

# FWC

## Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



**September 21, 2018 through October 4, 2018**

*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.*

***Patrol, Protect, Preserve***

### **NORTHWEST REGION**

#### **CASES**

##### **GULF COUNTY**

On the opening day of dove season Officer Gerber heard shots being fired on a dove field off Highway 22 near Wewahitchka. Officers Gerber and McMillion drove to the area and inspected numerous subjects. One subject was in possession of 31 white winged dove and failed to possess a valid migratory bird permit. He was cited for over the bag limit of dove and issued a written warning for no valid migratory bird permit. Several other warnings were issued.

Officer M. Webb conducted a fisheries inspection at Jetty Park in Port Saint Joe. A male and female were fishing. The male subject had in his possession four whole stone crabs and two blue crabs. The subject was cited for possession of whole stone crab and warned for stone crab out of season and fishing without a license.

##### **OKALOOSA COUNTY**

Officer White and Reserve Officer Hahr checked several dove hunters during the opening day of the first phase of the 2018 dove season. An inspection of the field where the subjects were hunting revealed bait had been broadcast to attract dove. The subjects were aware of the bait and were cited for the hunting violation.

Officers Jarvis and Maltais have been monitoring and communicating with an individual whose vessel is at risk of becoming derelict. Recently, the officers returned to check the condition of the vessel and found it to be hard aground and about 75% out of the water

on the shoreline of military property. The vessel owner was not present at the time. Officer Jarvis, along with U.S. National Park Ranger, met with the vessel owner. Due to the deteriorating condition of the vessel, the officer issued a notice to appear citation to the owner for a derelict vessel violation. An Eglin Range Patrol Officer issued the vessel owner a trespass warning.

Officer Specialist Maltais responded to a bear complaint at the Commando Village Apartments, an area known for bears getting into garbage. While patrolling the area, the officer saw a residential trash can on its side in the driveway at the garage door. These apartment units have new containers, but no bear resistant latches installed. The officer shined a light into an area between duplex units and found a bear lying prone and eating from a white kitchen trash bag. The bear did not respond to initial aversive conditioning efforts (yelling, lights and air horn). With the use of the patrol vehicle's air horn and strobe lights, the officer was successful in getting the bear to run into the woods behind the units. Officer Specialist Maltais located the resident whose household garbage the bear had gotten into and issued the homeowner a non-compliance letter. The homeowner was provided a Living in Bear Country brochure.

Lieutenant Hollinhead and Reserve Officer Arnette were on land patrol in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area and noticed ATV tire sign. After tracking the tire sign, the officers located six ATVs and one Jeep inside a mud pit in a wooded area off a management area road. The mud pit created by the ATVs had destroyed vegetation and threatened the root system of large trees. Six of the operators were identified and charged for damaging state lands with a motor vehicle and operating an ATV on Blackwater WMA. The subject operating the Jeep was cited for not having a tag for a motor vehicle.

Officer Specialist Maltais and Officer Jarvis responded to several complaints of bears getting in garbage in the Commando Village community. Officer Maltais located a bear eating household garbage. The officer was successful with hazing the bear back into a wooded area. Several homeowners were issued non-compliance notification letters for failure to secure their garbage cans.

Officer Corbin was on land patrol conducting state fisheries and license inspections in the Fort Walton Beach area. The officer saw an individual fishing off a seawall with a rod and reel. In identifying the individual, the Tallahassee Regional Communication Center confirmed he had an active full extradition warrant out of Covington County, Alabama for receiving stolen property. Also, he had three non-extraditable warrants out of Georgia. The individual was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Nichols was on land patrol at Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park. He saw two adults coming off a nature trail. When the individuals saw the officer, they abruptly turned away and moved to get out of the vision of the officer. Officer Nichols exited his vehicle and located both individuals. After establishing communication, the officer saw a snake pole and asked if they had seen any snakes or captured a snake. They stated no but gave consent for the officer to search the back bag. During the search, Officer

Nichols located a protected plant species commonly known as a Pitcher Plant secured in a clear, plastic bag. The officer confirmed the plant was removed from the state park. The officer cited and issued the individual a notice to appear citation.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Jones was on patrol on the Eglin Wildlife Management Area when he saw a vehicle operating recklessly and at excessive speed on a sand trail. When the officer attempted to make contact, the vehicle fled the area. A bulletin was issued for law enforcement to be on the lookout for the vehicle. A Highway Patrol Trooper stopped the vehicle a short while later. After interviewing the driver of the suspect vehicle, the officer issued a citation for careless driving and a notice to appear for being on the Eglin Reservation without the required permit.

Officers Hoomes, Jones, and Roberson were on the Eglin Wildlife Management Area searching for subjects illegally harvesting palmetto berries for commercial purposes. While conducting surveillance, Officer Jones saw a suspicious vehicle approaching his position on a very minimal sand trail. The vehicle was attempting to leave when the officer contacted the two occupants. They were issued notices to appear for not possessing the required Eglin permits. Later in the evening, Officer Hoomes found footprints which he backtracked to a hidden cache of 550 pounds of illegally harvested palmetto berries. The berries were seized, weighed, and disposed of with the help of FWC Wildlife Technician McDonald.

Officer Hutchinson and Lieutenant Hahr located a baited dove field prior to the opening day of the dove hunting season. On opening day, the officers along with Officer Mullins checked several subjects on the baited field and addressed several violations. Despite ending the hunt early, they determined that one subject was over the bag limit and that others had combined their birds. Twelve subjects were cited for hunting over a baited field and several others were warned for other hunting violations including over the daily bag limit of doves.

Officer Hutchinson located a truck stuck in a ditch in the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area. The owner had driven back to it on an ATV to try and get it out of the mud. The truck's tracks indicated that the driver intentionally left the center of the road and drove through the soft mud along the shoulder. The driver was issued a citation for damaging state land with a motor vehicle and littering. The driver was also warned for operating an ATV on a management area.

Lieutenant Lambert checked a duck hunter who was attempting to take waterfowl after legal shooting hours at Salters Lake in Escambia River Wildlife Management Area. Upon inspection, Lieutenant Lambert also found the subject was in possession of lead shot and was hunting with an unplugged shotgun. Lieutenant Lambert addressed the violations with the subject.

Officer Hutchinson and K-9 Zara were on patrol when they saw a light actively being shined from a vehicle into a field in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of deer. While watching the vehicle from a discreet location, Officer Hutchinson saw the truck exit the field and travel away from him. Officer Hutchison followed behind the vehicle and saw two dead deer, one buck and one antlerless deer in the bed of the vehicle. Officer Hutchison conducted a vehicle stop and discovered the two subjects in the vehicle were in possession of a spotlight, a scoped rifle and a shotgun along with the two deer and a freshly killed rabbit. Through his investigation, Officer Hutchison discovered that the two men had shot a third deer in another field nearby. He drove to the field and conducted an area search with his K-9 partner Zara. K-9 Zara located fresh blood and tracked for approximately 100 yards until she discovered the illegally taken deer in thick brush. Both subjects admitted to taking the deer and rabbit using a gun and light. Both subjects were cited for taking deer with the use of a gun and light.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark and FWC Bear Biologist Green gave a bear presentation to the Poquito community. The presentation was in response to several complaints of bears getting in garbage and a bear that attacked and killed chickens in a fenced pen. Approximately 130 citizens participated in the outreach event. Biologist Green provided the audience with a PowerPoint presentation and brochures and other static displays including a bear resistant garbage can. Lieutenant Clark spoke about the laws regulating the securing of food attractants.

