Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

February 1, 2019 through February 14, 2019

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

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

HOLMES COUNTY

Officers Homan and Greene responded to a complaint of an illegal deer being shot. Upon arrival, they located an antlerless deer near a tree stand on a property line. The complainant’s neighbor was questioned and admitted to killing the deer, which ran onto the adjacent property where he left it. Charges were filed at the State Attorney’s Office for taking antlerless deer during closed season.

Officers Yates and Letcher worked together to check a morning duck shoot. After locating the shoot and observing three subjects hunting, the officers checked for compliance. Both adults were found to be in violation for hunting ducks without a federal migratory bird stamp and cited accordingly.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Parrish saw a vehicle parked in an area known for hunting. He attempted to wait out the subject but responded to another call. The following day, he located foot sign and drag marks around where the vehicle had been parked. Further investigation revealed a baited tree stand and blood. He went to the vehicle owner’s residence and located the subject. After a short interview, the subject admitted to killing a short horned illegal deer. Charges were filed with the State Attorney’s Office for taking antlerless deer during closed season.
Officer Homan with assistance from Officer Gore and K9 Kane cited a subject for hunting with a suspended hunting license, due to the disposition from a previous night hunting case. Officer Homan saw a vehicle parked in an area known for hunting and waited for the subject. When contact was made, the subject stated that he was scouting and not hunting. Officer Gore and K9 Kane responded and tracked the subject back to a baited tree stand where a long gun, a pistol, and a camo bag with deer scents and calls were located nearby. The subject admitted to hunting and trying to hide the items.

Officer Parrish and Lieutenant Walsingham investigated a report of night hunting involving a vehicle with a Kentucky tag. After numerous interviews and assistance from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, three subjects were identified, and confessions were documented. Charges were filed with the State Attorney’s Office for attempting to take deer at night by gun and light and possession of a firearm by convicted felon.

Officers Gore and Parrish received information from the Washington County Sheriff’s Office regarding subjects hunting with modern weapons during muzzle loading season in an area closed to hunting in Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area. Upon investigation, confessions were obtained for hunting in the closed area with modern firearms during muzzle loading season. Appropriate charges were filed.

BAY COUNTY

Officer Basford and N. Basford were investigating a complaint of a subject whose photograph was in the local newspaper of him holding a red snapper. The complainant told Officer T. Basford that the background of the photograph looked like it was taken post Hurricane Michael. There were snapped pines in the background and it appeared to be at a house. The officers located the subject in the photograph and at the end of their interview, the subject confessed to taking and eating the red snapper. The charge of possession of red snapper during closed season will be direct filed with the State Attorney’s Office.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officer Hayes received a photo of a subject posing with a freshly killed doe deer at night. He also received a video of the same subject firing a rifle out of a vehicle as it was driving through Blountstown. Officer Hayes met with the subject and conducted an interview in which the subject admitted to killing the deer at night. At the direction of the state attorney, the subject was cited for taking deer at night with gun and light and firing a gun from a paved roadway. A rifle was seized as evidence.

GADSDEN COUNTY

Officer Richardson received a call from FWC dispatch regarding a complaint of road hunting. Dispatch stated that a Gadsden County deputy was on scene with a subject. Officer Richardson arrived on scene and saw the deputy and a Gretna police officer talking with three men on the side of the paved road. Officer Richardson walked up and
asked what was going on and one of the men stated he shot a deer about thirty minutes earlier. Officer Richardson asked where he shot from and the man stated right next to his truck. Officer Richardson asked the man if he had permission to hunt the property and the man stated he did not. Officer Richardson located the doe deer and issued the appropriate citations.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officer Forehand was working night hunting when he saw a light being shined some distance away. By the time he located the light, the subject was pulling into his residence. When Officer Forehand arrived at the residence, he found the subject had two doe deer. The subject stated the deer had been killed prior to dark and he had just now gone back to retrieve them. The subject was cited for two counts of possession of antlerless deer during the closed season.

Officer Forehand was working night hunting when a truck drove by with a light being shined out the passenger window shining farm fields. Officer Forehand conducted a traffic stop and found a .30-06 and .300 caliber rifles in the truck. Two subjects were cited for night hunting. Both firearms and the light were seized as evidence.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Christmas contacted two subjects walking towards their vehicles on Heckscher Drive at Simpson Creek. One subject was carrying a bucket with fish and the other had a plastic bag with fish. Officer Christmas conducted a resource inspection of the fish. The subject carrying the bucket of fish had one short red drum, two short black drum, one short spotted sea trout and a total of nine spotted sea trout which was over the bag limit. The subject carrying the bag of fish had two short spotted sea trout. The fish were seized and photographed. Both subjects were issued criminal citations for the violations.

