

FWC DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FIELD OPERATIONS

**WEEKLY REPORT
September 25 – October 1, 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

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officers in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties and the FWC Aviation Section worked a week long detail targeting violations of agency issued deer depredation permits and the illegal taking of deer at night with a gun and light. Eight officers and three lieutenants worked until midnight each night checking nine deer depredation permits and 18 hunters. Two citations were issued for possession of untagged deer removed from a permitted field. Two citations were issued for hunting license violations on the permitted field. Thirteen warnings were issued for various violations of the deer depredation permit restrictions. Officers also checked an additional 55 users near activated deer depredation permitted fields resulting in one arrest for DUI, two arrests for taking deer at night with a gun and light and two arrests for operating a vehicle off a named or numbered road in a management area.

Officer Keith Clark checked a sailboat for safety equipment in Pensacola Bay. He noticed two fishing poles on board and inquired if the operator had caught anything. The operator replied he caught one Spanish mackerel. Officer Clark asked to inspect the fish and found that it had been filleted. Officer Clark also found two fillets from a gag grouper in the cooler and determined the individual did not possess a saltwater fishing license. Officer Clark issued citations for the filleted gag grouper and fishing license violation.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY COPS

Officer Andy Maltais taught the legal section of a hunter education class. The class was held at Woodham Middle School in Pensacola.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Steve Hoomes and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Officer Jim Hughes were working a night hunting/deer depredation detail in the Berrydale area when they observed a vehicle approaching the peanut field they were watching. The occupants of the truck shined a spotlight at several deer standing in the field. The officers stopped them and observed a high-powered rifle in the vehicle. The subjects admitted to looking at the deer through the rifle scope. Officer Hoomes issued both subjects notices to appear for attempting to take deer at night with a gun and light.

Officers Andy Maltais and Ben Pineda responded to a boating accident in Navarre. Two personal watercraft (PWC) were traveling together when the lead PWC made an abrupt turn into the path of the second vessel. The second vessel could not turn in time and collided with the first. The first PWC operator's leg was broken in the collision. Officer Maltais is investigating the accident and charges are pending.

BAY COUNTY

An alligator hunting detail was worked by Lieutenants Jay Chesser and Steve Carter and Officers Dennis Palmer, Mike Nobles, Jeff Gager, Mark Clements, and Joe Chambers. Three permitted hunters were located and inspected as they left the ramps. No violations were found as all hunters were in compliance.

Officer Joe Chambers observed a subject spear fishing without a diver down flag displayed. Officer Chambers checked the diver after about an hour and observed him dump his catch. Citations were issued for the divers down flag violation and failure to return marine fish alive back to the water.

Early season duck hunting details were worked by Lieutenant Jay Chesser and Officers Dennis Palmer, Joe Chambers, Mark Clements, and Mike Nobles. Numerous hunters were observed and later checked resulting in a few written warnings. A shortage of birds was evident.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

BRADFORD COUNTY

Lieutenant Gary Knowles noticed a vehicle parked on the shoulder of County Road 125 in the closed portion of the Raiford Wildlife Management Area. Lieutenant Knowles discovered that a subject was hunting in the closed portion and conducted a canvass of the area in an attempt to locate him. After a brief search, the hunter was found. A records check on the subject disclosed one active capias through Bradford County Sheriff's Office and three active warrants through Clay County Sheriff's Office. The subject was also charged with hunting in a closed area and was booked into the Bradford County Jail.

Lieutenant Knowles found an abandoned vehicle obstructing a roadway inside the Raiford Wildlife Management Area. A registration check on the vehicle revealed that the tag was on notice for seizure due to insufficient insurance. A records check on the registered owner showed that his license was under suspension for financial responsibility. Officer Ricky Justus responded to assist in locating the driver. After nearly one and a half hours, the driver returned. The subject was issued a written warning for obstructing a roadway and his driver's license and vehicle tag were seized. The driver had the vehicle towed from the area.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Jamey Stowell stopped a vehicle in a closed area of the Cecil Field Management Area. The subject stated that he was in the area to scout before the hunting season opened. Officer Stowell informed the subject that he was not allowed in the area and asked if there were any weapons in the truck. The subject stated that he did have

firearms in the vehicle, an inspection revealed one hand gun and two rifles. Also, upon running a check of the subject's driver's license, Officer Stowell discovered that the individual had a driver's license for work purposes only. The defendant was issued citations for the violations.