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION

### CASES

#### NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Waldo received information from a Rayonier employee that a subject was illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries on the side of a local road in Nassau County. Officer Waldo located the subject who was in possession of a bag of freshly harvested saw palmetto berries. The subject did not have permission to be on the property and did not have the required permits to harvest the berries. Officer Waldo issued a notice to appear for illegal harvesting of and transporting saw palmetto berries. The berries were returned to the landowner.

Officer Sweat was patrolling in Nassau County at the Four Creeks Wildlife Management Area during the archery hunt when he checked a host subject and his guest and found the host was hunting with a crossbow. The subject was educated and a notice to appear was issued.

## HAMILTON COUNTY

Officers Cline and Nichols responded to a call that several subjects were trying to tape a live alligator's mouth shut. The officers located a group near the scene that stated they had no knowledge of anyone taking an alligator. The officers found evidence near a pond that an alligator had been removed. They also located evidence linking the scene to the subjects they had spoken with earlier. The following morning, the officers tracked down the subjects and obtained confessions that they had caught an alligator from the pond. Charges were filed for possession of alligator without permit.

## DUVAL COUNTY

Officers Lumpkin, Quarterman and Tucker found people in possession of undersized saltwater fish while patrolling from shore as well as by boat. Seven subjects were cited or warned for possessing undersized spotted seatrout and/or undersized redfish. Each of the violators had from 1-10 undersized fish. Additionally, some had fishing license violations, and one subject was arrested and booked on an outstanding warrant.

## LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Boone was patrolling Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area when the driver of a vehicle pulled up to ask a question. While speaking to the two occupants, it was determined they had been hunting. Officer Boone conducted a recreational license check and smelled the strong odor of marijuana coming from inside the vehicle. Further investigation revealed that both subjects were in possession of marijuana and associated paraphernalia. The two subjects admitted to smoking the marijuana. The appropriate citations were issued.

## BAKER COUNTY

Officer Burnsed received information about an illegal buck that was taken during the opening weekend of archery season from a private hunt lease. Officer Burnsed spoke with the adult subject who took the deer. The subject admitted that the buck was illegal by having a main beam between 5 and 10 inches. A charge will be direct filed through the state attorney's office for the violation.

Officer Burnsed checked a subject in Osceola National Forest opening weekend of archery season. Officer Tyler located bait, camera and tree stand nearby. The subject was interviewed and admitted to placing the bait. The subject was cited for the violation.

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Albritton was on patrol in Taylor County when he noticed two trucks stopped on the side of a hunt club road and decided to check on the trucks. During the check, he found one of the subjects in possession of a 4-point buck that had been killed with a rifle

during bow season. Officer Albritton issued the appropriate citation for illegal method of take and seized the deer as evidence.

Investigator McMillan was targeting unlawful night hunting activities in a rural part of Taylor County when he saw a vehicle driving slowly. As the vehicle neared his location, he heard a gunshot from the vehicle. Upon stopping the vehicle, Investigator McMillan discovered a 30-30 rifle and a spent shell casing. After interviewing the occupants post Miranda, they admitted to shooting at a doe deer off the roadway while it was being illuminated by the vehicle's headlights. The subjects were cited for the unlawful take of deer at night with a gun and light and shooting from a public road. Later, Investigator McMillan discovered one of the subjects was arrested for the same violation two weeks earlier by Officer Albritton.

Officer Dasher was patrolling Spring Creek Wildlife Management Area when he saw a subject exiting the wood line and walking toward a truck. Officer Dasher stopped and talked with the subject. During the conversation, Officer Dasher realized that the subject may have placed bait in the management area. The officer walked with the subject back to where he came from and found apples and corn that the subject admitted to dumping few minutes earlier. Officer Dasher issued the subject a citation for placing bait in a management area.

#### UNION COUNTY

Officer Gill and K9 Frier located a subject hunting over bait in Raiford WMA. The subject admitted to placing the bait and was cited for the violation.

#### CLAY COUNTY

Officer Bryan was patrolling a remote area and saw a truck traveling down the road, illuminating the surrounding fields and woods with its headlights. Officer Bryan saw the truck stop and the driver fire three gunshots out the window. After stopping the vehicle, he found that the driver was carrying a loaded pistol and the passenger had a loaded rifle. The subjects also had open alcohol containers in the vehicle. The subjects were cited for the violations.

Officer Bryan was patrolling a remote area late at night and saw a truck driving slowly, shining a spotlight attempting to illuminate deer. When he stopped the vehicle, he found the driver to be in possession of a loaded rifle. The driver was cited, and the rifle was seized.

#### MADISON COUNTY

Officers Ransom and Vazquez located a pond baited with corn prior to the opening of duck season. On the opening weekend of duck season, both officers returned to the area and checked two individuals hunting ducks over bait. Further investigation revealed another pond nearby on the same property where two more individuals were

apprehended for hunting ducks over bait and taking over the bag limit of ducks. The appropriate citations were issued.

## LEVY COUNTY

Officer Fox was on patrol in Andrews Wildlife Management Area when he saw a truck exiting the area. He stopped the vehicle and detected the smell of burnt cannabis being emitted from the vehicle. Officer Fox asked the individual if there were any drugs in the vehicle and the individual admitted to having a burnt marijuana cigarette. Officer Fox and assisting Levy County Deputies searched the individual's vehicle and saw multiple, used hypodermic syringes. Officer Fox also located 2 boxes of ammunition, a marijuana vaping device, and a burnt marijuana cigarette. The subject was a convicted felon and was arrested and booked into the Levy County Jail for possession of ammunition by a convicted felon, possession of drug paraphernalia, and possession of marijuana over 20 grams.

Officer Fox was on patrol in Andrews Wildlife Management Area and located multiple bait sites prior to opening morning of archery season. Officer Fox arrived at the bait sites during opening morning of the archery hunt and saw 3 individuals hunting over bait. Officer Fox issued 2 misdemeanor citations and one written warning for hunting over bait in a wildlife management area. Officer Fox also instructed the individuals to move their hunting equipment out of the baited area and to hunt elsewhere within Andrews WMA.

Lieutenant Umhoefer and Officers Hilliard and Willis were on patrol on the Withlacoochee River when they saw blue crab trap buoys with the required V numbers missing. They conducted a fisheries inspection on the traps and found that 5 different trap buoys were illegible. Officer Willis documented the violation and will direct file charges through the state attorney's office.