Officer Haskins was at Big Talbot State Park, Simpson Creek boat ramp, and saw a subject walking south along Heckscher Drive coming from the shoreline access under the bridge. The subject was carrying multiple rods and reels as well as a tackle box and a bucket. Contact was made to perform a resource inspection. The subject stated he had legal trout and flounder. The subject was in possession of one undersized spotted sea trout which measured 14 inches. The subject was issued a resource citation for the violation.

Officer Barry made two separate possession of cannabis and possession of drug paraphernalia cases. The first one was at the Oak Harbor Boat Ramp in Jacksonville
and the second was in Jennings State Forest. In one of the cases, the subject hid the cannabis in a soup can with a secret compartment.

Officers Haskins and Barry were on patrol of Bert Maxwell Boat Ramp in Jacksonville when they checked on a subject in a vehicle parked at the boat ramp. It was determined the subject had a warrant issued out of Duval County for violation of probation. The warrant was confirmed, and the subject was arrested.

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Bell and Johnston received a complaint about trespassing on Ross Hammock Ranch in Inglis. They met with an employee of the ranch and obtained a photo of a young man trespassing on the property. Upon investigation, they located the young man and he confessed to entering the property through a hole in the fence. Charges are pending through the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Officers Bell and Johnston were on water patrol in Cedar Key when they saw two commercial oyster vessels in waters that were temporarily closed to harvesting shellfish. Officers Bell and Johnston conducted a vessel stop on the two vessels and noticed unculled, un-tagged oysters in the bottom of both vessels. While conversing with the young men onboard, they admitted to getting the oysters from the closed zone. All three subjects were issued a notice to appear in the Levy County Court for harvesting oysters from a closed area and possession of unculled or untagged oysters.

UNION COUNTY

Officer Burnsed saw a pickup driving slowly on a highway just after midnight. A spotlight was being shined from the pickup onto private property adjacent to the highway. Deer were feeding in the area where the pickup was shining the spotlight. Officer Burnsed made a traffic stop on the vehicle and found a “cocked” crossbow laying on the back seat. He also saw that the bolt had been removed and was laying on the rear floorboard. The bolt was equipped with a mechanical broadhead. The occupants stated that they were looking for deer. Officer Burnsed direct filed charges with the state attorney office.

K9 Officer Gill received a request from Union County Sheriff’s deputies to assist with tracking a subject. The subject had run into the woods when the deputies tried to arrest him on a warrant. Officer Gill arrived, deployed K9 Friar and tracked the subject through the woods to a county grade. Contact was made with witnesses who said they had given the subject a ride into Columbia County earlier. Columbia County deputies went to the location and requested Officer Gill and K9 Friar respond to look for the subject. Officer Gill again deployed K9 Friar and tracked the subject in the woods behind a residence to a camper. The camper was padlocked from outside to make it appear as if no one was inside. Officer Gill saw sign where the subject crawled under the camper. It was determined the subject had a secret entrance through the floor of the camper. Officer Gill entered the camper and the subject was taken into custody.
NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Haskins was on patrol on the beach in Amelia Island State Park when he saw a white truck speeding and spinning tires, sending sand flying into the air as well as leaving ruts in the sand. The driver received a criminal citation for destruction of state park property using a motor vehicle.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Captain Huff was conducting inspections on vessels returning from fishing, when he saw a vessel come into the boat ramp to load their vessel. The occupants hastily loaded their vessel and attempted to leave the area quickly. Captain Huff approached the subject who stated they had caught a couple of fish. Inside their cooler were two legal red drum. An inspection of a rear compartment revealed two undersized red drum tucked under a recently used cast net. Both subjects stated they forgot to release the short fish. The owner of the vessel was cited for possession of undersized red drum and exceeding the daily bag limit of red drum.

BAKER COUNTY

Officers Burnsed, Tyler and Fanelli located three bait sites in Osceola WMA. The officers monitored the bait sites for six weeks. During this time, they were able to identify 14 individuals. At the end of deer season, the officers interviewed the individuals about the bait sites. The individuals were cited for 19 misdemeanor violations for placing bait and hunting over bait in a WMA.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

LEVY COUNTY

Officers Bell and Johnston responded to a call for an overdue boater in Cedar Key. The officers launched a vessel from Cedar Key and worked their way to the north. The officers located the vessel and the captain on an island just north of Cedar Key. The man launched from Suwannee and came to Cedar Key to harvest oysters. He got lost in the fog and ran out of gas. Officers Bell and Johnston transported the man back to Cedar Key and waited for someone to pick him up.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Albritton, Colasanti and Lieutenant Loyed responded to a boating accident in Madison County. There were two subjects fishing in a small pond when one of them stood up in the boat, causing the boat to capsize. One man was rescued by an individual in the area who saw the man treading water. The other man could not be found. The officers arrived on scene and began a search of the pond. Due to the depth of the water and the loss of sunlight, the search was called off until they could have a
dive team assist. The next morning, the FWC dive team along with the Valdosta dive team arrived and located the body of the missing man. FWC Investigator McMillian will conduct the boating accident investigation.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Green attended a coyote presentation at the Pablo Creek Library. The talk was hosted by Timucuan Preserve personnel and presented by FWC wildlife assistance biologists. About 50 people attended the presentation and Officer Green answered law enforcement questions at the end of the presentation. Officer Green also talked on the “Gone Fishing Show” on a local Jacksonville radio station. He discussed the “Catch A Florida Memory” program and the “Life Jackets Save Lives” initiative.

