

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

August 30, 2019 through September 12, 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

GULF COUNTY

Officer Specialists M. Webb and H. Webb saw a vessel with three people on board pull into the St. Joe City Ramp. A resource inspection revealed the captain was in possession of four pints of scallop meat. He was cited accordingly.

Officer Specialist H. Webb was conducting marine fisheries inspections at St. Joe boat ramp when a recreational fishing boat with several people on board returned from spearfishing. A resource inspection revealed that the captain and crew had an undersized gag grouper and an undersized mangrove snapper. The captain was issued citations accordingly.

Officer Lipford was conducting resource inspections at the Eagle Harbor boat ramp. An inspection of a vessel with three subjects on board revealed they had over the daily bag limit of bay scallops. The appropriate citation was issued.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Corbin and Officer McVaney conducted an inspection on a vessel that had been anchored in the Santa Rosa Sound for several nights without an anchor light. While speaking to the owner on board, it was determined that the vessel was in derelict condition and inoperable. A check with dispatch revealed the owner had an active

warrant for his arrest for failure to appear for possession of narcotics, loitering and prowling. The owner was arrested on the warrant and issued a derelict vessel citation.

Officer Corbin and Officer Mullins saw a vessel being operated on full plane in the idle speed/no wake zone near the Destin Bridge. A boating safety inspection was conducted and the operator showed several signs of impairment. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Corbin and Officer Hahr were dispatched to a complaint at the Okaloosa Island Pier in reference to subjects keeping undersize pompano. Two subjects were located on the pier matching the description given and a resource inspection was conducted. The subjects had five undersize pompano inside their cooler, along with other unregulated species of fish. Both subjects were issued appropriate citations.

Officer Corbin conducted a boating safety inspection in the Santa Rosa Sound on a vessel for not having an anchor light. The owner of the vessel could not provide the registration certificate. A check with dispatch found the vessel was still registered to the previous owner. The current owner of the vessel purchased the vessel in April of 2019. The previous owner of the vessel was issued a notice to appear citation for failure to transfer title/registration within 30 days of change of ownership.

Officer Corbin saw a subject cleaning a shark at a local marina. A resource inspection was conducted and the shark was determined to be a protected species that was prohibited to harvest. An undersized greater amberjack was also located. The vessel owner claimed responsibility for the violations and was issued appropriate citations.

Lieutenant Molnar and Officer McVaney conducted an inspection on a vessel anchored in the Destin Harbor and not displaying an anchor light. Contact was made with a subject sleeping on board who said he arrived from out of state a couple months ago and had been living on the vessel. The subject had an active arrest warrant out of Georgia for failure to appear on a sexual battery charge. The subject was arrested and transported to the Okaloosa County Jail.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties participated in a detail for the first two alligator hunting phases. The officers targeted violations associated with gator hunting. The officers checked 121 users, issued 2 citations, issued 21 warnings, and conducted 31 vessel inspections during the detail.

Officer Roberson was dispatched to a call at Navarre beach on the Gulf side in reference to an undersized gray triggerfish. While on route to the call, Officer Roberson learned that the suspect had left the scene. The officer obtained the suspects name and went to their residence and found the individual filleting an undersized triggerfish. The suspect was issued a notice to appear for possession of gray triggerfish out of season.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Bradshaw saw a vessel on Choctawhatchee Bay with a light being displayed in a manner for crabbing and flounder giggering. A resource inspection revealed blue crabs and flounder in a cooler. The occupant of the vessel was aware of the size limits and was cited for possession of undersized flounder.

Officers Bradshaw and Officer Brooks were patrolling Black Creek during the second phase of the public alligator hunt and saw a vessel with a light displayed in a manner for hunting alligators. One of the subjects standing on the bow of the vessel was actively looking for alligators while holding a rod and reel with a large treble hook, which is commonly used for harvesting alligators. An inspection determined the subjects were alligator hunting and one of the occupants had the required alligator harvesting permit, but the subject hunting did not have the required agents license. The subject was cited accordingly.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

GULF COUNTY

Lieutenant Guy and Officer Lipford responded to a stranded vessel with mechanical issues alligator hunting on Lake Wimico. The officers aided the subjects on board in getting back to the boat ramp safely.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

ALACHUA COUNTY

Officer Troiano was working an enforcement detail targeting alligator hunting on Orange Lake. Officer Troiano checked a subject returning to the ramp and discovered he had phase 2 tags for Orange Lake. The subject was hunting during phase 1. Officer Troiano cited the subject for hunting out of phase.