Officer Willis was on patrol when he received information that a subject had placed a feeder on Gulf Hammock WMA property. He located the hunting stand and feeder (recently filled with corn). Officer Fox assisted Officer Willis with working the site. The officers were able to apprehend the subject actively hunting over the bait. Officer Willis cited the subject for the violation.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### LEVY COUNTY

Lieutenant Umhoefer, Officers Willis, Starling, and Hilliard were dispatched to a search and rescue on the Waccasassa River. A subject called 911 and said he had been kayaking all day (now night) and was lost somewhere on the river. Lieutenant Umhoefer had the cell phone call triangulated to determine the area where the call was generated. The officers traveled up the Waccasassa River, up Cow Creek, and up Bullfrog Creek

for 8 miles and located the lost kayaker. He was recovered with no injuries and transported back to the boat ramp.

## TAYLOR COUNTY

Officer Wilder received a complaint about an overdue vessel that was launched from the Econfina State Park the day before and had not returned. Officer Wilder proceeded to the boat ramp in his patrol vessel and Lieutenant Loyed also responded by airboat. The subject was found on his vessel later in the day. He had camped out on an island overnight and made his way back to the boat ramp safely.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### HAMILTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Kiss and Officers Nichols and Cline were invited to speak at the Florida Trappers Association meeting in Jasper. The officers spoke to association members and answered numerous questions on trapping, hunting and general outdoor issues. Georgia Department of Natural Resources rangers were present as well to answer questions. There were approximately 50 members in attendance.

### MADISON COUNTY

Officers Ransom and Vazquez participated in a landowner cooperative meeting in Madison County. There were several local landowners in attendance. Both officers answered questions on topics of conservational enforcement, public safety and various hunting related questions.

## **NORTHEAST REGION**

### CASES

#### VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer McDonough was on patrol in the Oak Hill area when he saw a vessel running without lights. During the stop, the operator showed him a legal red fish he had caught that evening. Upon inspection of the vessel, an 18-inch snook was found hidden. The subject admitted to catching the snook in a cast net and deciding to keep it. Citations were issued.

Officer Pelzel was checking shoreline subjects in the Port Orange area and asked an adult male about his catch. After claiming only mangrove snapper had been caught, Officer Pelzel located two gag grouper in his possession. He was subsequently issued the criminal notices to appear for over the daily bag limit of grouper and undersized grouper.

Officer Goodreau checked a suspicious vehicle in the Oak Hill area. After identifying the individuals, an adult male was arrested for a local warrant and an adult female was arrested for an out of county warrant. Both were transported to the Volusia County Jail.

Officer North located a subject in Tiger Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA) who was deer hunting over corn during the archery season. The subject was cited for hunting over bait in a WMA, as well as hunting without a valid license and hunting without a WMA permit. Warnings were issued for no archery permit and no deer permit.

#### LAKE COUNTY

Lieutenant Chase and Officers Teal and Fahnestock located two baited hunting sites within the Seminole Forest Wildlife Management Area (WMA). They worked the sites on opening morning of archery, where they saw two individuals actively hunting over the bait. During the investigation another subject was identified, and the officers were able to locate another baited site on the WMA. All three individuals were cited accordingly.

While on water patrol on the Palatlahaha River Officer Shaw conducted a resource inspection on an individual actively fishing. An inspection of the subject's cooler revealed two large bass among other fish. When Officer Shaw went to measure the bass, the subject removed one bass from the cooler and threw it back into the water, not allowing the officer to conduct his inspection. The other bass (of similar size) measured over 17-inches. The subject was issued a notice to appear for obstruction of an FWC officer.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Bernard was conducting fisheries inspections at the Palatka City Docks when he checked the catch of a male subject that was cast netting. Upon inspecting his catch, it was found that the subject was in possession of two black crappie that were caught by the cast net and hidden under other product. The subject was cited for possession of a game fish caught by an unlawful method.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officer Dias was on foot patrol of Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in the Pipeline Unit when he located an area with corn and soy beans scattered across the ground. Officer Dias watched the baited area over a couple of weeks and saw a white Ford truck return to it several times to add more bait. Officer Dias conducted an early morning surveillance of the area and saw an adult male come into the area and climb a tree stand. At safe light, Officer Dias announced his presence and directed the adult male subject down from the tree stand. The subject was equipped with a bow with broadhead tipped arrows and was dressed in camouflage. Officer Dias issued the subject a notice to appear for hunting over bait in a WMA.

Officer Simpson was on foot patrol of Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in the Church Lake Unit when he located a baited area. He checked on the baited area several times until one afternoon he found a subject in a tree stand within 20-yards of the bait on the ground. Officer Simpson announced his presence and directed the subject down from the tree stand. While he was waiting on the subject to come down, Officer Simpson located an empty vanilla extract bottle. After inspecting the area closer, the officer found where the vanilla was scattered around the area. The adult male subject was equipped with a bow and broadhead-tipped arrows. A check of the subject's history revealed that he was cited for the same violation the prior hunting season by Officer Rice. Officer Simpson issued the subject a court date for hunting over bait in a wildlife management area.

Officers Simpson and Teal, and FWC K9 Moose found a vehicle parked off the side of the road on Ocklawaha Prairie (St. Johns Water Management Property). The officers suspected someone might be deer hunting in the area during the currently closed season. The officers and K9 Moose tracked three quarters of a mile from the vehicle and located two juveniles hunting from a ground blind in the closed area. The juvenile subjects appeared highly inexperienced at hunting. They were issued warnings for hunting during the closed season and educated on where to find legal hunting opportunities on public lands.

## FLAGLER COUNTY

Officers Graves and Campbell worked a series of night patrols focusing on alligator hunters in and around Crescent Lake in southwest Flagler County. Most of the inspected subjects were following hunting and boating safety regulations; however, the officers did issue citations to two subjects on Dead Lake (adjacent to and east of Crescent Lake) for attempting to harvest an alligator outside of the licensee's permitted area and failing to obtain a trapper agent license.

## BREVARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Saunders was inspecting a captive wildlife facility and found that they were illegally in possession of a Macaque monkey. Macaques have the potential to be carriers of diseases that can be infectious to humans. Investigator Saunders seized the primate and issued two citations. The primate has been placed at a licensed location.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### CASES

## DESOTO COUNTY

Officer Franks and Officer Karr received information that several subjects were shining a light from a vehicle. Officer Franks located the individuals and watched them as they shined a spotlight into an orange grove in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. As the vehicle got closer, Officer Franks could see it was a UTV with three subjects on board. Officer Franks questioned the three subjects and they said they had permission to hunt the grove for wild hogs. There were two rifles and three spotlights in the UTV and two of the subjects were carrying handguns. As Officer Franks was looking at the UTV, he noticed fresh blood and what looked like deer hair in the back of the vehicle. Officer Franks asked the driver where the blood and hair came from and he said it was from a freshly killed hog. Officer Karr arrived on scene and began helping with the investigation. Officer Franks told the subjects that it was deer hair in the back of the UTV and not hog hair. One of the subjects admitted to killing a deer and leaving it in the grove and agreed to take Officer Franks to where he hid the deer. The subject was given a notice to appear for hunting with a gun and light. The deer and rifle were seized for evidence.

#### HERNANDO COUNTY

Officer Spradlin and Officer Fagan responded to a tip from the Sheriff's office regarding an untagged alligator hide. The officers went to the reported local residence and saw the hide in plain view. An investigation also revealed the head of the alligator was on the property. The officers cited the individual responsible for the illegal take.

#### HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Franks and K9 Officer Stasko were conducting night hunting enforcement when the officers saw a vehicle traveling slowly towards them. As the vehicle got closer, they could see a spotlight being shined out of both sides of the vehicle. The light was being shined in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife in the groves on both sides of the road. As the vehicle passed Officer Franks' position, he began to follow the truck in his patrol vehicle. He followed the truck for several miles as the truck continued to shine a spotlight, stop in the middle of the road and even back up a few times. Officer Franks activated his emergency lights and stopped the vehicle before he turned onto a main road. In the truck were five subjects and four dogs. All the dogs were wearing activated GPS collars used to track hunting dogs when they are released into the field. Three subjects in the back of the truck were holding onto two of the dogs and the other two dogs were in a dog box. The driver had an activated GPS tracking unit around his neck to be used to track the GPS collars on the dogs. Inside the truck were two spotlights and a flashlight sitting on the seat. The subjects admitted to looking for hogs on the side of the road. All five subjects were given a notice to appear for hunting from the roadway.

While conducting night hunting enforcement, Lieutenant Bontrager received information that a vehicle was traveling slowly in south Hardee County while shining a light out of the passenger window. Lieutenant Bontrager located the vehicle and followed at a safe distance. Lieutenant Bontrager watched the truck stop several times and shine a spotlight out of the passenger window towards orange groves and open fields in a

manner capable of disclosing wildlife. The truck made a U-turn and Lieutenant Bontrager activated his emergency lights. Officers Livingston, Franks, Stasko and Gaudion arrived on scene to assist. Inside the truck, two rifles were located on the rear backseat. There was a high-powered spotlight near the passenger seat wired to the truck battery. Both the driver and passenger admitted to shining the spotlight and having a loaded rifle in the truck. Both occupants of the truck were given a notice to appear for hunting with a gun and light. One rifle that was loaded and the spotlight were seized as evidence.

Officer Livingston and Lieutenant Bontrager received information that someone was shining a spotlight in a blueberry field and possibly hunting. Lieutenant Bontrager arrived near the area and proceeded to look for the individual on foot. Officer Livingston arrived a short time later and could see a vehicle driving towards him from the field. As Officer Livingston was watching the vehicle lights, he heard what he thought was a gunshot. When the vehicle got closer he activated his emergency lights and stopped the vehicle. The driver told Officer Livingston that there was a rifle and handgun in the truck and he had him exit the truck. Officer Livingston could see fresh blood on the front of the driver's shirt and he found fresh blood and what looked like deer hair in the back of the truck. The driver said that the blood was from a deer that was harvested the day prior in Georgia and the hair was from a wild hog. Lieutenant Bontrager arrived to assist Officer Livingston. When asked again about the fresh blood and hair in the back of the truck, the driver admitted to shooting a deer in the blueberry field while using a spotlight and hiding it. The driver agreed to take Officer Livingston to the site where the deer was hidden. Officer Livingston retrieved the deer for evidence and issued a notice to appear to the driver for hunting with a gun and light. The driver admitted to killing the deer with the handgun when he injured it with the rifle. The rifle and handgun were also seized as evidence.

## HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Stephens was dispatched to conduct a vessel inspection on a 14-foot Jon boat. An individual had requested a vessel inspection for a homemade vessel. Officer Stephens inspected the vessel and discovered the vessel's HIN number had been removed. Also, the vessel was displaying a manufacturer's decal showing it was manufactured by Monark. The subject was told he could not use, sell or register the vessel until the investigation was complete. Days later, Officer Stephens noticed that Florida registration numbers and a decal were displayed on the vessel. The subject stated they were accidentally put on the wrong boat. During the investigation, the vessel along with subject's registered vehicle appeared for sale on the side of Highway 17 in Bowling Green, Hardee County. The vessel still displayed the registration numbers and the same decal that were "accidentally" placed on the vessel. The subject later provided a picture that helped determine the identity of the vessel. The vessel was owned and registered to a man that lives in Alabama. It was being stored in Frostproof, Polk County. The investigation would disclose the following: the vessel was stolen by a subject in Polk County - a relative to the owner - and sold that same day. That subject then sold the vessel to another individual who requested the inspection for a homemade

title despite knowing the vessel was registered in the state of Alabama. Officer Stephens and Investigator Ervin filed felony charges for grand theft and possession of a vessel with altered or removed hull identification number (HIN). The subject who stole the vessel pled no contest to grand theft and was adjudicated guilty. He was sentenced to serve thirty months incarceration in the Florida State Prison.

Officer Smith responded to a neighbor complaining about someone next door to him shooting and killing an alligator. Officer Smith conducted an investigation and the property owner later confessed to killing a twenty-eight-inch alligator to try and protect his Alpacas. The subject was issued a notice to appear for taking a twenty-eight-inch alligator without a permit.

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on patrol on the Hillsborough River, Officer Rorer saw a vessel operating at night without the required navigation lights. She conducted a vessel stop for the violation and performed a boating safety inspection. Through the course of her interaction with the vessel operator she detected signs of alcohol impairment. The individual was requested to perform standardized field sobriety tasks. Based on her observations and the operator's performance on the field sobriety tasks, he was placed under arrest for operating a vessel while his normal faculties were impaired by alcohol. He was transported to the Hillsborough County Jail where he provided two breath samples. The operator's breath alcohol content was .081 and .082.

While on land patrol, Officer Specialist Bibeau saw a vessel return to a nearby boat ramp. Officer Specialist Bibeau contacted the individuals, who were in the boat at the ramp, and conducted a fisheries inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau located an undersized gag grouper and found that the individual who admitted to catching the gag grouper had prior citations and warnings for fisheries violations. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for harvest of an undersized gag grouper.

Officer Specialist Ferguson and Officer Specialist Phillippi saw a male subject cleaning fish at the Gandy Boat Ramp. The subject told the officers he was a charter captain but just went out fishing with some friends. There were numerous mackerel filets on the cleaning table and three gag grouper in a bucket next to him. The captain told the officers a sixteen-year-old passenger on his vessel caught the fish. He told the officers the smallest grouper was 24  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Two of the gag grouper were undersized, measuring 22  $\frac{1}{4}$  and 23 inches. As the captain of the vessel, the man was issued a misdemeanor citation for the possession of two undersized gag grouper.

Officer Caldwell and Reserve Officer Wise saw a male fishing under a bridge in Upper Tampa Bay with a cast net. The two officers watched and waited for the individual to finish fishing. When he returned to his vehicle, the officers initiated a resource inspection. The individual was found to be in possession of a thirteen-inch undersized

redfish and an eight-inch undersized mangrove snapper. He was cited for the undersized redfish and issued a warning for the undersized mangrove snapper.

While conducting boating safety inspections at the Apollo Beach boat ramp, Officer Rivard initiated a resource inspection on a vessel with three occupants after observing fishing gear. He discovered the individuals to be in possession of four redfish, one of which was fifteen inches long, making it under the legal-size limit of eighteen inches. Officer Rivard interviewed the individuals on the vessel and one of the occupants admitted to catching two of the redfish and the undersized redfish. He was cited for possession of over the bag limit and undersized redfish.