Lieutenant Arkin and Officer Barry spoke at the Edward Waters College criminal justice program recruitment event about the responsibilities of an FWC law enforcement officer. There were approximately 35 students at the event.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Luce was on patrol in the vicinity of the Trident Basin wharf, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Port Canaveral when he contacted a subject leaving the wharf with a cooler that contained six legal pompano. After checking the cooler, the man continued to his vehicle while Officer Luce began speaking to another subject on the wharf. Officer Luce noticed the man seemed to be in a rush, and when the man attempted to drive off, he left his rod and reel leaning on the side of the vehicle. Officer Luce told the man to stop and told him not to leave his rod and reel behind. He then asked the man if there were any other fish in the vehicle. The man replied no and gave Officer Luce permission to look in the vehicle. When Officer Luce looked on the floor behind the driver’s seat he saw two plastic shopping bags that appeared to be moving. A closer inspection revealed 17 additional pompano, some of which were still alive. The man was in possession of 23 total pompano (daily bag limit is six). Officer Luce seized the fish and issued a criminal citation to the subject for violating the daily bag limit of pompano.

While in Port Canaveral, Officer Balgo performed a boating safety and resource inspection on an incoming vessel. During the resource inspection the operator of the vessel stated they did not have any fish on board. Officer Balgo’s inspection revealed an undersized permit and an undersized black drum on board the vessel. The operator was cited accordingly.
While on foot patrol at the Eau Gallie Causeway, Officer Balgo saw two individuals fishing on the relief bridge. Officer Balgo approached the two individuals as they began packing up a cooler. A resource inspection located an undersized black drum and two undersized bluefish. Officer Balgo saw another cooler in the back of one of the individual’s van. A resource inspection located four additional undersized black drum and two undersized bluefish. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Delano and K9 Officer Hadwin received information that a group of men were taking over the bag limit of fish at Sebastian Inlet State Park. The officers arrived and found two men fitting the subject’s description that was given. Upon inspection the men were found in possession of over the bag limit of bluefish and they did not have their fishing license in their possession. The men explained their licenses were in their vehicle and that they could retrieve them. Once at the vehicle another cooler was noticed. After conducting a full inspection, the two men were found to be in possession of 58 bluefish, 40 of which were under the legal-size limit. The two men received citations for under the legal-size limit, over the bag limit and no fishing license.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Chriest was on land patrol in the Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when she located a dump site with a large amount of personal and household trash. The officer found a piece of mail with a name and address in the garbage. Officer Chriest contacted that subject, who denied dumping the garbage on the WMA, however he volunteered to clean up the mess. He did so almost immediately, resolving the issue.

LAKE COUNTY

Officer Scrambling and Lieutenant Chase were on patrol when they saw a vehicle stopped in the road. While passing the vehicle, they saw two subjects moving around the trunk area with headlamps and florescent traffic vests on. Officer Scrambling turned the patrol truck around and conducted a welfare check. While checking if they were okay, the subject admitted to shooting bottles and targets from the road. A consensual search lead Officer Scrambling and Lieutenant Chase to a stolen firearm. The subject was arrested for possession of the stolen firearm.

Officer Fahnestock was patrolling at the T-docks conducting boating safety and resource inspections. Officer Fahnestock came across a subject with 30 black crappie, which was five over the bag limits. The subject was cited appropriately, and the five extra fish were released back to the water.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Officer Marroquin and Reserve Officer Miller were contacted by Indian River County Deputy Keppel about a subject keeping multiple freshwater turtles. Upon arrival, the officers found the subject was in possession of 23 varied species of freshwater turtles.
and one rat snake. The subject was cited for possession over the bag limit of freshwater turtles. The turtles were later released back into their environment.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel was checking shoreline subjects near the coastal north end of Volusia County. When approaching an adult male, Officer Pelzel detected the odor of cannabis and a subsequent search resulted in his arrest with a criminal notice to appear for possession of less than 20 grams of cannabis and drug paraphernalia.

Officer Edson was on patrol in coastal Volusia County when he encountered a man in possession of a nine-inch black drum, five inches short of the legal minimum size limit. He was issued a citation for the violation.

Officer McKee was on patrol in Blue Springs State Park when he saw a vessel violating the posted idle speed zone. He contacted the operator and detected signs of impairment. After an investigation, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence (BUI) and transported to the Volusia County Jail.

