

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

February 22, 2019 through February 28, 2019

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

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

FRANKLIN COUNTY

While on patrol in the offshore patrol vessel Guardian, Lieutenant Marlow, Officers Boyd and Nelson and NOAA Officer Harwell boarded a shrimping vessel south of Little Saint George Island. While aboard they found the vessel's nets to have a violation reference one of their required TEDs (Turtle Excluder Devices). The officers went into their ice hold and inspected their catch. They located gray triggerfish out of season and found the vessel to be more than 300 pounds over their bag limit for flounder. The appropriate action was taken to address the violations.

FEDERAL WATERS

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel Guardian, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and Nelson boarded a commercial vessel approximately 24 miles south of Franklin County. The vessel was engaged in both dive and hook and line fisheries. During the inspection, the officers located what appeared to be red snapper that was cut up and not landed in whole condition. Additionally, there was some of the cut up reef fish that was on the hooks of a rod and reel and being used as bait. The appropriate action was taken reference the violations.

While aboard the offshore patrol vessel Guardian, Lieutenant Marlow and Officers Boyd and Nelson boarded a commercial bandit rig vessel approximately 50 miles south of Dog Island. The occupants cut their fishing gear and threw it overboard while the patrol

vessel was approaching and failed to allow inspection of those items. While aboard the vessel, officers located a shark fillet and had an occupant throw a piece of uninspected fish overboard after being advised not to do so. The appropriate action was taken for the violations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CITRUS COUNTY

Officer Creel and Lieutenant Griffis were working an ongoing trespass complaint when the Citrus County Sheriff's Office stopped two individuals who were walking around a neighborhood holding a rifle. After stopping them, deputies found heroin and cannabis in the individuals' vehicle. Deputies suspected the individuals were hunting from the roadway and called FWC Law Enforcement for assistance. Officer Creel, along with Investigator Thomason, read both individuals their Miranda warning and proceeded to interview them. One individual admitted to hunting squirrels from the public roadway in the neighborhood. The individual did not have a hunting license. Officer Creel seized the individual's rifle, issued him a citation for no hunting license and will direct file a charge for hunting from the roadway. Three subjects were arrested for heroin and cannabis by the sheriff's office.

Officer Banks was assigned to a boating accident investigation regarding a capsized commercial shrimping vessel near the spoil banks north of Crystal River. This investigation developed into a derelict vessel investigation due to the owner failing to remove the vessel, which is sticking out of the water. The owner was cited for derelict vessel. Officer Suttles responded to a report of a derelict vessel in Kings Bay in Crystal River. The vessel is a commercial oyster boat. The owner has been contacted per procedure and has failed to attempt to remove the vessel. A charge for derelict vessel was filed with the Citrus County State Attorney's Office.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Barry was on patrol at the George Crady State Park Fishing Bridge, conducting resource fisheries inspections. She checked a subject who had a cooler of regulated fish. As she was walking back to her truck to get her measuring stick, she saw the subject concealing a red plastic shopping bag. It was later determined that the subject was concealing a plastic bag of harvested oysters. Duval and Nassau Counties are closed to oyster harvesting. The subject was issued a notice to appear for harvesting oysters in an unclassified area.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Lemaster was released from the field training program for solo patrol. Thirty minutes after being released for solo patrol, he was conducting fisheries inspections underneath the Atlantic Boulevard Bridge/Intercoastal Waterway. One of the subjects he checked was hiding behind one of the bridge pilings. This subject was smoking cannabis from a glass pipe. Officer Lemaster issued the subject a notice to appear for possession of cannabis under 20g and possession of drug paraphernalia.

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Drew was patrolling Newnan's Lake where subjects enjoy fishing from the shore and from boats. Officer Drew was conducting resource checks when he found one subject to have a suspended/revoked fishing license. Officer Drew issued the subject a citation and advised him that he could not fish and his fines would continue to increase each time he was caught fishing.