## LEE COUNTY

Officers Winton, Rogers and Stanley were on federal water patrol in FWC's SAFE Patrol Boat when they saw a fishing vessel transiting in from offshore waters. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection, at which time they located an undersized African pompano. Two subjects admitted to catching and keeping the two African pompano that were onboard the vessel, but neither admitted to possessing the undersized fish. Both subjects were issued notices to appear for possession of undersized African pompano, as well as warnings for expired fishing licenses.

Officer Winton and Officer Fogle were on nighttime vessel patrol when they saw a vessel operating carelessly and at a high rate of speed through a posted manatee zone. The officers conducted a vessel stop, at which time they noticed that the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Following field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The subject was transported to the Lee County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample. The subject was cited for boating under the influence and was issued boating citations for failure to provide a breath sample, violation of manatee zone, careless operation of a vessel and operating a vessel with an expired registration.

Officer Winton and Lee County Sheriff's Deputy Woodby were on water patrol when they stopped a vessel to conduct a safety inspection. During the inspection, it was determined that the vessel was a rental boat, and that the livery company had failed to check the renter for proof of boater safety education. The officers traveled to the livery and contacted the owner/manager who stated that he had been operating the company for twelve years but did not know the regulations. The manager was issued a notice to appear for violation of livery safety regulations and was educated about the requirements for renting boats.

Officer Winton and Officer Fogle were on nighttime water patrol near the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River when they saw a vessel failing to operate in a straight line. The vessel was making sharp turns as if the operator was not sure where to go, at which time the officers saw the vessel enter a slow speed zone on a full plane. A vessel stop was conducted, and the officers noticed that the operator showed signs of impairment. The operator of the vessel performed poorly on field sobriety tasks and was placed

under arrest for boating under the influence. At the Lee County Jail, the operator provided breath samples of .130 and .131. The operator was also issued a citation for violation of a manatee protection zone and warnings for careless boating and navigation lights violations.

Officer Winton and Officer Garcia were on patrol in FWC's SAFE Patrol Vessel when they saw a fishing vessel heading in from offshore waters. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. They determined that the vessel's occupants were in possession of nine undersized and out of season gray triggerfish. Additionally, since there were only four people onboard, the subjects possessed five triggerfish over the bag limit. The operator of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violations and several of the occupants were cited for expired fishing licenses. The triggerfish were seized as evidence.

Officer Garcia and Officer Winton were on patrol in FWC's SAFE Patrol Vessel when they saw a fishing vessel heading in from offshore waters. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and noticed that the vessel's occupants appeared nervous. The fisheries inspection revealed the subjects possessed eleven red grouper, nine of which were undersized. Additionally, since there were only four people onboard, the subjects were also in possession of three red grouper over the bag limit. The operator of the vessel was issued a notice to appear for the violations, and the nine-undersized grouper were seized as evidence.

## MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Gonzales, Dalton and Miller were on water patrol in the Braden River near the State Road 64 Boat Ramp. They were asked by the Bradenton Police Department to help apprehend a suspect who was wanted for attempted kidnapping in Sarasota County. The suspect had eluded police by jumping into the Braden River and was now hiding under the State Road 64 Bridge. The officers arrived on scene and were instrumental in the apprehension of the suspect, who was booked into Manatee County Jail.

Officer Gonzales and Officer Dalton were on water patrol around Long Boat Pass. They conducted a fisheries inspection on a vessel returning through the pass and found that the captain of the vessel had caught and kept an undersized red grouper. The captain of the vessel was cited for the violation and will have to appear in court.

Officer Infante was on water patrol in the Manatee River near the Fort Hamer Boat Ramp when she saw a vessel run through a Slow Speed Zone at a high rate of speed. The vessel also did not have registration numbers on its port side. Officer Infante stopped the vessel at the boat ramp. While addressing the violations with the captain, she saw he had slurred speech and noticed that a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage was present. After the subject performed Field Sobriety Tasks, he showed signs of impairment and Officer Infante transported him to the Manatee County Jail.

Officers Dalton, Gonzales and Infante were on water patrol in the area of Long Boat Pass. While on patrol, they conducted a boating safety inspection on a vessel that was transiting near the pass. During the inspection, the operator of the vessel was showing signs that he may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Officer Gonzales conducted a further investigation into the operator's level of impairment. When the officer's investigation was concluded, the subject was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. He was taken to the Manatee County Jail and will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Gonzales was on land patrol in the area of the South Skyway Fishing Pier. While on patrol he conducted a fisheries inspection on an individual that was spearfishing around the pier. Before the inspection, Officer Gonzales had witnessed the suspect hide a speared snook in some bushes with some fishing equipment. When the suspect exited the water, Officer Gonzales witnessed the subject retrieve the snook from the bushes. Officer Gonzales cited the subject criminally for taking snook by illegal method, possession of snook during a closed season and possession of undersized snook. The subject will have to appear in court for his violations.

#### PASCO COUNTY

While on water patrol, Officer Specialist Pulaski saw a vessel violating the slow speed zone while it was heading inbound on the Pithlachascotee River. Officer Pulaski conducted a vessel stop for the violation. During the stop, the operator exhibited several indicators of impairment. When asked to submit to the Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks, the subject refused. Officer Specialist Pulaski arrested the individual for boating under the influence and issued a civil penalty for failure to provide a breath sample.

#### PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Specialist Bibeau and Officer Bibler saw a fishing vessel returning from offshore. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau located a cooler filled with legal reef fish and a separate cooler that contained a large bag of fillets. After a short series of questions, the operator admitted that some of the fillets belonged to king mackerel and that he was responsible for the violations. Officer Specialist Bibeau issued the individual a misdemeanor citation for failure to land king mackerel in whole condition.

Lieutenant Van Trees was checking the 4th Street Bridge when he saw a group of women near the shoreline. He was initially told that they didn't have any fish and were alone, but after talking to another subject nearby, Lieutenant Van Trees discovered the women were with a group of men cast netting along the shore. After contacting the group of men who were cast netting, Lieutenant Van Trees talked to the men separately and discovered one of the men had taken a bucket of fish to the women earlier in the day. Lieutenant Van Trees found the bucket hidden in the mangroves which contained an undersized snook along with numerous other fish. Officer Specialist Martinez came to assist and after a short series of questions, it was revealed that one of the men had

cast netted the undersized snook. The subject was cited for his violations and was also issued warnings for not having a fishing license and not having a snook permit.

While on water patrol in Tarpon Springs Officer Specialist Ferguson stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety and resource inspection. During the inspection, Officer Specialist Ferguson asked if there were any fish on the vessel and he was told no. Officer Specialist Ferguson was granted permission to look into a cooler and he asked about the contents of a bag inside the cooler. After being elusive about the bag, the male subject on board gave Officer Specialist Ferguson the bag which had numerous undersized spotted sea trout inside. The subject was cited for possession of undersized spotted sea trout and warned for no saltwater fishing license, insufficient number of personal floatation devices and spotted sea trout not in whole condition.