Officer Thornton was on patrol around Orange City when he saw a vehicle being driven erratically. He conducted a traffic stop to address the violations. While speaking with the driver, Officer Thornton developed suspicion the subject may be impaired by alcohol or drugs. He requested the male subject to submit to sobriety tasks and he complied. After completing the sobriety tasks Officer Thornton placed the subject under arrest for driving under the influence (DUI). The subject submitted to breath testing and the results were .211 and .226 respectively. The subject was also issued a traffic citation for failure to maintain a single lane.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Ramsey responded to a shots fired call in a residential neighborhood. Upon speaking with the complainant, Officer Ramsey asked Officer Lawshe and Investigator Crews for assistance with possibly locating a shot deer. Officers Ramsey and Lawshe located fresh blood in the complainant’s front yard, tire sign just off the roadway in front of the home and just down the road from home. Officer Ramsey called in K9 Officer North for assistance. They were able to find a dead doe deer in a backyard three hundred yards from the initial residence. This deer was shot by a small caliber rifle. The complainant was able to provide a tag number to the vehicle that woke his wife and him up by shining head lights into and around their home. The complainant stated he heard what appeared to be one gun shot. The vehicle drove away only to return a few minutes later and park down the road from the home. The complainant confronted a young male who was carrying what appeared to be a rifle. The male left, driving away in a pickup truck. Investigator Crews and Officer Ramsey went to the male’s house and interviewed him. A full confession was obtained. Charges were filed accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING
LAKE COUNTY

Officer Morrow and Public Information Officer Weber attended a Career on Wheels Event at Umatilla Elementary School. Over 600 children, parents and teachers participated. The event was a great opportunity to share the FWC mission with the community.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Putnam County officers participated in the Bassmaster Elite Series event. Officers assisted with the captains meeting, take-off, weigh-in, and worked with B.A.S.S. officials to deal with legal issues that occurred.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Lieutenant Lee, Lieutenant Lightsey, and Officer Cybula worked in cooperation with biologists to help ensure safe passage of two right whales near Sebastian Inlet. Officers performed nearshore and offshore patrols to enforce the proper zones. Pilot Lieutenant Willman utilized his fixed winged aircraft to assist with this effort.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Messman conducted a seafood quality control inspection at a local business. An inspection of a refrigerated room used to store oysters revealed the temperature was at fifty degrees Fahrenheit. That was ten degrees above the safe temperature of forty degrees Fahrenheit. The floor where the seafood was stored had multiple cracks, allowing for dirt, bacteria and food residue to accumulate. The store owner was cited for numerous seafood quality control violations.

Lieutenant Van Trees saw a car parked near a canal and decided to further investigate. A check of the vehicle registration revealed the owner had prior violations with FWC. Lieutenant Van Trees took up a concealed position, saw two men fishing and saw a red drum on a stringer in the water. Lieutenant Van Trees waited for the men to return to their vehicle but when the men’s friends showed up, Lieutenant Van Trees was forced to reveal his presence and check the two subjects. An inspection of the subjects’ stringer revealed five undersized red drum and one undersized sheepshead. After being read their Miranda Rights, Lieutenant Van Trees was able to determine who caught what fish. He cited one subject for possession of undersized red drum and for
possession of undersized sheepshead and the other subject for possession of undersized red drum. Both men were warned for possession of red drum during an executive closure, over the daily bag limit of red drum and for not having a fishing license.

Officer Specialist Martinez and Officer Wilkins stopped a vessel for a boating safety inspection. Upon talking to the operator, Officer Wilkins noticed signs of impairment which included slurred speech. The operator was unsteady on his feet and had difficulty completing simple tasks required for a boating safety inspection. After administering field sobriety exercises on the operator, Officer Wilkins arrested him for boating under the influence (BUI) and booked him into the Hillsborough County Jail for BUI and failure to submit to a breath test.

Officer Specialist Martinez and Lieutenant Van Trees stopped a vessel for a navigation light violation and saw signs of impairment from the operator. The operator had an extremely strong odor of alcohol, kept forgetting items Officer Specialist Martinez asked for during the boating safety inspection and kept getting distracted by trying to fix his navigation light. Officer Specialist Martinez conducted field sobriety exercises with the subject and at the end of the tasks arrested the operator for BUI. The operator was booked into the Hillsborough County Jail for BUI and failure to submit to a breath test.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Guy was conducting resource inspections at a local boat ramp when he saw a man remove a cooler from his boat and walk over to a fillet table. The man told Officer Guy that he had some snapper, but that they were all over the minimum size limit. After inspecting the contents of the cooler, Officer Guy found three mutton snapper under the eighteen-inch minimum size limit. The man was charged appropriately.

