's Department with an investigation in which a masked assailant broke into a home and shot at the homeowner. The homeowner was unharmed. The officers assisted in searching the area around the home for evidence pertaining to the crime.

### **LAKE COUNTY**

Officers Ian Sweet and David Straub were working information received about possible gator poaching on Lake Apopka. At approximately 0430 hours, a boat returned to the boat ramp with six individuals on board. One citation was issued for hunting in a closed area and a written warning was given for leaving lines in the water unattended.

Officers Tom Kist and Jared Beard checked three dove fields and more than 38 dove hunters in the Umatilla area resulting in two citations written for un-plugged shotguns.

### **MARION COUNTY**

Officers Kat Kelley, Joe Simpson, Wayne Hargabus, Emily Judd, John Wilke, and Mike Burke assisted investigations with a tragic boating accident on the Rainbow River. A local fisherman fell out of his vessel and did not resurface. The Marion County Sheriff's Office dive team responded and located the man's body the following day.

Officers Simpson, Wilke, Burke, Steve Adam, and Steve McDaniel worked a dove hunting detail on opening day. Lieutenants George Waldeck and Kevin Steinke flew the county looking for dove fields. There were a few fields located and some minor warnings and citations written. Officers Wilke and Burke watched a field and located a subject in possession of 22 doves. The hunter was cited for taking over the daily bag limit.

### **PUTNAM COUNTY**

Officer Troy Starling and Lieutenant Ben Allen received information on a person who killed a deer illegally behind his house. The officers went to the house and spoke with the suspect's girlfriend who said her boyfriend killed a deer a few weeks prior on a

farmer's property under a gun and light permit. She showed the officers the .22 rim fire that was used. The officers asked to look in a shed in the back yard and the woman consented. Behind the house they observed a moonshine still. Inside the shed was a pair of red shouldered hawk wings that were nailed to the wall. They also observed numerous mason jars, empty cracked corn sacks and empty sugar sacks. The officers told the woman they would come back to talk to the suspect when he was home.

The officers interviewed the farmer and he advised he had a permit to kill deer on his property at night. He stated the permit was in the first suspect's truck from the last time he came out and killed deer. The farmer stated the suspect killed seven deer in three different hunting trips and all the deer were killed with a .22 rim fire rifle. The farmer also stated the suspect took a six and an eight point from the property without tagging them.

The officers returned to the suspect's residence and he admitted to killing seven deer with a .22 rifle. He also admitted to making and selling moonshine for \$40 per gallon. He led the officers to a wooded area behind the residence where he had the six and eight point racks. The officers seized the rifle, photographed the deer heads and seized the hawk wings and moonshine still. The suspect told the officers the farmer had been selling the deer meat killed under the permit and had sold one of the deer for \$70 at a local store.

The following day the officers interviewed the farmer again. He admitted to selling one of the deer killed illegally for \$70. He told the officers where the buyer lived. The officers went to the buyer's residence and he corroborated the farmer's story. He also had most of the meat left which was seized.

Officers Starling and Ryan Haney served arrest warrants against both of the suspects. A total of 29 charges were filed, including possession of a moonshine still, selling illegally taken deer, taking deer by an illegal method, possession of a red shouldered hawk and numerous permit violations.

## ST JOHNS COUNTY

On Twelve Mile Wildlife Management Area Officer Rich Wilcox saw a truck parked near an area he knew was baited with corn. He went to the area and found a subject hunting from a tree stand with the area still baited. Officer Wilcox cited the hunter for hunting over corn in a management area.

## SUMTER COUNTY

Officers Sweet and Straub utilized the doe deer replica inside the Richloam Wildlife Management Area. One individual was cited for attempting to take doe deer after shooting the replica in the spine.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer James Yetter received information concerning bait placed within Lake George Wildlife Management Area. He began surveillance of the location before daybreak and witnessed an adult male hunting within twenty yards of the baited area. The individual was arrested on a misdemeanor charge for placing bait in a wildlife management area.

Officers Yetter and Clay McDonough were working individually in the Ponce De Leon Inlet area inspecting vessels fishing from the inlet. Several vessel inspections resulted in four adult males issued misdemeanor notice to appear citations for possessing red drum that exceeded the maximum allowed length.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

Officer Randy Vaughn was contacted by a Charlotte County Sheriff's Office agricultural deputy who had received information regarding shots fired in the Prairie Creek Preserve. When Officer Vaughn arrived, the deputy had detained several subjects in possession of a deer and a rifle. The subjects were cited for taking deer by an unlawful method and an eight-point buck and .22 caliber rifle were seized.

### **DESOTO COUNTY**

Officer Jordan Hilliard was working in West Desoto County for possible night hunting violations when he observed a vehicle traveling slowly with the occupants shining a spotlight in a manner capable of disclosing deer. Officer Hilliard stopped the vehicle and discovered a loaded .243 caliber rifle. The three occupants were issued a notice to appear for attempting to take deer with a gun and light at night and the rifle and spotlight were seized.