Officer Specialist Rivera was on patrol at Gandy Beach. He saw a man throwing a cast net off a jetty. When the subject finished fishing, he began dumping his catch into a cooler in his pick-up truck. Officer Specialist Martinez approached the man and performed a resource inspection of the man's catch. He found several mullet and a jack crevalle covering an undersized snook. Snook is currently closed (Pinellas County) due to an emergency FWC executive order. Officer Specialist Martinez seized the snook for evidence and cited the subject accordingly.

## POLK COUNTY

Lieutenant Bontrager saw a vehicle traveling very slowly on a rural road. As he followed the vehicle, someone shined a light out of the side window and onto a field in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife. The driver continued for several miles, turning down many side roads and stopping in the middle of the road several times. Lieutenant Bontrager activated his emergency lights and conducted a vehicle stop. As he approached the truck, Lieutenant Bontrager could see a semi-automatic rifle in the back seat of the vehicle. The rifle was secured by the officer and the driver admitted to shining a spotlight from his vehicle while driving with a loaded rifle in the truck. The driver was given a notice to appear for hunting with a gun and light. The rifle was seized as evidence.

Officer Smith responded to an individual shooting and killing a spotted fawn deer on the Avon Park Bombing Range during archery season. The subject was hunting in the military hunt area and jumped a spotted fawn deer. The subject didn't see that it was a spotted fawn and killed the deer through thick brush at 35-40 yards. The subject was cited for taking a spotted fawn deer.

Officer Smith responded to a complaint about a subject picking saw palmetto berries on Arbuckle WMA. Officer Deweese and Officer Earls assisted Officer Smith in trying to locate the subject. Officer Deweese and Officer Earls followed the subject's tracks leading to an undesignated road in the WMA. Officer Smith waited outside the WMA for the subject to exit. Officer Smith saw the vehicle matching the description leaving the WMA and conducted a resource traffic stop. The subject admitted to harvesting saw

palmetto berries on the WMA. The subject was issued a notice to appear for harvesting saw palmetto berries on a WMA, possession of saw palmetto berries without proper permit and a citation for entering a WMA without paying appropriate fees and operation of motor vehicle on undesignated road. The berries were seized and donated to the Lake Wales Ridge WEA: Royce Unit.

## SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Hudson was about to launch his vessel for water patrol at the Manasota Boat Ramp when he noticed a vessel returning to the ramp. Officer Hudson decided to perform a boating safety inspection and during the encounter he noticed that the operator appeared to be intoxicated. Officer Hudson gave the operator field sobriety tasks to perform to determine the level of impairment. The operator performed poorly and was arrested for boating under the influence. He was taken to the Sarasota County Jail and will have to appear in court.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

## LEE COUNTY

Officers Winton, Fogle and Hazelwood were on water patrol in the Caloosahatchee River when they saw several subjects swimming next to a vessel in a high vessel-traffic area. The officers approached to ensure that the subjects were safe, at which time they noticed that two of the subjects were drowning and were unable to stay above the surface of the water. Attempts to grab the subjects and throw life rings to them were unsuccessful, so Officers Fogle and Hazelwood entered the water to assist. The officers worked together to pull the subjects out of the water and place them in recovery positions until EMS arrived on the scene. Once EMS arrived, the officers began an investigation into the incident. During the investigation, two separate operators of the involved vessel were arrested for boating under the influence. These subjects were transported to the Lee County Jail, where they refused to provide breath samples and were booked into the facility without incident.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

## HARDEE COUNTY

During a directed conservation patrol called "Operation Night Hawk," Officer Smith was patrolling along the Hardee and Desoto county line when he noticed a vehicle travelling very slowly in a known night hunting area. The vehicle suddenly stopped several times in the middle of the road and then both occupants exited the vehicle. Officer Smith conducted a resource traffic stop and noticed in plain view open alcoholic containers in the vehicle. The passenger was under the age of twenty-one and in possession of an alcohol beverage. The passenger had been previously arrested by Officer Carter and Officer Smith less than twenty-four hours prior for DUI and possession of alcohol under the age of twenty-one. The driver of the vehicle was issued a citation for open container

in a motor vehicle, no tag light and a notice to appear for providing alcoholic beverages to a person under twenty-one. The passenger was issued a citation for open container in motor vehicle and a notice to appear for possession of alcohol under the age of twenty-one.

## POLK COUNTY

Officer Geeraerts received information that a landowner was scattering bait in his orange grove prior to the opening weekend of dove season. He scouted the property and found several places where cracked corn and seed was scattered. He documented the bait with photographs and GPS coordinates. On the opening day of dove season, Officer Geeraerts and Officer Kobs set up a directed conservation patrol and positioned themselves a safe distance from the property. In the afternoon, over a dozen subjects began shooting on the property. The shooting continued for over three hours. Once the shooting started to slow down, Officers Geeraerts and Kobs entered the property and began conducting license checks and making sure everyone was complying with migratory bird regulations. One subject was cited for not having a plugged shotgun and admitted to Officer Kobs he knew it was not plugged. The landowner was given a notice to appear for baiting the field and additional charges are pending with the State Attorney's Office.

## LEE COUNTY

Officer Perry coordinated a directed conservation detail to target subjects who had been cutting the fences of a wildlife management area (WMA) and illegally entering at various times. Officers Lejarzar, Hazelwood, Stapleton, Price, Salem, Thompson, K-9 Officer Stasko and Lieutenant Ruggiero participated in the detail. One night, while the officers were working the detail, a large group of approximately thirty ATV's and side-by-sides were riding the boundaries of the area, but nobody cut the fence or damaged the property. During another shift, a large group of ATV's and side-by-sides were seen riding around the WMA at approximately 2:00 a.m. When the officers tried to conduct a stop to address the violations many of the violators fled and cut various fences in an attempt to get away. The officers were able to stop several people. In total, fifteen citations were issued for various violations including being in the WMA during closed hours, operating a motor vehicle on a closed road, not possessing a valid day use permit, littering and operating an ATV in a WMA. The group was educated on the laws relating to the WMA and the investigation is ongoing. If other operators are identified, additional arrests could be made in the future for violations relating to fleeing to elude, destruction of state lands and cutting fences.

## PASCO COUNTY

Officers Smith, Avis, Hughes along with Lieutenant Wells conducted a multiday directed conservation patrol on the 85' Offshore Patrol Vessel, Gulf Sentry. The officers patrolled through the Florida Middle Grounds, a Habitat Area of Particular Concern. They inspected numerous recreational and commercial fishing vessels. A commercial fishing

vessel near the Florida Middle Grounds was inspected, and the officers located numerous pieces of reef fish cut up. The captain of the fishing vessel was using grouper and snapper as bait and was cited for the violations.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **CASES**

#### **BROWARD COUNTY**

Officer Vacin saw 2 divers exiting the ocean with spearfishing equipment and dive bags. After conducting a fisheries inspection, he discovered one of the divers with undersize hogfish and the other with over-the-bag limit of spiny lobster. The spiny lobster were returned to the water alive after being photographed for evidence. Both individuals were issued citations which will require a court appearance.