Officer Reith was patrolling the Bailey Tract of the Goethe State Forest when he saw a SUV parked in a closed area for vehicles. He contacted the subject who was picking palmetto berries and placing them in the back seat of his SUV. Officer Reith issued a notice to appear for picking palmetto berries on state land and issued a citation for operating a vehicle in a closed area.

Officer Drew received information from a landowner in reference to subjects who cut a fence and entered the property in their vehicle. The landowner had photographs of the subject's vehicle and discovered they were picking palmetto berries on the property. Officer Drew spent several days interviewing subjects and gathering enough information

to locate the two suspects. Officer Drew located the suspects and the vehicle at a residence in Bronson. They admitted to cutting the fence to enter and pick palmetto berries on the property. Charges will be direct filed through the state attorney's office for trespass and criminal mischief.

Officer Drew saw four subjects loading multiple bags of freshly picked palmetto berries into a van. He had received multiple complaints about these subjects illegally picking palmetto berries on state lands and private lands without permission. Officer Drew had previously warned them about picking palmettos berries without written landowner permission and that they needed to possess a native plant harvesting permit through the Department of Agriculture. Officer Drew asked the subjects if they had their permits for picking and transporting the berries for sale. All four subjects stated they did not have any permits. Officer Drew issued a notice to appear to each of the four subjects for not possessing the native plant harvesting permit and seized 150 pounds of palmetto berries.

CLAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Haney was contacted by the Clay County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) to assist with a suspicious person call. A male subject with a lengthy criminal history was trespassing on private property and picking palmetto berries. Lieutenant Haney responded and found that the subject was harvesting for commercial purposes, did not have permission to be on the property to pick the berries, and did not have the required permit. The subject was arrested and transported to Clay County Jail.

Officer Colasanti was on patrol and saw a subject inside the Bayard WMA picking palmetto berries. The suspect had been told he was not allowed to harvest berries in this area by St Johns Water Management District staff. The subject was cited for the violations.

Officer Barber followed up on a Wildlife Alert complaint regarding a subject who had posted photographs to social media of himself holding two small alligators. Officer Barber's investigation revealed that the subject illegally captured and transported the juvenile alligators to his home. He did not have a permit to possess live alligators. Charges were filed for the violations.

Officers J. Barber, E. Barber and Lieutenant Haney were patrolling Camp Blanding property and saw three subjects operating a UTV in a prohibited area. They conducted a stop and the operator appeared to be impaired. The subject was arrested and transported to jail where he refused to submit to a lawful breath test.

CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Reid and Banks received an illegal camping complaint in the Withlacoochee State Forest Two Mile Prairie Tract. They located the camp site and contacted a female and her two children. The female had several baggies that appeared to be

methamphetamine, a bag of 30 pills and multiple smoking pipes. Each small baggie and several smoking pipes field tested positive for methamphetamine. The female was placed under arrest and booked into the Citrus County Jail. Citrus County Sheriff's Office deputies responded and assisted in transferring the two children into the custody of the Florida Department of Children and Families. The bag of 30 pills was submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for identification.

Officers Reid and Banks were conducting Joint Enforcement Agreement Mid-Range patrol 13 miles off Homosassa in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. The officers saw a vessel with fishing equipment on board and conducted a stop for a marine fisheries inspection. Officer Banks boarded the vessel and contacted the operator and occupants. Her inspection revealed a 21" gag grouper, three inches less than the 24" minimum size limit. Officer Banks issued the appropriate citation.

Officer Reid saw a vessel with fishing equipment onboard going toward the Homosassa River. Officer Reid contacted the vessel and performed a marine fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed two 22" cobia, both less than the 33" minimum size limit. Officer Reid issued a citation for the violation.

Officer Browning was on patrol working a targeted enforcement action on the Homosassa River following the recent trap closure. Officer Browning saw a commercial blue crab fishing vessel, with an individual pulling traps outside the marked channel. He conducted a commercial blue crab inspection and found the individual did not have a saltwater products license in his possession, nor was there any record that he had one. The vessel did not have a saltwater products license either. Officer Browning issued a citation for no saltwater products license and two written warnings for commercial blue crab fishing regulations and boating registration.

Officers Browning and Ulrich were on foot patrol, targeting alligator hunting on Lake Rousseau spillway. The officers saw three individuals operate a vessel from Lake Rousseau into the Barge Canal. The vessel being operated did not have the required stern light and one of the individuals was spotlighting the bank. The officers announced their presence and proceeded to complete an alligator hunting and boating safety inspection. One of the individuals had alligator hunting tags but they were exclusively for Lake Rousseau. The other two individuals did not to have valid alligator trapping agent licenses. The officers issued three resource citations, one uniform boating citation and eight written warnings.