Officer Drew received information of a large dump site on an area hunt club. After combing the trash to obtain a name, Officer Drew was able to locate a name and interviewed the suspect. After Miranda warning was read, Officer Drew received a confession and a written statement of dumping of the trash. Officer Drew will be filing misdemeanor charges through the Alachua County State Attorney's Office.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officers Boone and Fowler received information from a permitted professional archeologist conducting research on state-owned lands. During the project, the group uncovered human remains in a site believed to be dated as far back as the 1700s. Both officers contacted the local sheriff and oversaw the return of the remains back to the site. The research project was discontinued, and the group of archeologists was reminded to notify the Department of State of the findings per Florida Statute.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

ALACHUA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ferguson and Officers Stanley and Troiano attended the Newberry High School Criminal Justice event. The event was organized for students to ask questions to all law enforcement agencies in the county. More than 200 people were in attendance.

DUVAL COUNTY

Lieutenant Arkin spoke to approximately 75 middle school teenagers at Twin Lakes Academy Marine Science class in Jacksonville. The class is learning about the ecosystem and why it is important to protect Florida's waterways and aquifers. Lieutenant Arkin instructed two groups about the importance of protecting Florida

waterways and how FWC plays a part in this process. Lieutenant Arkin also spoke to the students about FWC Division of Law Enforcement.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Wester was at Rodman Dam when a female who was seen fishing returned to her vehicle and started driving away. A traffic stop was conducted, and the subject was found to be in possession of two black bass over the 16-inch size limit. A while later the female returned to the dam and began fishing again with a subject later identified as her husband. A fisheries inspection of the husband revealed that he was also in possession of two black bass over the 16-inch size limit. Both subjects were cited for being in possession of more than one black bass over 16-inches.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Campbell responded to a call for assistance, where a St. Johns County Deputy was working a vandalism case. During his investigation, the deputy noticed some dead deer in the back of a pickup truck. On arrival Officer Campbell found six dead deer (four does and two bucks) in the bed of the truck. All had been shot. Officer Campbell noticed blood on the back-bumper of a Nissan Rogue that was also at the location. He asked the owner if she knew anything about the blood or deer. She stated her grandson had borrowed her car to go out the night before. Through further investigation, Officers Campbell and Ramsey, along with the deputy located an adult male that was involved, as well as a juvenile. Both eventually admitted to shooting the deer. They left the deer in the bed of the truck to spoil. The adult was cited for eleven violations, two of which were felony charges. The juvenile was cited for nine violations.

BREVARD COUNTY

While on foot patrol at the State Road 520 Causeway and Banana River, Officer Balgo saw an individual standing next to his vehicle with a fishing pole. Officer Balgo asked the individual if he had caught any fish. The individual stated he had just arrived and was about to fish. Officer Balgo saw a cooler in the vehicle and asked if he could look inside. The individual gave permission and a resource inspection located an undersized snook wrapped in tin foil. The individual was cited accordingly.

Officer Rasey stopped to check the welfare of an individual walking near the Banana River. The subject was soaking wet but said everything was fine. Officer Rasey followed the subject back to his vehicle where he indicated that he had no fish but had discarded a fishing pole nearby. Further down the road, a cooler and cast net were located containing an undersized spotted seatrout and an undersized sheepshead. The suspect

admitted to taking the fish without a fishing license. The subject was issued a citation and two warnings for the violations.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton and Lieutenant Spoede were on patrol in Matanzas Pass when they stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the safety inspection, the operator exhibited signs of impairment. The officers had the subject perform field sobriety tasks. After he performed poorly on the tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence and transported to the Lee County Jail. The subject, who was also suspected of being under the influence of drugs, agreed to provide a breath sample but refused to provide a urine sample. The subject was booked into jail for boating under the influence and was cited for refusal to submit to a lawful test of blood/breath/urine.

Officer Winton was on patrol off the coast of Sanibel when he stopped a fishing vessel returning from offshore waters. Upon stopping the vessel, Officer Winton recognized the captain as a charter guide who had been previously cited by FWC for fisheries violations. A resource inspection revealed an undersized hogfish on board the vessel. The captain was issued a notice to appear for possession of undersized hogfish and warnings for related violations.