Officer Winton responded to reports of a derelict vessel located in Hancock Creek. Officer Winton determined that the vessel was indeed being stored in a derelict condition. He successfully located the owner who resides out of state. An arrest warrant for storing a derelict vessel upon the waters of the state has been filed with the State Attorney’s Office.

Officer Winton saw a driver throw litter out of a vehicle window. He conducted a traffic stop, at which time it was determined that the driver had a suspended driver license and an active arrest warrant out of Desoto County. The driver was placed under arrest and transported to the Lee County Jail where he was booked for the warrant and for knowingly driving while his license was suspended.

Officer Gray was on patrol at Punta Rassa boat ramp when he saw the operator of a commercial crab vessel appear to give blue crabs to another individual on the dock. Interviews with the subjects revealed that the commercial crab subject was selling crabs directly to the public from his vessel without the required licenses. He was issued a notice to appear for the violation.
Officer Bell and Officer Gray were on patrol in federal waters in the SAFE boat when they stopped the operator of a vessel bottom fishing. When asked how the fishing was, the occupants stated that all they had caught was grunts and squirrelfish. An inspection of the vessel revealed an out of season and undersized gag grouper as well as an out of season and undersized grey triggerfish. The subjects were cited appropriately.

Officer Stanley responded to reports of a derelict vessel located in the Caloosahatchee River. He determined that the vessel was indeed being stored in a derelict condition and successfully located the owner. The owner stated that he had stripped the vessel and towed it into the river hoping it would go away. The owner was cited for storing a derelict vessel upon waters of the State of Florida and for an expired registration over six months old.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Gonzales was working around the South Skyway Fishing Pier and performed a fisheries inspection on an individual who was fishing from the shoreline just ahead of the pier. Officer Gonzales found that the subject had caught and kept his limit of gray snapper (mangrove snapper). After the officer had measured all the snapper, it was found that each one was under the minimum size limit of ten inches. The subject was given a criminal citation and will have to appear in court.

Officer Dalton and Officer Gonzales were on water patrol in the Manatee River near the Fort Hamer Boat Ramp. They performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting in the river. During the inspection, the officers became suspicious that the operator of the vessel was under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. Officer Dalton decided to investigate to determine the operator’s level of impairment. After the operator had been evaluated, he was placed under arrest for boating under the influence of alcohol and possession of alcohol by someone under the age of twenty-one. The subject was taken to the Manatee County Jail and will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Klobuchar and Officer Davidson were on water patrol around Longboat Pass. They performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel traveling near the pass. During the inspection, the officers became suspicious that the operator of the vessel was under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. Officer Klobuchar investigated to determine the operator’s level of impairment. After the operator had been evaluated, he was placed under arrest for boating under the influence of alcohol and taken to the Manatee County Jail. He will have to appear in court for his violation.

Officer Dalton and Officer Gonzales were on water patrol in the Manatee River near the I-75 overpass. They performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel underway in the river. During the inspection, the officers became suspicious that the operator of the vessel was under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. Officer Gonzales decided to investigate to determine the operator’s level of impairment. After the operator had been
evaluated, he was placed under arrest for boating under the influence of alcohol and taken to the Manatee County Jail. He will have to appear in court for his violations.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Officer Bibler and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officer were heading offshore for patrol when Officer Bibler noticed two vessels in Johns Pass tied together with people onboard that appeared to be filleting fish while still underway. Officer Bibler stopped the captains of the vessels and contacted them. The subjects were gutting the fish prior to landing them. Since the subjects were fishing in the Individual Fisheries Quota (IFQ) Program, the officers escorted them back to the dock to conduct an IFQ inspection. The inspection revealed that both captains of both vessels possessed numerous undersized grouper and were in violation of other administrative violations. The captains were cited accordingly.

Officer Bibler and the NOAA officer witnessed a vessel returning from offshore with a single occupant on board. The man was wearing a wetsuit and he seemed to be nervous as the officers passed. The officers turned their vessel around and stopped the subject vessel for a marine fisheries inspection. The man stated that he had sheepshead and flounder on board. A fisheries inspection revealed that the subject did in fact have multiple sheepshead and grouper in his live well. Because the subject looked very nervous, Officer Bibler investigated further and asked if he had any more fish on board. The subject stated that he did not. A thorough inspection revealed that the subject had numerous undersize hogfish and an amberjack stuffed in the bow compartment of the vessel. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Specialist Bibeau along with Lieutenant Van Trees stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection. Upon stopping the vessel, the operator of the vessel advised all they had caught were grunts and porgies. Officer Specialist Bibeau conducted an inspection and located a Ziplock bag containing fish fillets hidden at the bottom of a cooler. Officer Specialist Bibeau read the operator his Miranda rights and, after being questioned, the operator advised that he had caught two red grouper and filleted them. When asked why he filleted them, the operator admitted that he knew the grouper were too small to keep, so he cut them up. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the operator a misdemeanor citation for the fisheries violations.