Officer Reid received a complaint of individuals harvesting redfish over the bag limit in the area of Long Point, northwest of Crystal River. Officer Reid found two individuals on a vessel fishing in that area. He performed a marine fisheries inspection and found the two individuals to be in possession of three redfish. The bag limit for this area is one per person. The appropriate citation was issued.

Officers Suttles and Hughes received information that subjects were catching and hiding snook during the closed season at a popular fishing spot. The officers arrived and saw a

subject matching the description loading a snook into a cooler in the trunk of a vehicle. The officers contacted the subject, conducted an inspection and issued a citation for possession of snook during the closed season.

Officers Suttles and Hughes were on patrol in the scallop grounds when they saw a vessel at anchor near a rock pile with a dive flag displayed. They saw several spearguns on the deck and conducted a resource inspection. Two undersized gag grouper were located and the appropriate citations were issued.

Officers Suttles and Hughes conducted inspections of commercial shrimp boats harvesting shrimp in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Ten vessels were boarded and inspected for compliance. The officers issued three federal citations for harvesting and possessing shrimp in federal waters without the required permit. The three cases will be turned over to NOAA for prosecution.

Officers Hughes, Suttles and Read were on water patrol in federal waters aboard the offshore patrol vessel NC Fin Cat. Officer Hughes conducted a marine fisheries inspection of a 26-foot recreational fishing vessel and discovered five undersized gray triggerfish inside the fish box onboard the vessel. Officer Hughes issued a federal citation for possession of undersized gray triggerfish and the case will be turned over to National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration for prosecution.

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Culbreth saw two individuals operating an off-road vehicle on the side of Interstate 10 and Cecil Commerce Parkway. He contacted the individuals who had exited the off-road vehicle and entered the woods. He noticed the off-road vehicle contained two burlap bags and two trash cans of palmetto berries and harvesting tools/gear in the rear of the vehicle. Officer Lentz arrived to assist with the investigation. The officers learned the two individuals did not have the required harvest permit. Both were cited for harvesting commercial exploited plants without a permit along with three written warnings.

Lieutenant Givens and Officers Read and Geib checked a recreational fishing vessel in federal waters out of Mayport Inlet. Officer Geib discovered two red snapper in a live well. Recreational harvest of red snapper was closed at the time of the inspection. Officer Geib issued a federal citation and the case will be turned over to National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration for prosecution.

Officers Geib and Read conducted an inspection of a fishing vessel and found three people on board in possession of five red snapper. Recreational harvest of red snapper was closed at the time of the inspection. Officer Read issued a federal citation and the case will be turned over to National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration for prosecution.

SUWANNEE COUNTY

Officer Specialists Johnston and Nichols were patrolling just outside Ichetucknee State Park when they saw a reckless driver swerving in and out of east and westbound lanes on US 27. The officers stopped the vehicle and the operator appeared impaired. Field sobriety tasks were performed, and the driver was arrested for DUI. At the Suwannee County Jail, he consented to a breath test. The results were .185 and .170.

MADISON COUNTY

Officer Vazquez was on foot patrol working an active artifact dig site in Twin Rivers State Forest. He noticed a faint light in the distance and walked towards it. When he arrived at the location, he saw a subject digging with several tools and filtering the dirt. The man admitted to digging for artifacts as well as having several artifacts in his possession. The charge of removing artifacts from state lands will be filed with the state attorney. Due to the extensive damage of the site, both the State Forest Service and the State Archeology Service will be providing a site assessment and damage report to assist with prosecution.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Stuhr was on vessel patrol on the Intracoastal Waterway and the Amelia River. He conducted a boating safety and fisheries inspection on a vessel and learned from dispatch the operator had an out-of-state warrant from Georgia. The warrant was for driving under the influence and for driving while license was suspended/revoked. Georgia authorities advised that they would extradite; the operator was arrested and taken to the county jail.

LEVY COUNTY

Officer Willis was dispatched to Manatee Spring State Park regarding a subject who was mud bogging on park property and had gotten stuck. Officer Willis arrived on scene and met with park staff and the owner of the stuck vehicle. The owner admitted to driving the vehicle off the roadway and mud bogging. The vehicle was buried to the frame in mud, causing damage to state park property. Officer Willis cited the subject appropriately for the violations.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

While on foot patrol at Ketchum Park Boat Ramp, Officer Balgo saw several individuals fishing along the seawall. A resource inspection located an undersized red drum in one of the coolers. A citation and several warnings were issued accordingly.