Officer Adam Small was on water patrol in Pumpkin Hill Creek where he stopped a vessel with two occupants on board to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, Officer Small noticed a burlap bag hanging over the side of the vessel. When Officer Small asked about the bag, one of the defendants stated that there were just a couple of fish in it. At one point one of the subjects stated, "I don't keep small fish." Inspection of the bag revealed seven spotted sea trout, six of which were undersize. Officer Small asked the subject who had previously made the statement about not keeping small fish, about the small fish in the bag and he stated, "Oh yeah, I did keep those small ones." Citations were issued accordingly.

Officers Adam Small and Tom Tucker received a complaint that an alligator had been killed illegally. The officers arrived on scene and found an alligator head and hide, salted down and in open view on a pair of saw horses. The officers knocked on the door of one of the two mobile homes on the property, and after no one came to the door, they were getting ready to go to the second home when one of the defendants drove up. When asked if he knew anything about the alligator, the subject stated that all he knew was that the alligator was there when he left to go play ball, and he didn't know who killed it, but thought it could have been his brother-in-law. A driver's license check revealed that the subject had a revoked license with prior knowledge. Lieutenant Tony Wright arrived on scene and asked the defendant if he could get his brother-in-law to come home or get in touch with him by phone. The subject stated that he did not have a phone and did not know his brother-in-law's phone number. A consensual search of his vehicle revealed a cell phone and a phone number for the second subject. Contact was made with the second defendant and he was asked to return to his residence in order to resolve this issue. The second defendant returned to the residence and was questioned. He stated that the first defendant helped him skin the gator and helped him eat it. When asked why he shot it, he made the statement that it was in self defense. He stated that he had shot at it three times. When asked why he shot at it three times, he stated that it was a small target and he wasn't that good of a shot. The alligator appeared to be approximately three foot long. Both defendants were placed under arrest and booked into the Duval County jail.

NORTHEAST REGION

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Corey Bridwell was working a duck hunting detail with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Jane Whaley in the area of Haulover Canal. At the Bair's Cove boat ramp, the officers observed a vessel pull in that matched the description of a vessel registered to the owner of a truck in the ramp. The owner in question was known to have a

suspended driver's license and this was verified by dispatch. The subject pulled the vessel from the water while driving the vehicle registered to him. Once the vessel had been removed, Officers Bridwell and Whaley made contact with the man and saw three, oversized black drum in plain view inside the vehicle. The officers confirmed the man's identity and the fact his license was suspended. Officer Bridwell issued the man a misdemeanor citation for over the bag limit of oversized black drum and a traffic citation for driving on a suspended license. The subject signed the misdemeanor citation but refused to sign the infraction. Officer Bridwell advised the man that he would be taken to jail if he did not sign the citation. The man replied with "I don't care if I go to jail." Officer Bridwell then arrested the man for failure to sign a citation. Officer Michael Slotin transported the subject to the Brevard County Jail where he was booked into the jail for the above violations.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officers Dusty Humphrey and Damon Saunders were working a late night at the Sebastian Inlet State Park, targeting snook and redfish violations. From a concealed position they observed a subject take a large snook back to his vehicle and filet the fish. The subject then returned to the inlet and continued to fish. Later in the evening the officers checked the fisherman and his friend. During the check the fishermen only presented two filleted redfish to the officers. When asked if they had any snook, they told the officers they had tried all night to catch one but were unable to. During the investigation one of the subjects eventually admitted to catching a snook but claimed that it was legal size. Officer Humphrey issued the subject a citation for failure to land snook in whole condition. Multiple warnings were also issued.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

While on patrol in Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, Officer Caitlyn Staskiewicz and Lieutenant Guy Carpenter II stopped a hunter to conduct an inspection. During the inspection, the officers found a small amount of cannabis and a cannabis pipe inside the center console of his truck. The man was issued notices to appear for the violations.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Troy Starling and his wife were bow hunting on private property. They hunted in the morning and spent the day in a residence on the property. When Officer Starling and his wife went out to go hunting that afternoon they saw that both of their bows were missing from the back of their jeep. They drove around the property and saw a suspect lying in the bushes. Officer Starling exited his jeep and identified himself as a law enforcement officer. When he did this, two other suspects stood up, each holding their bows. Officer Starling detained the suspects until a Putnam County Sheriff's Deputy and Lieutenant Ben Allen arrived. All three suspects were booked in jail by the sheriff's department for armed burglary, grand theft and armed trespass.