Officer Specialist Bibeau contacted three individuals that were actively fishing from the shoreline. While conducting a fisheries inspection, Officer Specialist Bibeau located a nine-inch snook in a nearby five-gallon bucket. He read the individuals their Miranda rights and, after questioning the group, one of the individuals admitted to catching the snook with a cast net. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the subject a misdemeanor citation for harvest of a snook during closed season and harvest of an undersized snook along with warnings for harvesting a snook by illegal method and not obtaining a snook permit.
Officer Specialist Bibeau saw two individuals carrying fishing equipment while walking back to a nearby vehicle. He contacted the individuals to conduct a fisheries inspection. The individuals advised him that they did not catch any fish and showed Officer Specialist Bibeau an empty cooler. Officer Specialist Bibeau then located a five-gallon bucket and was told it only contained a cast net. He inspected the bucket and located multiple undersized sheepshead and an undersized redfish hidden at the bottom of the bucket underneath the cast net. Officer Specialist Bibeau read the individuals their Miranda rights and, after a short series of questions, one of the individuals admitted to catching the redfish. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for violation of executive order pertaining to the closure of redfish and harvest of an undersized redfish. The other individual was issued a warning for possession of undersized sheepshead.

Officer Specialist Bibeau stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and found an undersized and out of season greater amberjack. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the operator of the vessel a misdemeanor citation for possession of a greater amberjack during closed season and a warning for possession of an undersized greater amberjack.

Officer Specialist Bibeau stopped a vessel to check a group of subjects and found an undersized and out of season triggerfish. The operator of the vessel admitted to catching the triggerfish and was issued a misdemeanor citation for possession of an out of season triggerfish and a warning for possession of an undersized triggerfish.

Officer Specialist Bibeau stopped a vessel to conduct a fisheries inspection and noticed the operator of the vessel was elusive and nervous about a cooler. Officer Specialist Bibeau asked if there were any fish on the vessel and the operator told him no. When asked to open the cooler, the operator pushed ice around and tried to cover a fish. Officer Specialist Bibeau had already seen inside. The fish the operator was trying to conceal was an undersized tripletail that had been speared. Officer Specialist Bibeau read the occupants of the vessel their Miranda Rights and, after questioning, one of the occupants onboard the vessel admitted to catching the tripletail with a bow. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individual a misdemeanor citation for possession of an undersized tripletail and a warning for illegal method of take.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw four individuals actively fishing from the shoreline. He went to a concealed location and waited for the individuals to pack up their belongings and return to their vehicles prior to conducting a fisheries inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau located an undersized snook, five undersized sheepshead, multiple whole stone crab and many undersized stone crab claws. Officer Specialist Bibeau read the subjects their Miranda Rights and, after questioning, one individual admitted to catching the undersized snook with a cast net while another individual admitted to catching the stone crabs. Officer Specialist Bibeau wrote the individuals multiple misdemeanor citations and warnings for the fisheries violations.

POLK COUNTY
While patrolling the area of Lake Shipp, Officer Carter saw a vessel traveling across the lake with an obstructed “all around” white light. As the vessel approached the shoreline, he conducted a vessel stop for the purpose of doing a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, Officer Carter saw the operator display signs of impairment. After completing the boating safety inspection, Officer Carter conducted a BUI investigation with sobriety tasks and determined the operator was impaired. The operator was arrested for BUI and issued a citation for refusal to provide a breath sample.

Officer Boyer was patrolling Tenoroc Fish Management Area (FMA) when he encountered several subjects fishing at Lakes “A” and “B.” One subject was using a cast net to take fish from the lakes. Officer Boyer conducted a resource inspection. During the inspection, Officer Boyer found the subject to be in possession of fourteen tilapia, four panfish and one bass. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the use of a cast net in the FMA, one warning for not checking in at the FMA and one warning for the taking of gamefish by illegal method.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Specialist Balfour and K-9 Officer Gaudion were on patrol around Green Swamp West Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Richloam WMA. They located a vehicle parked on a closed road in Richloam that bordered Green Swamp West. Officer Specialist Balfour could see a dog box located in the bed of the vehicle. The officers conducted surveillance of the area. A short time later, an individual was seen crossing the fence. The individual retrieved the vehicle and drove down the fence line to find the rest of his party and the dogs. The officers contacted the group and issued several citations and warnings.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Specialist Pulaski and Officer Rothchild responded to Green Swamp West to assist Pasco County Sheriff’s Office with a 911 call and the location of a suspicious person. During the search, the information changed several times as to the reason the individual called 911. After a brief search, the individual was located unharmed.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