After receiving information regarding a boating accident on the Peace River near Lettuce Lake, Officers Jordan Hilliard, Matt Prowant and Clint Thompson responded to the scene. The operator involved in the one-vessel accident was transported to the Desoto Memorial Hospital. According to witnesses there was a possibility that alcohol was a factor. After the operator was treated and released from the hospital, he was transported by Officers Prowant and Thompson to the county jail where a breath test revealed a .111 and .114 BAC five hours after the boating accident. The operator was charged with boating under the influence of an alcoholic beverage.

### **HARDEE COUNTY**

Officer Clint Thompson observed a vehicle traveling slowly and displaying a spotlight in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. Officer Thompson conducted a traffic stop, but was only able to find an empty rifle case inside the vehicle. The occupants initially stated they did not have a gun, but after Officer Thompson suggested using a K-9 to search the area, the occupants admitted to throwing the rifle from the vehicle. Officer

Matt Prowant responded to assist and recovered a loaded 30-06 caliber rifle on the right-of-way. The subjects were issued citations for attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light. The rifle and spotlight were seized.

Officer Darrell Henderson observed a vehicle traveling on Highway 664 with the occupants shining a spotlight in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. Officer Henderson stopped the vehicle and discovered a .270 caliber rifle. The driver and passenger were issued a notice to appear for the gun and light violation.

#### HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Damon Pulaski and Lieutenant Kevin Grover were working a shrimp detail on the first night of the shrimp and stone crab zone closure. While no vessels were found in the closed zones, notice to appear citations were issued to one shrimp vessel found harvesting commercially without a valid saltwater products license. Another vessel was found in possession of undersize gag grouper. In addition, citations for several boating safety and registration violations were issued.

#### HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Erika Zimmerman was on water patrol on Lake Josephine when she observed a subject on an airboat stop near some private land and then enter the property. The subject returned to his airboat minutes later and left the area. Officer Zimmerman stopped the vessel and discovered the subject had placed a deer stand and bait on the property. The land owner was contacted and agreed to prosecute. The subject was issued a notice to appear for trespass.

Officer Erika Zimmerman received information from the Highland County Sheriff's Office regarding a truck with a gopher tortoise in the bed parked at the Florida Hospital in Lake Placid. Officer Zimmerman located the owner of the vehicle and issued the subject a notice to appear for the possession of a gopher tortoise without a permit.

#### LEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Jeff Rebon and Officer Lonnie Sushil attended an FWC permit workshop in Fort Myers. While FWC biologists received public input reference the current and proposed rules, Officer Sushil answered many questions from the attending participants.

#### PASCO COUNTY

Officer Joe Wolff checked several people fishing along the Withlacoochee River. Two subjects did not possess fishing licenses or identification. After one of the individuals was found to have provided Officer Wolff with false information, Officer Wolff ascertained the subject's true identity and determined the individual had felony warrants for theft of electrical services and cultivation of marijuana. Officers Donnie Jones and

Joshua Allison responded to assist and the subject was taken to the Pasco County Jail where he was booked for the active warrants and charged with providing false information. In addition, a citation for failure to have a freshwater fishing license was issued.

## PINELLAS COUNTY

Tampa area officers and investigators responded to a boating accident that occurred on Tampa Bay near Bayboro Harbor. The single vessel accident resulted in one fatality and several injuries. The investigation is ongoing and is being conducted by Investigator Dan Parisoe.

## POLK COUNTY

Detectives from the Polk County Sheriff's Office served a search warrant on a residence in Auburndale. During their search, a gopher tortoise was located inside the residence and FWC was contacted for assistance. Officers Robert Bratton and Stephen Judah arrived to interview the suspect and determined he had caught the tortoise near his home and was keeping it as a pet. The officers seized the tortoise and charged the suspect with possession of a gopher tortoise without a permit. The suspect was subsequently transported to the county jail.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Matt Hopp and Bill Carpenter responded to a Fort Lauderdale waterfront restaurant after receiving a call from a local police department about an impaired vessel operator. Officer Hopp performed field sobriety tasks on the operator. The results, as well as the observations of the police officer, provided sufficient probable cause to arrest the operator for boating under the influence. Further chemical testing documented the operator's breath alcohol level at .12- well over the legal limit.

Officers Weis & Varnadoe were on patrol in Southwest Ranches when they observed a two subjects fishing. The officers conducted an inspection and issued one of the subjects a citation for possessing of over the bag limit of peacock bass.

Officers Carpenter, Hopp, and K-9 Officer Juntunen were on patrol in both the Everglades and Holey Land Wildlife Management Areas when they conducted a camp inspection on a subject. The subject was found to be in possession of a skinned and dismembered deer that had not been checked through the biologist check station. A citation was issued for possession of the untagged deer.