Officer Winton and Lieutenant Spoede were on patrol at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River when they saw a fishing vessel returning upriver. The officers stopped the vessel to conduct a resource inspection. It was determined that the vessel's captain was in possession of two undersized red grouper. The captain was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Winton and Lieutenant Spoede were on patrol at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River when they saw a jet ski violating a posted slow speed zone. The officers conducted a vessel stop, at which time the operator exhibited signs of impairment. After performing poorly on field sobriety tasks, the operator was placed under arrest for boating under the influence. Once back at the marina, the operator, who was handcuffed, jumped off the officer's patrol vessel and attempted to swim away. Fortunately, the officers had previously ensured that the subject's life jacket was secured properly and were able to recover him unharmed. During an inventory inspection of the jet ski, marijuana was also located. Since the subject had two previous convictions for DUI within the past ten years, he was booked into the Lee County Jail on charges for felony BUI, resisting arrest without violence, and possession of marijuana less than twenty grams.

Officer Garcia was on patrol at the Carl Johnson boat ramp when she saw a vessel pulling up to the dock without the required navigational lights displayed. She recognized the operator, whom she had previously cited for driving on a suspended license, leave the vessel and get into a truck and drive over to the ramp to pull the vessel. An investigation of the vessel revealed that the subject had purchased it over a year ago but had failed to register the vessel or transfer the title into his name. The subject was issued a notice to appear for knowingly driving on a suspended license and failure to transfer title. He was also issued multiple warnings related to other registration and boating safety violations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton was on patrol around the South Skyway Rest Area when he saw a subject fishing from the relief bridge off of I-275. Officer Dalton performed a fisheries inspection and found that the subject had caught and kept seven undersized gray (mangrove) snapper. The subject was given a criminal citation for possession of undersized mangrove snapper and a warning for being over the bag limit of mangrove snapper. The subject will have to appear in court for his violations.

Officer Dalton and Officer Gonzales were working water patrol around Longboat Pass. They stopped and performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting near the Longboat Pass Bridge. During the inspection, the officers noticed that the operator of the vessel was exhibiting signs of impairment. Officer Gonzales had the operator of the vessel perform some tasks to determine his level of impairment. After Officer Gonzales had concluded his investigation, the operator of the vessel was arrested and taken to jail for boating under the influence of alcohol. He will have to appear in court for his violation.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While conducting fisheries inspections near the Gandy Bridge, Officer Freda discovered an individual to be in possession of an undersized sheepshead. Through the course of the fisheries inspection, it was determined the individual had a warrant for his arrest for failure to pay child support out of Hardee County. The individual was issued a warning for possession of an undersized sheepshead. He was taken into custody based on the warrant and booked into the Pinellas County Jail.

While on patrol near Fort Desoto, Lieutenant Laskowski saw two individuals traveling back to shore in a small jon boat. A resource inspection revealed the individuals to be in possession of two redfish, one of which was under the legal minimum size limit of eighteen inches. Based on Executive Order 18-45, the possession of redfish and snook are prohibited in Pinellas County due to the occurrence of red tide earlier this year. The individuals were cited for possession of a redfish during a closed season and issued a warning for possession of an undersized redfish.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Hazelwood and Officer Lejarzar traveled to Bartow for the “National Archery in Schools Tournament” along with officers from throughout the region. Officers assisted as lane judges for hundreds of students ranging in age from elementary to high school. A few officers took up the challenge of competing against the coaches for bragging rights. Ultimately, the coaches prevailed, but the officers made a good showing despite using youth bows that were a bit too small. The students received awards, trophies and equipment for their skills and hard work.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Gray presented an outreach event at Fountain View RV resort in North Ft. Myers. The event focused on living alongside alligators. The meeting was attended by many residents of the community and it gave them a chance to see and touch a live alligator and learn the steps they can take to avoid conflict with the animals, including what to do about nuisance alligators.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officers from the Southwest Region participated in the 2019 Florida State Fair. During this event, thousands of people journeyed through FWC’s Red Barn exhibit, which showcased FWC’s six divisions. Participants were able to reconnect with nature through hands on activities, live animals, games and educational experiences. Officers engaged stakeholders, answered questions and explained recruitment opportunities during one of the largest outreach opportunities in the state. Each year, FWC’s Red Barn exhibit encourages people to reconnect with nature by establishing lasting environmental ethics only achieved by personal experience.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Lieutenant Hankinson and Officer Hudson were called out to an early morning boating accident in Jupiter. Upon conclusion of the accident investigation, Lieutenant Hankinson cited the operator for violating a United States Coast Guard Navigation Rule. The operator was also issued a warning for improper navigation lights.