While in travel status heading to the FWC Training Center in Quincy Officers Ryan and Armstrong saw a car driving erratically. The car was swerving in and out of its lane and
barely missed 2 vehicles parked on the side of the road changing a tire. Officers Ryan and Armstrong conducted a traffic stop. The subject was given field sobriety tasks and was determined to be driving under the influence of alcohol. The subject was also driving without a valid driver license (he had never had a valid license issued). The subject was arrested and booked into the Gadsden County Jail for DUI and driving without a valid driver license.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Boyd was on patrol in John MacArthur Beach State Park when he inspected a subject returning to his vehicle. The officer found the subject was in possession of an undersized mangrove snapper and was fishing without a saltwater shoreline fishing license. When the subject reached for his driver’s license inside his vehicle, Officer Boyd saw a clear bag containing cannabis. The officer issued the subject a notice to appear (citation) in court for the misdemeanor charge of possession of cannabis under 20 grams. He also issued the subject two warnings for possession of undersize mangrove snapper and fishing without a saltwater shoreline fishing license.

Officer Brodbeck was dispatched to a complaint regarding construction near a nesting pair of bald eagles in West Palm Beach. After meeting with the complainant, the officer was shown photographs and video of a pair of bald eagles displaying nest-building behaviors in the neighborhood. Several other nearby residents were interviewed, and all stated they had seen a pair of eagles within the last week. The officer did not witness the eagles; however, evidence of recent nest building was present. Federal protection of eagles provides a 660 ft buffer zone surrounding actively nesting bald eagles. Within the protected area were two ongoing construction projects. Officer Brodbeck spoke with the managers for both projects regarding the bald eagles and issued four written warnings for disturbing nesting eagles. The following day, Officer Brodbeck returned to the area and saw the nesting pair actively building their nest.

Officer Brodbeck, with the assistance of Officers LeBlanc and Godward, was able to identify and locate a derelict vessel owner. The vessel was a barge belonging to a local marine construction company which had been abandoned and partially submerged north of Peanut Island for approximately 5 months. After being read Miranda and being confronted with evidence of ownership, the owner admitted the vessel was his and took responsibility for its current condition. A misdemeanor citation was issued for placing a derelict vessel upon the waters of the state.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Morrow, Officer Brevik and Investigator Sierra, responded to the Cypress Creek Natural Area, about a report of a capsized canoe with subjects in the water with alligators. Upon arrival, the officers attempted to locate the subjects who were not at the location initially reported. Palm Beach County sheriff’s air support (helicopter) located
the subjects and advised officers of their location, which was approximately 300 yards through a heavily wooded area. Officer Morrow proceeded to the subjects’ location through the woods, where she contacted them. The subjects advised that they were inexperienced with canoeing and had been unable to paddle against the current back to their location and had subsequently capsized. Due to the terrain encountered while attempting to make contact and the subject’s inability to continue their current course, Officer Morrow assisted the subjects to a meeting point with other units downstream, where they were assisted by other responding FWC officers.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Morrow, Pecko, and Ames responded to a report of a grounded vessel which was leaking fuel. Upon arrival, officers assessed the situation and determined that containment efforts would be necessary. The FWC Officers requested DEP response. Upon the arrival of the DEP personnel, the FWC Officers assisted DEP with placing a boom in the water to contain the spill until additional equipment and salvage could be made.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Yurewitch were dispatched to check on an injured osprey. The officers responded and found the osprey on the side of US41 with what appeared to be a broken wing. It appeared to have been struck by a vehicle. The osprey was placed in a carrier and transported to the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for rehabilitation.

Officers from Collier, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties participated in Operation Night Eyes, targeting illegal night hunting in Collier County. Over the course of the detail officers and aircraft patrolled rural Collier County, Big Cypress National Preserve, Picayune Strand State Forest, and Fakahatchee Preserve State Park. Over the two-night operation several subjects were encountered both legally and illegally recreating in the patrol areas. The violators were cited accordingly.

Officers Johnston, Wagner, and Knutson were patrolling offshore in federal waters conducting resource inspections. Several vessels, including two commercial shrimp vessels were stopped and inspected. The officers wrote resource citations for an out of season greater amberjack, and an undersized red grouper.

While conducting water patrol during the Everglades City Seafood Festival, Officers Kleis, Arbogast and Conroy saw a group of people fishing off a dock. The officers
conducted a resource inspection and discovered two undersized black drum. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Kleis and Conroy saw a man fishing near the Jolley Bridge. The officers conducted a resource inspection and found two undersized Mangrove Snapper in his cooler. Appropriate citations were issued.

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Washington was on water patrol around Biscayne Bay when he stopped a motor boat on plane in a manatee slow speed zone. Upon conducting a boating safety and saltwater fishery inspection, he discovered two parrotfish not kept alive, one undersized/out of season gag grouper and two undersized yellowtail snapper. The subject was issued misdemeanor citations for each violation.