Officer Balgo saw a vehicle stopped in the middle of US Highway 1. The operator showed signs of impairment and Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were performed. The operator was arrested for DUI. His breath sample was .22% blood alcohol concentration, almost three times the legal limit.

While on foot patrol at Florida State Road 528 and the Banana River, Officer Balgo saw an individual fishing near the shoreline. A resource inspection found the individual in possession of over his daily bag limit of red drum. The individual was cited accordingly.

Officer Hallsten received a complaint that two individuals kept a tarpon at a popular fishing area. Officer Hallsten contacted Lieutenant Lee who was in the area. Lieutenant Lee located the subjects with the tarpon in the back of their vehicle. When Officer Hallsten arrived on scene, he issued the subject who had caught and kept the tarpon a notice to appear and a fishing license citation.

Officers Hallsten and Balgo conducted a fisheries inspection on an individual fishing from shore. The subject was found in possession of a redfish that was 34 ½ inches, with 27 inches being the maximum size for redfish. Officer Balgo issued a citation accordingly.

Officer Hallsten saw a vehicle driving without headlights on after dark. The vehicle was driving very erratically, and a traffic stop was initiated. The operator appeared to be impaired and Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks were given. The operator was arrested for DUI, refused to provide a breath sample, and was booked into the Brevard County Jail.

Lieutenant Lee led a post-storm assessment of the Intracoastal Waterway in Brevard and Indian River Counties after Hurricane Dorian passed through the area. Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission received several reports of overturned and misplaced vessels due to the storm. Lieutenant Lee's team searched 90 miles of waterway in a two-day period and identified fourteen vessels that were misplaced during the storm. Local officers will be conducting investigations on all fourteen vessels to ensure they are recovered or removed from state waters if warranted.

Officer Maslo saw two men fishing from the shoreline. A resource inspection revealed that one of the men was in possession of eleven mangrove snapper, eight of which were under the legal-size limit. Citations were issued accordingly.

Officer Loeffler received information about a subject keeping over the bag limit of redfish. After identifying the suspect, the officer conducted a resource inspection. The inspection revealed three redfish, two of which were under the legal-size limit. Citations were issued accordingly.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel checked the catch of three subjects who were fishing from the shoreline in New Smyrna Beach. Two of the subjects were in possession of multiple mangrove snapper that were under the legal-size limit and were issued notices to appear. The other subject was in possession of a gag grouper that was under the legal size limit and was issued a notice to appear.

Officer Cornell stopped and checked a subject fishing in the Daytona Beach area. The subject was in possession of more than three times his daily bag limit of mangrove snapper and almost all of them were under the legal-size limit. He was issued two charges on a notice to appear.

ST. JOHN'S COUNTY

Officers Ramsey and Lawshe saw eight people in violation of Guana Dam WMA rules pertaining to fishing in Lake Ponte Vedra. The violations observed were cast netting within 50 yards of Guana water control structure, possession of fin fish which may be taken by hook and line only, and prohibited access to Guana Dam water control structure. During the fisheries inspections one subject was in possession of an undersized redfish, and one subject had a warrant out of St. Johns County for an unpaid FWC wildlife resource violation at Guana Dam. The subject with the warrant was taken into custody and booked into the St. Johns County Jail. All the other subjects were cited for seven misdemeanor violations and received six warnings.

While on federal fisheries patrol, Officer Specialist W. Miller conducted an inspection on a vessel fishing 18 miles east of St. Augustine. The inspection found a red snapper and two red drum. Federal citations for possession of red drum in federal waters, and possession of red snapper in federal waters were issued.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Dias was checking a boat ramp along the Ocklawaha River and heard an airboat being operated in an area closed to alligator hunting. Officer Dias saw the individuals on the boat shine lights along the shoreline. He followed the subjects back to a different boat ramp as they actively shined lights along the shoreline. At the boat ramp a resource inspection was initiated. The subjects were in possession of alligator hunting equipment and alligator tags and were hunting outside the boundaries of their hunt zone. A notice to appear citation was issued for the violation.

Senior Officer Simpson and Officer Specialists Rice and Dias encountered numerous subjects illegally harvesting saw palmetto berries in the Marion and Lake County portions of the Ocala Wildlife Management Area (WMA). All subjects have been in possession of 20 pounds to 500 pounds of berries and did not have a permit from the U.S. Forest Service to harvest in the WMA. Ten notice to appear citations have been issued for the violations. Two arrests have been made for illegal harvest of the berries and felony drug charges.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Guirate, Wester, and Mason received a call from the Florida Highway Patrol that several subjects were harvesting palmetto berries on private property without a permit or permission. Upon their arrival the subjects were still on scene and were cited accordingly.