Officer Boyd was on land patrol and received a call about two adult males catching and keeping undersize snook at the Jupiter Federal Bridge. When Officer Boyd arrived, he

saw two subjects exiting the area that matched the description of the subjects from the call. The subjects were in possession of two undersized snook. The snook measured 22 inches and 23 inches. In the Atlantic region in the State of Florida it is illegal to harvest snook that measures less than 28 inches in length and over 32 inches in length. It is also illegal to harvest more than the daily bag limit of one snook. Officer Boyd issued the subject who caught the snook two misdemeanor citations for possession of undersize snook and for possessing over the daily bag limit of snook. Officer Boyd also issued the subject two warnings. The first warning was for possession of a saltwater fish species without a saltwater shoreline fishing license. The second warning was for possession of snook without a snook permit.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Boynton Beach when a vehicle was operating erratically, nearly striking a curb and crossing into oncoming traffic. A vehicle stop was initiated to address the violations. Upon contacting the driver, Officer Brodbeck detected numerous signs of impairment. After performing poorly on field sobriety tasks, the driver was arrested for suspicion of DUI. At the Palm Beach County Jail, the driver provided breath samples of 0.117 and 0.118 BAC. A search through law enforcement databases revealed the driver had 4 prior DUI convictions. The driver was cited for felony DUI.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Boynton Beach when 5 subjects were harvesting fish from a freshwater canal with a cast net. While observing the subjects, two returned to a nearby SUV and backed it up to the remaining three individuals. Once the vehicle began to leave the area, a stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection. While speaking with the driver of the vehicle, the remaining subjects began to leave the area. Officer Brodbeck was able to locate and detain all five individuals. A search of the area revealed numerous freshwater fish, including gamefish, which had been discarded in nearby vegetation. Investigator Fowler arrived on scene to assist in the investigation. Violations included harvesting freshwater gamefish by illegal method, resisting arrest without violence, possession of a concealed weapon, tampering with evidence, and no valid driver license. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol arrived and transported four subjects to be processed for deportation. One subject was released from the scene.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Schroer was dispatched to a residence where a homeowner reported an alligator was sitting under his vehicle. Officer Schroer captured the alligator and relocated it to a nearby natural area without incident.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Arbogast and Stearns were on water patrol in Marco River when they saw a vessel unable to maintain a straight course. They stopped the vessel to conduct a safety inspection. During the inspection the officers saw several indicators of impairment. The operator consented to field sobriety exercises and performed poorly. The officers determined that the operator was impaired and placed him under arrest for boating under the influence. Officer Stearns transported the operator to the Naples Jail Center. The operator refused to provide a breath sample and was charged accordingly.

Officer Curbelo was patrolling Picayune Strand State Forest on the opening day of the Spring Turkey Quota Hunt when he heard several shots nearby. Officer Curbelo concealed himself and waited for the subjects to approach. Officer Curbelo saw a male and female exit a wooded area, both carrying turkeys. When Officer Curbelo checked their licenses and quota permits the subjects were in possession of a valid quota permit and a guest permit. Under the rules of the quota permit the bag limit is one bird. The quota permit holder was cited for over the bag limit and the second Osceola turkey was seized as evidence.

Officer Specialist Polly was contacted by the land manager from a local agricultural farm regarding a subject that was trespassing on the property. When Officer Polly arrived, he saw a vehicle stuck in one of the farm ditches and the individuals nearby waiting on a tow truck. Officer Polly recognized the driver as a subject who had also been off trail the week before in the Picayune Strand State Forest. The driver stated that he and his passenger had entered the forest and made their way through to the farm fields the night before but didn't recall how he had gotten into the farm. The only way for the subject to have arrived in the farm fields was to again travel off trail from the forest. At the land manager's request, the subject was issued a notice to appear for trespassing on agricultural property. The subject was also trespassed from the state forest.