Officers Sample and Cartaya were on water patrol when they saw a small fishing vessel returning inshore near Cape Florida Channel. They conducted a resource inspection, and the subjects stated that they had a few grunts and snapper in their cooler. Upon inspecting the cooler, they found a black grouper at the bottom underneath numerous other fish. Grouper season is closed in Atlantic waters. One subject was cited for possession of black grouper during the closed season.

Officer Moschiano responded to a tip from a concerned citizen about somebody cutting up mangrove trees. The subject was using a machete to break off oysters near the mangroves. Harvesting of oysters with a machete is illegal method of catch. The subject was also in possession of over the bag limit and undersize oysters. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Moschiano and Officer Blanco responded to a tip from a concerned citizen about somebody keeping undersize snapper at a bridge near Black Point Park. With the help of NPS Law Enforcement Officer Moschiano, they contacted the subjects while NPS Law Enforcement provided backup for the stop. The subjects were in possession of 9 undersize mangrove snapper and were cited accordingly.

Officer Cartaya, Officer Almagro and Officer Swensson were on water patrol 3.5 miles east of Soldier’s Key. They stopped a recreational fishing vessel to conduct an inspection. The harvester was found to be in possession of eight undersized mutton snapper. He was issued a misdemeanor for the violation.

Officer Sample and Officer Cartaya stopped a subject illegally fishing at the top of Bearcut bridge. He was in possession of undersized yellowtail snapper, undersized mangrove snapper and undersized triggerfish. Appropriate citations were issued.

MONROE COUNTY
Officers Sapp and Cobb were conducting patrol in Marathon, Florida. Officer Sapp received information about an escaped prisoner in the area. Officers Sapp and Cobb met with Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, and K-9 units to get information on the escapee and to begin searching for the subject. Approximately 10 minutes into their search, Officer Sapp saw a subject matching the description provided. As Officer Sapp exited the patrol vehicle, the escapee fled on foot. Officer Sapp engaged in a foot pursuit along the Overseas Highway. Officer Sapp, along with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, was able to capture the subject in the Home Depot parking lot. The escapee was turned over to MSCO without further incident.

Officer Hoppe and Officer Thompson were on water patrol in the Boot Key area near Marathon. The officers noticed a vessel with no registration sticker. After making contact, the officers noticed that the operator was showing signs of impairment. The operator was slurring his words and had glassy bloodshot eyes. Officer Thompson conducted SFSTs on the operator and placed him under arrest for BUI. The subject submitted a breath test of .110 and .103.

Officer Alvarez and Lieutenant Munkelt conducted a vessel stop on a commercial lobster vessel in the Koehn subdivision in Big Pine Key. Upon inspecting the vessel and catch, 31 short lobsters were found on board. The captain did not have his commercial license present, nor his vessel registration. The vessel also did not have a hull identification number and there were lobster traps on board that had improper markings. The captain and one crew member were cited accordingly.

**MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE**

**MONROE COUNTY**

Officers Dube, Larios and Janzen responded to a dead whale call near Flamingo in Everglades National Park. Officers assisted in towing the 38-foot whale to the Flamingo Boat ramp. Officers also assisted at the boat ramp as FWC’s FWRI, NOAA, National Park Service conducted a field necropsy.

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**MONROE COUNTY**

Officers Thompson, McKay, and Lieutenant Munkelt responded 11 miles off shore of Marathon to assist the US Coast Guard with a vessel taking on water. The 39-foot quad powered center console began taking on water for unknown reasons in rough seas. Units arrived on scene to find the boat making slow headway and barely able to keep up with the flooding water, even while using a USCG auxiliary pump. At the request of the USCG crew, our boat returned to USCG Marathon to bring out an additional dewatering pump. With that pump the vessel's flotation improved and was escorted back to shore.

**DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL**
COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Polly, Reams, and Araujo conducted resource and boating safety patrols on Lake Trafford in Immokalee in conjunction with the local speckled perch season. The officers encountered numerous boating safety, registration, and license violations over the two-day patrol. All violations were addressed accordingly.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Curbelo and Stearns participated in Collier County’s career day demonstrating some FWC equipment and explaining the core mission as FWC officers. Students were educated on the importance of fishery/wildlife regulations and how conservation law enforcement is incorporated into the effort. The event consisted of many different agencies including military branches, the Sheriff’s Department, fire departments and medical professionals. The youth that attended were juniors and seniors from three different high schools. Officers interacted with over 120 students.

Officers Reams, Araujo, Thurkettle, and Tidwell attended the Collier County Sheriff’s “Kids Love Fishing” event. The yearly event held at CCSO’s Camp Discovery in Naples allows kids and families the opportunity to experience freshwater fishing. The event was attended by approximately 600 people. FWC officers educated people about freshwater fishing, boating, and alligators (thanks to the loan of two small alligators from the local nuisance alligator trapper).