Officers Robert Kuester and Eric Alford observed a subject spear fishing at the Hillsboro Inlet jetty. When the officers inspected the subject's catch, they discovered an undersize, speared snook and cited the subject for the violations.

Officers David Weis and Joshua Varnadoe observed a subject fishing at the C-11 canal in Westin. An inspection of the catch revealed six peacock bass- four over the allowable limit. The subject was cited.

## OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

### COPS

Officers Brandon Lasher, Ray Woolrich and Jason Phillips assisted approximately 125 young participants at the stationary target and clay pigeon firing range as they participated in the annual Juniors Acquiring Knowledge Ethics Sportsmanship (JAKES Day) event, held at the Pine Creek Sporting Club.

Officers Randolph Irwin and Mike Davis and K9 Officer Cris Douglas participated in a Safety Fair, hosted by The Home Depot in Okeechobee. A small patrol vessel and several vehicles were on display.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Amanda Phillips and Travis Basfort stopped a vessel at the Phil Foster boat ramp and conducted field sobriety tasks on the operator. The operator failed the tasks and was arrested and taken to a local jail. Further chemical testing documented the operator's breath alcohol level at .17- more than twice the legal limit.

## ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Kyle Patterson was on patrol in western Fort Pierce when he observed a light being shined from a vehicle into several area canals. Officer Patterson eventually stopped the vehicle and Officer Amy Buck responded to assist. An alligator was discovered freshly butchered on the tail gate of the truck, which was parked next to a house. Meat from the alligator had been placed in a plastic bag and hidden in a cabinet by one of the subjects at the residence. Two subjects were arrested, one for illegally harvesting the alligator and hunting with a gun and light, the other for tampering with evidence.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Doyle Cook and Marc Shea rescued a group of hunters that were lost in Big Cypress National Preserve. The subjects provided officers with GPS coordinates via

their cell phone and the officers located them 1.5 miles northeast of Bear Island access point, dehydrated and in knee-deep water. Officers led the group and several of their dogs to safety. The officers were praised for their efforts in a letter written to FWC Commissioners and Governor Charlie Crist.

Officers Marc Shea and David Barrett issued a federal citation to a commercial fisherman for possession of fish not in whole condition and undersize king mackerel. Because the fish were harvested from federal waters, both FWC and the National Marine Fisheries Service have an interest in the case.

#### MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Lieutenant Pat Reynolds received a complaint that a Miami Beach exhibitor was recklessly displaying his pythons. Lieutenant Reynolds located the exhibitor with his eight foot Green Burmese Python on the sidewalk of Ocean Drive. He possessed a Class III Wildlife Exhibit license, but not a Reptile of Concern license. The exhibitor's residence was inspected for proper caging standards. He was cited for not having all of the requisite licenses and warned for not having the pythons "micro-chipped."

October 3 was the start of the area's 2009-2010 dove season. An enforcement detail was organized between field officers and investigators. The weekend detail yielded the following statistics: approximately 300 users checked, nine criminal citations, four civil citations, twenty-three warnings. Violations included guns and motorized vehicles on South Florida Water Management District properties, "unplugged" shot guns, no hunting licenses, no federal migratory bird permits, fishing, hunting within the county's bird sanctuary, hunting from the roadway, and taking other protected migratory birds. FWC officers and investigators assisted Miami-Dade Police Department with two incidents involving convicted felons possessing firearms. FWC investigators also cited a subject for hunting from the roadway and while inspecting the subject's vehicle, discovered a White Ibis, a protected species, in his cooler.

Officer Mike Albert received a call from a concerned citizen about a subject at Haulover Inlet who had just caught and kept an oversize snook. Officer Albert notified the FWC communication center who notified nearby Bal Harbour Police Department. Officer Albert arrived just as the subject was about to depart the area. A Bal Harbour police officer had also been watching and waiting for the subject. The subject was found to be in possession of a snook that had been cut almost entirely in half. The cut had permitted the fish to be folded and concealed in a white plastic bag which was then stuffed into a book bag. The subject was arrested and jailed for the violation. Warnings were also issued for licensing violations.

#### MONROE COUNTY COPS

Officers James Johnson, Seth Wingard, Steve Dion, Martin Messier, and Josh Peters, along with Investigator John Brown captured the winning trophy for FWC in a fund raising golf tournament open to all law enforcement agencies. FWC, Key West Police Department, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Monroe County Sheriff's Office,

and U. S. Customs participated and raised \$1,436 for the Cancer Foundation of the Florida Keys. The idea for a law enforcement golf tournament was created and organized by Officer James Johnson, and he plans to make it an annual event. The trophy is displayed at the FWC Division of Law Enforcement Office in Marathon and will rotate to next year's winning team.