

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



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**October 4, 2019 through October 10, 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.*

**NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

**CASES**

**MADISON COUNTY**

Officer Ransom was on patrol when he heard several gun shots from a nearby field. Further investigation led to the discovery of two individuals actively hunting dove with shotguns. An inspection of licenses and gear discovered that the two subjects were hunting dove with unplugged shotguns. Both subjects were issued appropriate citations.

**LAFAYETTE COUNTY**

Officer Davenport responded to a complaint of dumping on private property. Upon arriving at the location, it was determined that not only was dumping present but also the remains of an illegally killed alligator. Officer Davenport interviewed five individuals which ultimately led to one primary subject. The charges of dumping and illegally possessing American alligator are being filed with the Lafayette County State Attorney's Office.

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**SUWANNEE COUNTY**

Lieutenant Humphries and Officer Ransom responded to a request for assistance from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on a possible missing boater. A vessel had been left at a local ramp for a few days, and there was concern for the

individual's safety. Upon responding to the area and checking with the family members of the registered owner, the missing individual was reported to be okay and was returning soon to retrieve the vessel. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services was notified of the subject's safety and intention to recover the vessel.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### COLUMBIA COUNTY

Officers Johnston and Bryan attended a fall festival sponsored by the Lake City Police Department. In attendance were representatives from multiple agencies and organizations from the Lake City area. The officers educated the public on the wide-range of duties and responsibilities of an FWC Officer. The event was successful with dozens of families and children present – some of which expressed interest in one day becoming an FWC officer.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officer Mason responded to a complaint of a known convicted felon that was photographed on a trail camera carrying a rifle. After gathering the initial evidence, Officer Mason located the subject and initiated an interview. The subject admitted being a convicted felon and was in possession of a firearm and ammunition. The firearm and ammunition were seized, and the subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Mason was on patrol when he saw a Putnam County Sheriff's Office unit on a traffic stop. He stopped to assist and found that the subject vehicle contained a large amount of harvested palmetto berries which they did not have a permit for transport. The subjects were issued citations for the offense.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officers Hayes and Hargabus received information reference a vessel operating recklessly on the Rainbow River. A detailed description of the vessel was provided to the officers based on information reported from a concerned citizen. The officers saw a vessel matching the description of the vessel in question with multiple people onboard, including young children. After observing the vessel violate the idle speed zone and the small children onboard not wearing life jackets, the officers conducted a vessel stop to address the violations and conduct a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks (SFSTs)

were administered and the operator was arrested for BUI and issued citations for the offenses.

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **LEE COUNTY**

Officer Winton responded to reports of a gopher tortoise burrow being destroyed during construction at an address in Cape Coral. Officer Winton initiated an investigation and determined that one gopher tortoise burrow was destroyed and another burrow was affected to the degree that it modified the natural behavior of any resident tortoises. Charges pertaining to the “take” of two gopher tortoise burrows are being filed with the State Attorney’s Office.

Officer Winton was on patrol at a boat ramp in Fort Myers when he stopped a vessel for violating a posted slow speed zone. During the stop, it was determined that the operator was in possession of six undersized redfish, one undersized seatrout and one undersized sheepshead. Seatrout and redfish are currently closed for harvest in Lee County due to a recent red tide event and the bag limit for redfish is one fish per harvester. The operator was issued appropriate citations and a notice to appear.

#### **MANATEE COUNTY**

Officer Franks was dispatched to a possible alligator hunting violation in a privately-owned orange grove. When Officer Franks arrived at the grove, he saw four subjects standing around two pickup trucks. As he approached the trucks, Officer Franks could see someone near the tailgate of one of the trucks skinning a five-foot alligator. The subject did not have an alligator hunting permit and admitted to killing the alligator with a shotgun. Officer Franks noticed a cooler in the back of the truck and an inspection revealed the breast meat of an ibis. The ibis carcass was found in the bushes a few feet away. Officer Franks seized the alligator, ibis, and the shotgun used by the subject. The subject was given a misdemeanor notice to appear for not having an alligator trapping license, killing an alligator by illegal method and violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. After the fact, the subject was identified as a convicted felon and Officer Franks submitted a felony capias for a convicted felon in possession of a firearm.

#### **PINELLAS COUNTY**

Officer Lamoureux was patrolling the North Skyway Fishing Pier when he saw a subject fishing alone in the rain. While approaching the subject, Officer Lamoureux could see a stringer hanging down into the water. A resource inspection revealed that the subject had an undersized gag grouper in his possession. The subject was cited for the violation and the fish was returned to the water.

## POLK COUNTY

Officer Lebreton was working land-based patrols nears Lake McLeod when he conducted a boating safety and resource inspection on two individuals at the lake's boat ramp. The subjects were in possession of eleven black bass, three of which were over sixteen inches. The first subject admitted to catching the three largest bass. His fishing license had been revoked and he had an active arrest warrant through the Polk County Sheriff's Department. The second subject was on probation and prohibited from being around alcohol, yet there were multiple beer cans located inside the boat. The subject's probation officer was contacted, and he advised Officer Lebreton to arrest the subject for violation of parole. Both subjects were arrested, cited accordingly, and transported to the Polk County Jail. The bass were returned to the water alive.