#### **GLADES COUNTY**

Lieutenant Brown along with Officer Madsen and Captain Suggs saw a vessel with no navigational lights visible inside the Fisheating Creek WMA. The occupants were attempting to harvest an alligator outside of their assigned harvest unit. Lieutenant Brown issued them notices to appear (citations) for the violation and wrote them a citation for operating with no navigational lights. Two warnings were also issued for boating violations.

#### **HENDRY COUNTY**

Officer Nasworth received a call from Lieutenant Brown about a doe deer that had been shot at the Dinner Island Wildlife Management Area. He met the subject who had shot the doe deer during general gun. The subject admitted he shot the doe. Officer Nasworth advised the subject that doe deer were not allowed to be harvested during the general gun season at Dinner Island WMA. Officer Nasworth also learned that the subject didn't have the required quota hunt permit. Officer Nasworth provided the subject with a court date for killing the doe and a warning for hunting without a quota permit. The deer was seized, photographed and donated to a wildlife facility.

#### **MARTIN COUNTY**

Officer Hudson was patrolling in Dupuis WMA. He saw two males putting 2 large bags of palmetto berries into the trunk of a car, throw gloves onto the ground and then get inside of the car to leave. Officer Hudson stopped the car and examined the two bags of palmetto berries. The individuals were given a citation for possession of palmetto berries inside of a WMA and a warning for littering.

Officer Pecko and Lieutenant Hayes saw a vessel believed to be alligator hunting in a canal. The vessel was operating without navigation lights. While hidden in the bushes, Lieutenant Hayes and Officer Pecko saw one subject operating the vessel while two other subjects were casting towards an alligator. The vessel approached the boat ramp and a vessel stop was conducted. The vessel had numerous boating safety violations and the two subjects that were casting the fishing rods did not possess valid alligator trapping licenses. All subjects were cited accordingly.

Officers Willems and Webb were dispatched to a call regarding a vehicle being operated recklessly in the Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The individual had been camping and was attempting to leave the park when the officers arrived. The subject was driving and pulling a camping trailer. A traffic stop was conducted, and dispatch relayed that the individual did not have a valid driver's license and that the tag did not belong to the vehicle the subject was operating. Consent was given to search the vehicle and the trailer. A stack of copy paper with copied forged currency and a printer containing a sheet of paper with copied currency on it was found in the trailer. The subject was placed under arrest and booked into the Martin County Jail with 2 felonies for forgery, and 2 misdemeanors for the traffic violations.

Officer Willems was on patrol in the Allapattah Flats WMA when he stopped to conduct a resource inspection on a subject. The subject was found to be in possession of an illegal short horned whitetail buck. For the area, whitetail deer must have a 10" main beam, or at least 3 points on one side. The illegal buck had an 8-1/2-inch main beam, and only 2 points on either side. The individual was issued a criminal citation. The illegal buck was seized and donated to a local wildlife rehabilitation facility.

Officers Morrow and Pecko saw a vessel underway that appeared to have been engaged in fishing. The officers conducted a vessel stop to complete a fisheries inspection. Upon conducting the fisheries inspection, Officer Morrow saw that the vessel captain exhibited multiple signs of impairment and that there were two grocery bags full of empty beer cans onboard the vessel. Officer Morrow conducted Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST's) on the subject. Based on the findings of the SFST's and physical indicators of the operator, he was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. The subject was booked into the Martin County Jail, where he refused to submit to a lawful test of his breath. The subject was cited for operating a vessel while normal faculties are impaired and refusal to submit.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in the Jupiter Inlet when a vessel was operating after sunset without navigation lights. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation and to conduct a boating safety inspection. Upon contacting the operator of the vessel, Officer Brodbeck saw drug paraphernalia in plain view. One passenger on board claimed ownership of the paraphernalia and was issued a misdemeanor citation for the violation. The operator of the vessel received a warning for the navigation light violation.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol at night in Juno Beach when a vehicle was operating erratically and failing to maintain its lane. A traffic stop was initiated to address the violations. Upon contacting the driver of the vehicle, numerous indicators of impairment were detected. After completing standardized field sobriety tasks, the driver was placed under arrest for DUI. At the Palm Beach County Jail, the operator provided breath samples of 0.114 and 0.117 g/210 L. The driver was issued a traffic citation for DUI with a BAC over 0.08 and a warning for failing to maintain a lane.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol at night in Jupiter when a commercial dock-building barge was northbound without proper navigation lights displayed. A vessel stop was initiated to address the violation. Upon contacting the operator of the vessel, Officer Brodbeck detected numerous indicators of impairment. After completing seated field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for BUI and transported to jail. While booking the subject at the Palm Beach County Jail, the subject stated that he had used a large amount of marijuana that day. A urine sample was obtained and sent to the FDLE lab for testing. The operator was issued a boating citation for BUI as well as warnings for improper navigation lights, no sound producing device, and no vessel registration on board.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Lantana when he saw an individual fishing with a cast net from a bridge. After observing the subject place everything caught into a bucket for approximately 15 minutes, the officer made contact to conduct a resource inspection. Several undersized mangrove snapper were located toward the bottom of the bucket beneath several hundred baitfish. Officer Brodbeck issued the subject a misdemeanor resource citation for illegal method of take (cast net) and a warning for the undersized fish, which were returned alive to the water.

Officers Trawinski and Merizio were patrolling the beach along Palm Beach Island when they saw several subjects snorkeling off the beach. While conducting fisheries inspections at the beach they found a subject to be in possession of three undersize spiny lobster. The subject was issued a criminal citation. The officers also wrote a few citations for no lobster permits and no fishing licenses.

Investigator Patterson responded to a report of a subject placing an alligator into a vehicle near the North County Airport and Beeline Highway. Upon locating a vehicle matching the reported description, Investigator Patterson contacted the vehicle operator. Located inside the vehicle was a two-foot alligator with the mouth taped. The vehicle operator was issued a notice to appear (citation) for a misdemeanor violation – possession of American Alligator without permit. The two-foot alligator was released to the wild.

Officer Willems was dispatched to a call regarding the illegal take of an antlerless deer in the JW Corbett WMA. The suspect was interviewed and admitted to not knowing the regulations. A criminal citation was issued for the illegal take of antlerless deer.

Officer Brodbeck was dispatched to a call regarding two subjects harvesting oversized snook in Jupiter. Upon arrival at the location and conducting surveillance, two subjects were located matching the provided description. The officer watched for approximately two hours and waited for them to exit the water when they were done fishing. Both subjects were carrying large black plastic bags and stopped by a large tree to pick up two large snook. Officer Brodbeck attempted to contact both subjects, however one fled into the mangroves with the bags. The officer detained one subject and began a search of the area. After wading in the water for 10 minutes, the bag containing the two large snook was located. The subject that was detained refused to cooperate with Officer Brodbeck or provide any information about the identity of the subject that fled. The subject was placed under arrest for possession of oversize snook and possession of over the daily bag limit of snook. The subject also received resource citations for no saltwater shoreline license and no snook stamp, as well as a warning for trespassing on private property.