Officer Araujo was working plain clothes patrol in an unmarked vehicle in the Picayune State Forest during the opening weekend of Spring Turkey Quota Hunt. He noticed a vehicle parked on the side of a dirt road with animal traps on the vehicle roof. The traps contained water bowls and cracked corn. Officer Araujo saw two individuals exit the wood line towards the vehicle. Officer Araujo identified himself to the subjects who spontaneously stated that they had a license to trap bobcats. Along with another officer, Araujo followed the subjects to their trapping site where additional traps were located. The traps contained cracked corn and were placed on the ground to feed live chickens used to attract bobcats. Officer Araujo documented all potential evidence and obtained video and recorded statements after questioning the subjects post Miranda. The following charges will be filed with the State Attorney's Office; trapping out of season, not attending to traps within 24 hours, placing bait on a Wildlife Management Area, and attempt to take bobcat out of season.

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

While patrolling Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, Officer Dunn saw a group of people actively fishing at one of the fishing piers. Officer Dunn conducted an inspection of the subjects' fish and found 16 mangrove snapper, 1 lane snapper, and 1 red hind grouper. Officer Dunn found 15 of the 16-mangrove snapper to be undersize and the 1 lane snapper was undersize. The total number of snapper exceeded the total aggregate (10 snapper per person) allowed per person and the red hind grouper was out of season. One of the subjects claimed possession of the fish and was cited accordingly.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Tafoya and Larios were on water patrol in Tavernier Creek. Officer Tafoya noticed a man standing near a fish cleaning table, holding what appeared to be a hogfish. When the officers approached the dock, the subject placed the fish onto the cleaning table. Officer Tafoya asked the individual what kind of fish he had just been holding, the man held a mutton snapper up. A closer inspection of the cleaning table and a cooler found nearby revealed the individual was in possession of two undersized and out of season hogfish, one undersized mutton snapper, and one 34" out of season black grouper. The individual was given a notice to appear and charged accordingly.

Officers Hettel and Martino were on patrol ocean side of Key West when they responded to a call of a person trying to sell a live queen conch to tourists at a local restaurant. Key West PD officers arrived on scene first and contacted the subject. Upon arrival, Officers Hettel and Martino spoke with the subject who admitted to being in possession of the protected species. The officers followed the subject to his vehicle where he turned over a live queen conch to Officer Hettel. The subject was issued a notice to appear and the queen conch was returned to the water alive.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

MONROE COUNTY

The FWC OPV Trident patrolled from Key West to Rebecca Channel in South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico federal waters and conducted numerous fisheries inspections on commercial and charter fishing vessels.

Officers Richards, Foell, Sapp and Cobb on FWC Offshore Patrol Vessel Trident conducted a fisheries inspection on a 75' commercial shrimp vessel out of Houston, Texas. The inspection of the vessel's below-deck freezer hold revealed 175 lane snapper mixed in between bags of shrimp. Lane snapper bag limit in Gulf of Mexico federal waters is 20 per person. The three subjects possessed 75 lane snapper over the allowable bag limit. The violations were documented and forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service.

Officers Richards, Foell, Sapp and Cobb on FWC Offshore Patrol Vessel Trident conducted a fisheries inspection on an 87' commercial shrimp vessel out of Mayport,

Florida. Inspection of the vessels below-deck freezer hold revealed multiple undersized spiny lobster. The subject was cited accordingly for the undersized lobster.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Arbogast and Conroy conducted panther zone speed enforcement on US 41. The officers stopped several vehicles to address speed violations. The travelers were educated about the importance of slowing down for panther conservation efforts. The speed limit in the panther zone area is 60 mph during the day and 45 mph at night. The officers issued three citations and four warnings.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer Washington and Officer Albert attended Keiser University “Criminal Justice Day.” About 150 students from local high schools attended the event. The officers brought wildlife for educational purposes and answered questions pertaining to fish and wildlife management and enforcement.

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube was an Instructor for the USCG Station Islamorada at the “Weekender” Boating Safety Class at the History of Diving Museum. Officer Dube taught the boating law and boating accident portions of the class. There were 35 students that participated in the course and received their boat smart boating license.