Officer Wester was on water patrol on the Ocklawaha River when a boat passed by him with several blue crab in a bucket and a grappling hook. Upon making contact, he found the subject was crabbing in the river and did not have any buoys attached to his traps. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Wester was on patrol at the Palatka City Docks when he observed a group of subjects shrimping. He watched the group and saw that only two of the persons were actively throwing a cast net, but several family members were taking buckets of shrimp to a vehicle. Officer Wester made contact as they were leaving and found that the vehicle had 25 gallons of shrimp inside. The limit for the two subjects was ten gallons. Both subjects were cited appropriately.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

SEMINOLE COUNTY

A man reported that his friends had been kayaking on the Econlockhatchee River earlier in the day and were lost. With Hurricane Dorian approaching, Lieutenant Tye and Officer Auber arrived on scene as well as other FWC officers, Seminole County Fire Rescue and Seminole County Sheriff's Office. After assessing the conditions, it was determined it was safe enough to attempt to find the kayakers before storm conditions worsened. Lieutenant Tye and Officer Auber launched a vessel along with Seminole County Fire Rescue. They located the lost kayakers approximately 3.5 miles from the St. Johns River on the Econlockhatchee River and returned them to safety as the weather conditions deteriorated.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Hazelwood was on land patrol in the Cecil Webb Wildlife Management Area (CWWMA) when he received a call that some subjects were possibly picking berries on Tuckers Grade inside CWWMA. When Officer Hazelwood arrived on scene, he found two individuals removing saw palmetto berries from state lands. The appropriate law enforcement action was taken.

Officer Zenoniani, Officer Hazelwood, Officer Midolo and Captain Carpenter II were on patrol in the Yucca Pens WMA in Charlotte County when they came upon an illegal saw palmetto berry picking operation. Nine violators were found in possession of several bags of illegally obtained berries and were cited accordingly.

Officer Midolo, Officer Hazelwood, Officer Salem and Lieutenant Ruggiero responded to a complaint about people picking palmetto berries in a local management area. Lieutenant Ruggiero located the vehicle along with other suspects in the woods with several bags of palmetto berries nearby. None of the men had a valid day use permit or a permit to harvest palmetto berries. They were each issued the appropriate citations.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer Messman saw an individual walking carrying a bucket and cast net. Officer Messman pulled into the parking area where the individual had parked. When the individual arrived at his vehicle, he was no longer carrying the cast net or bucket. A search/resource inspection located the bucket and cast net in a concealed location. One snook was in the bucket. The individual was issued the appropriate citations.

While on patrol on the Hillsborough River, Officer Rorer initiated a boating safety inspection. The operator showed signs of impairment and standardized seated field sobriety tasks were performed. The operator was arrested for operating a vessel while under the influence of drugs or alcohol to the extent that the person's normal faculties were impaired. The operator refused to provide a breath sample.

While on patrol at the Tampa Bypass Canal, Officer Caldwell saw individuals fishing with a cast net. The individuals were in possession of three large-mouth bass. One of the men admitted to catching the bass with the cast net. He was cited appropriately.

While on patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Officer Caldwell saw a subject fishing. He waited until the subject was done fishing and initiated a resource inspection. The individual was in possession of a snook during closed season and six undersized sheepshead. The individual was cited for the violations.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Winton was on patrol in Matlacha when he saw a vessel trailer being operated without a license plate. A traffic stop was conducted, and it was determined that the vessel had been bought and sold without a title, a violation of Florida Statutes. The driver of the vehicle was issued several citations. Criminal charges pertaining to the sale/purchase of a vessel without a title are being filed with the State Attorney's Office.

Officer Garcia and Officer Zenoniani were on water patrol. They initiated a boating safety inspection on a vessel in a manatee zone. The operator showed signs of impairment, was arrested for boating under the influence, and transported to the Lee County Jail. The operator refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Gray responded to a state park where multiple subjects were picking palmetto berries. Officer Gray arrived on scene and a second subject was detained. The subject was cited for removing palmetto berries from a state park and issued a trespass warning.

Officer Winton was on patrol at the Punta Rassa Boat Ramp when he saw a fishing vessel returning to the dock with a faulty navigation light. A vessel stop was conducted. A resource inspection revealed the captain was in possession of several undersized mangrove snapper. The captain was issued a notice to appear but refused to sign the court copy. The captain was arrested and cited for three counts of fisheries violations, refusal to accept a summons, and resisting arrest without violence.