FWC Investigators Toby and Luher responded to a capuchin monkey that had bit a camera man who was filming a documentary regarding using monkeys as Emotional Support Animals (ESA) in Loxahatchee. The wound was treated at the scene and the investigation is ongoing.

A grey kangaroo escaped from a private sanctuary in Jupiter Farms. An active search was conducted by multiple FWC officers with assistance from the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) drone operators, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Aviation unit, and the City of Tequesta's K-9 dogs. The community of Jupiter Farms also conducted their own attempts to find the animal by means of golf cart, foot, vehicle and horseback. The kangaroo was eventually captured by its owner. The owner was issued a total of 10 second-degree misdemeanor citations and issued 18 written warnings related to the escape and inspection violations.

## ST. LUCIE COUNTY

While patrolling C23/24 Reservoir Small Game Hunting Area, Investigator Turner and Officer Miano found a ground blind. A closer inspection of the blind revealed it was occupied by a subject engaged in hunting. Investigator Turner and Officer Miano conducted a regulatory inspection and concluded that the subject was hunting migratory birds. In addition, Investigator Turner and Officer Miano saw the subject was in possession of one crow; one common moorhen; and one unplugged shotgun. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation for hunting migratory birds in small game hunting area during closed season, and a warning for possession of unplugged shotgun while attempting to take migratory birds.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

## HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in the Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest when two subjects waved the officer down and advised that two persons in their group were stuck in a remote location in the forest. They additionally advised that one subject was exhibiting symptoms of heat exhaustion to include dizziness and vomiting. After an hour-long search, Officer Brodbeck located the lost persons and after an evaluation, determined neither required medical attention. The officer was able to dig both vehicles out of the mud, and with the assistance of the Florida Forest Service, both vehicles were safely towed to a main grade.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **MIAMI DADE COUNTY**

Officer Moschiano and Officer Hernandez stopped a vessel coming in from offshore near Caesars Creek. Upon inspection of the vessel the operator was found to be in possession of a commercial lobster trap and its catch. The operator was charged accordingly.

Officer Moschiano and Officer Gomez conducted a resource inspection on a vessel at Homestead Bayfront Boat ramp. The operator was found to be in possession of 3 undersize mangrove snapper, 2 undersize lane snapper, and an undersized mutton sapper. The operator was charged accordingly.

Officer Carper noticed a PWC violating the Blue Lagoon marked manatee zone. Upon further inspection by Officer Carper and Officer Cosculluela, the PWC was found to be rented illegally from a livery operating out of the Blue Lagoon Boat Ramp. The operator of the livery did not have a pre-ride safety briefing, proof of insurance, written statements from the customer(s) attesting they had completed a safety brief, or boating safety information displayed at the temporary business location at the boat ramp. Furthermore, no commercial entity or business is authorized to operate out of City of Miami boat ramps. The livery operator was cited accordingly.

Officer Osorio saw a vessel coming into the Crandon Park Marina Boat Ramp with several fishing rods and other fishing equipment. He initiated a vessel stop to conduct a fisheries inspection. The result of the inspection revealed seven undersized mutton snapper. The captain of the vessel was educated on how to properly identify and differentiate a mutton snapper from a lane snapper. The subject was cited for two misdemeanor arrest notice to appear for the possession of seven undersized mutton snapper and for over the bag limit. Officer Osorio also educated the captain about boating safety equipment and issued a citation and a warning for the violations.

#### **MONROE COUNTY**

FWC officers assisted Monroe County Sheriff's Office deputies in the apprehension of a subject who had been stopped for reckless driving. The driver fled the scene which ultimately ended 50+ miles away in Miami Dade County when the driver stopped on his own after having driven over several sets of "spike strip" tire deflation devices. He was taken in to custody and returned to Monroe County.

Officer Rubenstein was conducting resource inspections at the 7-mile bridge and saw a vessel that had just come from fishing in Atlantic state waters. Officer Rubenstein watched as they loaded their truck from the sea wall and went over to conduct an inspection of their catch. When asked what they had caught they showed the officer 2 lane snapper. Officer Rubenstein received consent to search the cooler and found the 2 individuals to be in possession of 146 lane snapper, 1 undersize mangrove snapper, and 1 pork fish. The individuals were cited accordingly. Officer Piekenbrock arrived to help with questioning and processing the evidence. The resource was donated to the wild bird center in Key West.

Officers Cobb and Sapp responded to Garrison Bight Marina in Key West for a report of a stolen vessel. After speaking with the reporting party, Officers Cobb and Sapp were able to identify two subjects that took the vessel and interviewed them. In the interview, the subjects stated that they salvaged the vessel and the victim owed them money for the salvage. Prior to the salvage there was no agreement for work, salvage, or recovery in any verbal or written statements. The victim's vessel, motor, and bilge pump were located and returned. One subject was arrested for grand theft and dealing in stolen property. The second subject was interviewed by Officer Cobb and admitted to assisting the friend in the taking of the vessel. The Key West State Attorney's office was consulted and agreed to a warrant for the second subject's arrest. Officers Sapp, Mobley, and Cobb executed the warrant and arrested the subject in Seaplane Basin, Key West. At the time of arrest, the subject had drug paraphernalia to include needles, burnt spoons, rolling papers, and unidentified pills. The subject was transported to the Stock Island Jail without incident and booked on felony charges of grand theft, dealing in stolen property, and misdemeanor charges of possession of drug paraphernalia.

Officer Piekenbrock saw a male subject aboard a kayak and one in the water actively diving for spiny lobster near Summerland Key. Officer Piekenbrock saw the individuals from the mangrove trees nearby and waited for them to head back to shore. A resource inspection was conducted and revealed the two individuals were in possession of 44 spiny lobster, 40 of them were under the legal-size limit. Consent was given to search the house where the two men were staying. There were 22 more undersized spiny lobster inside a chest freezer on the porch. Officer Mason arrived on scene to help photograph evidence. The two individuals were arrested and booked into the Stock Island Jail.

## COLLIER COUNTY

Officer McVaney responded to a complaint of possible bear feeding in Golden Gate Estates in Naples. While speaking to the complainant the officer saw a bear climbing

onto the subject's rear porch, exhibiting little fear of the officer and resident. Officer McVaney was able to scare the bear away, and while looking around the area saw signs of unsecured attractants and possible evidence of intentional feeding. The owner of the property was issued a Letter of Noncompliance for having unsecured attractants on the property and instructed in methods to keep the bears from returning.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Arbogast and Lee County Officer Rogers represented FWC at the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Southwest Florida's annual "Walk Like MADD & 5k" at Jet Blue Park in Fort Myers. This event is held to rally the community around the public health issue of impaired driving. The fundraiser raised money to help MADD's mission of providing victims of driving or boating under the influence crimes the assistance and support that they need. The event attracted hundreds of runners and walkers. The officers were available at an outreach table to speak with and answer "under the influence" questions and resource related questions.

Officer Tidwell worked an outreach event at Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center in Naples. The "National Estuaries Day" event attracted over 600 visitors of all ages. Officer Tidwell spoke to visitors about recreational fishing and conservation. He also answered several questions regarding living with bears and panthers.