Officer Jesse Lee was on patrol of the river at Black Point in the Ocala National Forest when he spotted a vessel on the shore line. Proceeding up a trail, he intercepted two hunters; one was dragging a doe deer. The two Putnam County men were cited for possession of doe deer during the closed archery season.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Rich Wilcox and Lee Lawshe received a complaint from an individual who saw two suspects enter a wooded area Monday afternoon carrying a rifle. The complainant recognized the suspects and told the officers where they lived. The officers went to the residence later that night and conducted an interview. The suspects stated they had not killed anything that afternoon. However, they did admit to killing a nine point buck and a doe with a rifle the first week of September. The officers seized the nine point rack, three rifles, four deer hams and one deer shoulder. The meat was donated to a charitable organization. Two counts of taking deer during the closed season will be direct filed against both suspects.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Duane North and Jeff Beal found a vehicle parked along Troy Road in Lake George Wildlife Management Area. Officer Beal stayed with the truck while Officer North followed tracks into the swamp and encountered a man walking with a machete. The suspect said he was "just scouting and cutting dead limbs" when asked by Officer North, but was unable to show where. Officer Beal observed a bag of corn and a bottle of c'meer deer mineral powder in plain view in the back seat of the subject's vehicle. Officer Beal read him Miranda and conducted a thorough search of the area where Officer North initially heard the subject walking. A tree stand was located surrounded by corn and the mineral powder. The subject denied the stand was his, but after Officer North pointed out the subject's boot tracks around it and the fresh cut limbs, he admitted it was his. He also denied knowledge of the corn until Officer North began to compare it to the corn in his bag. The subject was cited for the bait and warned for cutting vegetation. He was also cited for placing his tree stand prior to the season. The subject removed the stand.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Jason Semeyn responded to a vessel capsizing with five people in the water. The 12-foot open skiff, which was overloaded with passengers, hit a wave that caused the vessel to capsize. The individuals involved sustained no injuries. The operator was issued a citation for insufficient lifesaving devices.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Matt Ervin received information regarding two subjects who were archery hunting in Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area (WMA) during a general gun wild hog quota hunt. The information was passed to Officer Kristen Gavagni who observed the subjects' airboat in the WMA. Officer Gavagni tracked the subjects to a tree stand and cited one of the individuals for attempting to take deer during the closed season.

Officer Dirk Williamson received a complaint involving subjects trespassing and hunting on the Kissimmee River restoration construction site in the Avon Park Bombing Range. Upon arrival, Officer Williamson detained six subjects who were alligator hunting in the construction area. With assistance from Investigator Joe Brooks, two of the individuals were charged with violating alligator hunting permits, allowing an unlicensed individual to hunt and hunting out of their assigned area. Another individual was charged with hunting without an agent's license. The three subjects were also charged with trespassing.

Officer Erika Zimmerman was patrolling private property on foot, when she observed two individuals fishing from a dock. She made contact with the subjects, who did not have permission to be on the property and asked them if they caught any bass. After receiving a "no" response, Officer Zimmerman checked inside a bucket near the individuals and located a bass that was undersize. The subject who had caught the bass was issued a citation for the violation. In addition, both individuals were issued notices to appear for trespassing.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COPS

Officer JoAnne Adams, along with personnel from Florida Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), represented the FWC at the Florida Sportsman Show in Tampa.

LEE COUNTY

Investigator Larry Jernstedt observed two individuals parked near the entrance to the Charlotte County Buffer Preserve in Cape Coral. Investigator Jernstedt requested assistance from Officers Brian Cazalot, Justin Koble, John Ruggiero and Andy Brown. The officers arrived to see two subjects leave the area with a large quantity of redfish. A traffic stop was conducted and the individuals were found in possession of six redfish. In addition, the driver was driving on a suspended license. Both individuals were arrested and booked into the Lee County Jail.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

A helicopter surveillance flight was conducted in the area of the Kissimmee River and Kissimmee Chain of Lakes by Lieutenant Joe Allen and Pilot Mike Wood. During the detail, Officer Matt Ervin arrested one individual for hunting in the Bluff Hammock Safety Zone, which is closed to hunting. Another individual was observed in an airboat in the Starvation Slough Unit of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area, which is closed to

airboating. Pilot Wood landed the helicopter and the subject was issued a citation by Lieutenant Allen for the misdemeanor.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Dirk Williamson received information regarding several subjects who would be attempting to take wildlife with a gun and light later in the evening on private property, near Lake Kissimmee. Officer Williamson and Investigator Joe Brooks went to the area and observed several individuals displaying a light from a vehicle. After numerous gunshots were heard coming from the vehicle, Investigator Brooks and Officer Williamson conducted a vehicle stop and determined that the subjects were hunting wild hogs and rabbits. Three individuals were charged with attempting to take wildlife at night with a gun and light.