Officer Bell saw a vessel returning from federal waters south of Sanibel Island. Officer Bell initiated a boating safety and fisheries inspection. One occupant of the vessel possessed two red grouper that were less than the legal limit of 20". Officer Bell issued the subject the appropriate citations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton and Officer Gonzales were on land patrol in the area of Palma Sola Boulevard. They saw an individual fishing from a small bridge using two large cast nets strung together and seine netting to block off a canal. The subject was cited criminally for stop netting.

Officer Dalton was on land patrol in the area of Manatee Avenue West on the Palma Sola Causeway. He conducted a resource inspection on an individual who had been cast netting off the causeway. The subject had caught and kept two red drum, one undersized snook and one undersized sheepshead. Citations were issued accordingly.

Officer Gonzales and Officer Dalton were on water patrol in the area of Long Boat Pass. They performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel transiting the area. The operator of the vessel was showing signs of impairment and sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence of alcohol and was taken to the Manatee County Jail.

Officer Dalton was on land patrol in the area of Manatee Avenue West on the Palma Sola Causeway. He conducted a resource inspection on an individual who had been fishing in Perico Harbor. The subject had caught and kept one red drum that was undersized. He was cited accordingly.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on patrol near the Gandy Bridge, Officer Freda observed an individual fishing. A resource inspection found the individual in possession of five spotted seatrout. The legal bag limit for spotted seatrout in the southwest region is four per person. Spotted

seatrout is also currently closed in the southwest region to allow the fishery to recover. The individual was cited accordingly.

While on patrol under the Pinellas side of the Gandy Bridge span, Officer Freda observed an individual fishing. He initiated a resource inspection and found the individual in possession of a redbfish. Redfish is currently closed in the southwest region to allow the fishery to recover. The individual was cited accordingly.

While on patrol at the Maximo boat ramp, Lieutenant Laskowski saw an individual attempting to dock his vessel. The individual appeared to be having trouble pulling up to the dock. After observing several more unsuccessful attempts, Lieutenant Laskowski assisted the boater in docking the vessel. The operator showed signs of impairment and after completing seated standardized field sobriety tasks, was arrested for operating a vessel while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He was transported to the Pinellas County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

Officers Conrad and Freda saw an individual catch a snook at the Gandy Bridge. The individual put the snook into a bucket, returned to his car and attempted to leave. The officers stopped the individual and located the snook in the trunk of the vehicle. The individual was cited for possession of a snook during the temporary closure, and for fishing without a license.

While on patrol near the Gandy Bridge, Officer Conrad saw an individual catch a snook. He waited until the individual packed up his vehicle to leave and then initiated a fisheries inspection. The individual was cited for possession of a snook during a closed season.

While on patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Officers Caldwell and Wise saw three individuals fishing. They waited for the men to finish their activities and initiated a resource inspection. The men possessed four undersized snook during a closed season, five undersized sheepshead and one redbfish during a closed season. The three men were cited appropriately for the various violations.

Officer Specialist Bibeau saw an individual actively fishing from underneath a bridge. He contacted the individual to conduct a fisheries inspection as he was preparing to leave the area. Officer Specialist Bibeau found the individual in possession of a red drum and cited him appropriately.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera completed an investigation regarding a monkey bite at a pet store. A child had placed her hand near the enclosure housing a cotton top tamarin monkey. There was no barrier to prevent contact with the animal as required by law. The monkey bit the girl on the finger, causing substantial injury. Three misdemeanor citations were issued for the violations.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera responded to a report of a loose fox with a collar. Upon capture of the red fox, he was able to identify the owner. This same fox had escaped the previous year and the owner was cited. The owner of the fox agreed to release ownership, and the fox was placed at a licensed facility.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Boynton Beach when a suspicious vessel was observed at a boat ramp. The vessel displayed a Bahamian registration, had above-deck fuel tanks, and clothing belonging to several individuals. Suspecting possible human/drug smuggling, Customs and Border Patrol were called to the scene. A person claiming to be the owner of the vessel arrived and was detained. The CBP arrived on scene and took the subject into custody for further questioning.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol in Boynton Beach when a vessel without navigation lights entered the boat ramp at high speed. Upon contacting the operator, signs of impairment were detected. At the completion of seated field sobriety tasks, the operator was arrested for BUI. At the Palm Beach County Jail, the operator refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Brodbeck was watching several subjects actively harvesting fish with a cast net in a freshwater canal. As they began to leave, a resource inspection was initiated. A cooler in the bed of the vehicle contained two black bass and five bluegills, which cannot be harvested by cast net. In the bed of the truck was also a live red-bellied cooter, a native freshwater turtle. None of the subjects possessed a valid freshwater fishing license. The subjects were cited appropriately for the violations and the turtle was released unharmed to the water.

While on patrol in the Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer Norbrothen saw a vehicle operating in an area closed to vehicle traffic during archery season. The officer conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle and discovered the license plate attached did not match the vehicle. During a search of the vehicle, an additional license plate was found in a seat back pocket. The officer confirmed the additional plate had been stolen two weeks prior. The officer recovered the stolen license plate and the driver of the vehicle was cited with several criminal charges and citations for violations of WMA rules.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson was dispatched to a complaint from a park ranger about two individuals picking saw palmetto berries illegally on Savannas Preserve State Park. The officer arrived on scene and the two individuals were at their car with the park ranger. The park ranger advised that the subjects had a black trash can on the fire trail and when they heard his ATV, they hid it in the bushes and walked out a non-designated exit. The officer located the hidden black trash can which was filled with saw palmetto berries. The subjects were given a notice to appear citation and two citations for evasion of state park entrance fee and for exiting at a non-designated exit.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Norbrothen, Kirkland and Lieutenant Phillip were dispatched to conduct a welfare check on a subject in Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). A caller reported that her husband had not been heard from while hunting in the WMA. She was concerned he could be lost and had no way to contact him. She relayed pertinent information to FWC about her husband and his hunting plans. The information she gave FWC was pivotal in directing officers to her husband quickly and efficiently. The officers were able to locate her husband and determine he was in good health and good spirits. FWC dispatch then contacted his wife to let her know her husband was safe and on his way out of the WMA.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officer's Sample and Cosculluela saw several PWC's moored together around a pontoon boat and floating dock. None of the PWC's had registration numbers or decals displayed. A few minutes later six individuals riding PWC's approached the dock. Two operators were tour guides and the other four were paying customers, confirming suspicion of a PWC livery operation. The investigation revealed 17 PWCs registered in Florida over 60 days with no decals or numbers attached, one reported as stolen, one reported as abandoned, and one deemed not sea-worthy. The owner was contacted by phone and refused to respond to the scene to claim the two that had been reported stolen and abandoned. Several violations were discovered and further investigation revealed the owner had been warned previously. In total, 50 citations were issued which included numerous UBCs for registration violations and two misdemeanor citations for livery safety violations.

Officer Perez responded to a report of a suspicious vehicle loitering around a park. The officer observed the vehicle and attempted to conduct a stop. Three occupants fled the vehicle in different directions and hid in the bushes. One of them was carrying a dirty

white mesh bag. The subjects refused to comply with verbal commands to come out but were found and arrested. They were cited for removal of palmetto berries, collecting plant specimens from state park, interfering with an FWC officer, and resisting without violence.

Officer Presser observed two subjects cast netting and keeping large quantities of mullet. A resource inspection revealed the subjects were in possession of 297 silver mullet. The daily recreational bag limit for mullet is 50 per person, putting the subjects 197 fish over the limit. Neither subject was in possession of a fishing license. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued for the violations.

Officer Cartaya was conducting resource inspections and fishing license checks on the Rickenbacker Fishing pier. He checked two men fishing and found they possessed 28 mangrove snapper, 16 which were undersize. The total bag limit for mangrove snapper is 5 per person per day. The total aggregate bag limit for snapper is 10 snapper per person per day. Both subjects were issued misdemeanors accordingly.

Officers Dunn and McKinley observed a PWC on plane in a posted manatee zone. They attempted to conduct a vessel stop, but the subject fled into the Frost Museum parking area. Officer McKinley pursued the operator on land but could not locate him. A BOLO was issued for the subject and a City of Miami officer found and took the subject into custody. The subject had two warrants out of Broward County, one out of St. Johns County, and was wanted for questioning in 14 states and by the FBI for crimes relating to his warrants.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Fernandez completed an investigation regarding an escaped kangaroo. He was able to locate the owner of the animal who did not have a license for it. The owner was found to have an additional wallaroo and two arctic fox without the proper license. The appropriate citations were issued for the violations.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Knutson conducted a boating safety and resource inspection on a homemade vessel. He noticed there was no Hull Identification Number (HIN) on the transom of the vessel. The number is required by law and must be permanently affixed to the transom of the vessel. The owner of the vessel was charged accordingly.