SOUTH REGION A

BROWARD COUNTY

Officer Enos was on patrol in the Everglades and Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area when he observed a truck creeping along a levee. He watched the actions of the subjects inside of it for some time and eventually conducted an inspection. Based upon his observations and what the subjects had in their possession, Officer Enos cited them for archery hunting during the closed season.

Officers Harrison and Caske were on water patrol in the Intracoastal Waterway when they stopped a vessel near Hillsboro Inlet. A subject on board was cited for possession of undersize vermillion snapper. Other citations and warnings were issued for boating safety violations.

COPS

Lieutenant R. Laubenberger and Officer Harp attended a public FWC workshop hosted by FWC biologists. The officers provided security for the event.

HENDRY COUNTY

Officers Michael Lilley and David Burnsed waited approximately four hours for a vessel to return to the Clewiston boat ramp to conduct an alligator hunting inspection. Once the vessel returned and gear was loaded into the vehicle, the inspection was performed. The officers noticed fresh blood on the deck and bow box of the vessel. A freshly killed, untagged alligator was located in a cooler in the bed of the pickup truck. A subject was cited for possession of an untagged alligator.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer David Fowler checked a subject at a Boynton Beach boat ramp and cited him for possession of nine undersized yellowtail snapper. Officer Luis Rodriguez issued a citation to one hunter for possessing too many teal ducks in Water Conservation Area 1. Officer Jeff Haynes issued a citation to a subject in the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area for harvesting game fish with a cast net.

Regional investigators saw an advertisement on an Internet website stating that largemouth and peacock bass, catfish, oscars and Mayan cichlids could be purchased for aquariums for ten dollars each. On September 30, an investigator posing as a buyer met the seller at a predetermined location and purchased two small largemouth bass, two warmouth, one peacock bass, one bream, and one Mayan cichlid for sixty dollars. After the purchase, Officers Rick Cobo and Travis Basford arrived to assist with regulatory inspections. The seller was issued a citation for selling freshwater fish without a proper license. Written warnings were issued for possessing too many peacock bass, taking fresh water gamefish by an illegal method (cast net), selling fresh water gamefish without proper licensing, and possession of fish/wildlife as a pet without a permit.

Investigator Shannon Wiyda assisted in capturing a cooper's hawk that was trapped in a Costco Store. The bird was later released unharmed. She also assisted officers with locating, identifying, and seizing an exotic serval cat. The owner was cited for possession of an animal, which is classified as Class II wildlife, without the proper permit. The cat was transferred to a permitted facility.

Investigator Laurie Luher attended a public auction of exotic birds and cats to investigate a no/improper licensing complaint. Over 400 birds, cockatiels, cockatoos, parakeets, macaws, were being auctioned. An inspection of the paperwork determined that the owner had all requisite licenses to exhibit and sell. However, the owner's personal pet license had expired and a warning was issued. Lieutenant Charles King and Officer Travis assisted with the complaint.

SOUTH REGION B

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Anders Bergstrom responded to an early morning Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) assistance request at Spanish Harbor boat ramp. At approximately 2:00 am, FHP Trooper C. Fisher approached a vehicle parked at the boat ramp. The trooper observed several subjects dump items out of their car and quickly drive away. Trooper Fisher stopped the vehicle and further investigation revealed 145 lobster tails (131 were undersize) had been discarded on the ground. Trooper Fisher issued citations to several subjects for possession of 131 undersize lobster tails and 135 over the bag limit. Additional charges may also be filed.

Lieutenant Joseph Scarpa, Officers Tiffany Davis, Raul Pena-Lopez, and Brian Christy issued a federal citation to the captain of a shrimp trawler for illegal fishing inside the

Tortugas North Ecological Reserve. The officers conducted surveillance, tracked the vessel's course, and documented the activity on video. The vessel was escorted to Key West where its catch was off-loaded the next morning. The catch weighed 10,754 pounds and sold for \$20,255. The case has been turned over to a National Marine Fisheries Service agent.