While patrolling near the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Officer Knutson observed a small skiff docking at a campground boat ramp. The vessel had registration violations and no Hull Identification Number. The operator had been previously warned about these discrepancies and was issued the appropriate citations.

Officers Yurewitch and Araujo inspected a vessel fishing in Barfield Bay near Goodland. They issued written warnings for unlawfully using oysters for bait and harvesting them from a closed shellfish area. The subject was also issued a citation for an expired fishing license.

Officers Araujo and Yurewitch inspected a fishing vessel where the subject was unaware of the requirement to keep grouper in whole condition until landing ashore. The officers explained the regulations and issued written warnings for the whole condition violation, navigation light placement, improper registration display, and a citation for no valid fishing license.

MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Mattson was on unmarked water patrol in Key Largo and noticed a boat with a dive flag displayed. The boat was in an area known as the triangles which is a known spearfishing site in state waters. Investigator Mattson watched the boat from a distance and saw one man with a speargun. Investigator Mattson performed a resource inspection and located an undersized mangrove snapper onboard the vessel. The man was cited accordingly.

Investigator Mattson observed a boat at anchor with a man in the water and no dive flag. He asked the diver if he had any fish or spearguns. He said he had fish but no spearguns. After asking the man to swim to his boat, Investigator Mattson went to where the man had been diving and could see a speargun on the sea bottom. The man was cited for multiple violations.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Stearns, Arbogast, Rubenstein, Polly, and Lieutenant Bulger participated in an ongoing targeted enforcement action plan, focusing their attention on panther zone speed enforcement for Florida panther conservation efforts in Ochopee. The officers utilized radar equipped vehicles to detect speeding violations. The speed limit is 60 mph during the day and 45 mph at night in the area. The officers conducted several stops to address excessive speed violations and educate the travelers about the importance of slowing down for panther conservation efforts. Over the course of the evening, the officers issued 9 citations and 3 warnings.

Officer Conroy contacted a fisherman that possessed two undersized snapper. The angler showed Officer Conroy how he measured the catch using the top of his cooler lid. Officer Conroy explained the accuracy issues and that a more accurate measuring device should be used to determine the legal-size limit of his catch. Officer Conroy issued the appropriate citation.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

FWC officers responded to a call approximately 10 miles off-shore in reference to a male subject adrift on an inflatable raft. A good Samaritan had offered assistance since it was getting dark and the winds and tide were pushing the subject further out to sea. The subject refused assistance. The good Samaritan got the subjects name and approximate GPS coordinates before calling 911. Information available at the time indicated that the subject was wanted out of Connecticut for murder. By the time responding units arrived on scene it was dark and the good Samaritan had lost visual contact with the subject. Working with other agencies and with the help of air support, the subject was located and taken into custody.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Yurewitch, Officer Knutson, and Lieutenant Mahoney received a call regarding a whale in distress near the Ten Thousand Islands. Officers arrived on scene with FWC biologists and a Collier County Sheriff's Office marine unit. They located and captured a distressed pygmy sperm whale. Due to the nature of its injuries, the whale was transported and turned over to FWC marine mammal biologists for care.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Larios and Janzen responded to a speared and entangled green sea turtle on the oceanside of Key Largo near Carysfort Reef. A good Samaritan vessel had spotted the distressed adult female turtle and called FWC. The officers arrived and found the 155lb green sea turtle entangled in a lobster trap line and buoy which was stuck on the exposed portion of a 3-foot spear extruding from the base of its neck. The officers were able to get the turtle onto their patrol vessel and coordinated with FWC biologists and the Marathon Sea Turtle Hospital for further transportation. FWC officers, along with John Pennekamp State Park (JPSP) staff, and Sea Turtle Hospital staff transported the sea turtle for emergency surgery. The surgery was successful and the sea turtle is recovering.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

MONROE COUNTY

Officer Dube and Recruiter Pestka gave an FWC presentation at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science on Key Biscayne. Officers talked about FWC's missions with a focus on marine mammals, marine mammal protection and how the FWC works with our partner agencies during natural disasters and mass strandings.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Yurewitch responded to multiple reports of a bear sited in a neighborhood over several days. He observed no violations and educated the stakeholders on the presence of bears and how to avoid them by removing any potential attractants.

The Naples Fishing Club reached out to the Naples Field Office requesting an officer speak at one of their group meetings. Officer Knutson attended the event, providing education on the new shoreline shark fishing regulations, hunting regulations, and answered many questions about the FWC.