## SOUTH REGION A

### CASES

#### MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson received a tip about two large piles of corn, a game camera and a tree stand within bow range of the corn pile in Hungryland Wildlife Management Area (WMA). On opening morning of the archery quota hunt, he saw an individual illegally enter Hungryland WMA thru a non-designated entrance, take the game camera and climb the tree stand overlooking the bait pile. Just after daylight, Officer Hudson contacted the subject who had an arrow nocked on his bow. The subject was cited accordingly.

#### PALM BEACH COUNTY

While on patrol of the Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) during opening weekend of muzzleloader season, Officer Norbrothen received information from concerned subjects about a group of individuals possibly hunting with rifles. He located the subjects and conducted a resource compliance inspection. Two subjects said they were hunting and allowed the officer to inspect their firearms in the back of the vehicle. Two 30-06 rifles, a 12-gauge shotgun, and a BB-Gun were located – no muzzleloaders. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Brodbeck was dispatched to a complaint regarding subjects catching and keeping undersize mutton snapper at the Lake Worth Pier. Upon arrival, the officer located two subjects with numerous mutton snapper well below the 18-inch minimum size limit. Each subject received the appropriate citation.

Officer Schroer conducted a fisheries inspection on a vessel returning from offshore. During the inspection, one undersized mutton snapper and four undersized gray

triggerfish were found onboard the vessel. When asked for the vessel registration, the captain of the vessel advised he did not have the registration paperwork onboard. The captain was cited appropriately for the violations.

Officers Langley and Matthews were on vessel patrol near the Boca Raton inlet when they saw a vessel on plane in a slow speed zone. The officers stopped the vessel to address the boating safety violation and conduct a fisheries inspection. The two subjects stated they were returning from the Bahamas and had 18 wahoo aboard the vessel. The fishing poles on the vessel were in the rod holders with terminal tackle still attached. All vessels returning from the Bahamas must abide by Florida state bag limits and have all fishing gear stowed with no terminal tackle attached. The operator of the vessel was cited accordingly, and the fish were seized for evidence.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **MIAMI DADE COUNTY**

While patrolling opening day of dove season, Officers Osorio and McKinley spotted several subjects who appeared to be hunting inside the Miami-Dade Wildlife Sanctuary. An inspection revealed the subjects were dove hunting and had harvested a few dove. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Presser was conducting fisheries inspections on the Rickenbacker Causeway when he contacted a subject actively fishing with a rod and reel. A resource inspection of the subject's cooler revealed three undersize mutton snapper. A query through dispatch revealed the individual did not have a recreational shoreline saltwater fishing license. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Presser was conducting resource inspections on the Rickenbacker Causeway when he contacted a subject actively fishing with multiple rods and reels. A resource inspection revealed the individual was in possession of over 50 grunts, one undersize black grouper, two undersize mangrove snapper, and three undersize yellowtail snapper. The subject did not have a recreational shoreline saltwater fishing license. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Presser was conducting fisheries inspections in Miami Beach at South Pointe Park when he contacted two subjects. One was in possession of a snook and a mutton snapper, both of which were legal size. Officer Presser asked the subjects if they had any other fish and they showed him a cooler full of silver mullet. A total of 218 silver mullet were in the cooler putting the subjects 118 fish over the daily recreational bag limit of 50 mullet per person. Both subjects were cited accordingly.

#### **COLLIER COUNTY**

Officers Stearns, Knutson and Wagner responded to a tip from a concerned citizen about a subject trespassing while harvesting palmetto berries in Golden Gate Estates. They responded to the area and witnessed the violation in progress. The subject attempted to flee and did not obey any officer commands. Officers searched for the subject and located him nearby. He was cited for resisting arrest without violence and harvesting palmetto berries without a permit.

While on night patrol, Officer Kleis saw a vessel operating with red and green lights on the stern of the vessel. He stopped the vessel to address the light violation and to conduct a vessel safety inspection. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and refused to participate in field sobriety exercises. The subject refused to comply to a breath test and was arrested for boating under the influence

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### COLLIER COUNTY

The Collier County Marine Emergency Response Team – of which the entire FWC team stationed in Collier County is a member – received a 911 call of a vessel off of Marco Island taking on water and sinking. Multiple officers responded with Collier County Sheriff's Office and Fire Rescue Marine units. The vessel was located and successfully pumped out by Collier County Fire Rescue.

## DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROLS

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Georgevich, Arbogast, and Kleis participated in a focused Florida panther conservation effort in the panther speed enforcement zone in Ochopee. Over the course of the evening patrol effort, officers issued five citations for excessive speeds up to 87 in a 45 MPH zone, two criminal citations for related violations, and multiple warnings to drivers educating them on how speeding vehicles impact panthers at night.

Officer Curbelo, Thurkettle, Kleis, Reams, Oldsen and Lieutenant Balfour conducted a panther zone speed enforcement detail in the panther zones on Tamiami Trail. They issued numerous speeding tickets for unlawful speeds up to 79 in a 45 MPH zone, issued multiple warnings, and educated the public on the importance of reducing speeds for their safety and for panther safety.

## COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

### COLLIER COUNTY

Officer Stearns accompanied the Collier County Sheriff's Office for an educational event showcasing agency equipment and their specialized abilities to serve the public. Officers from both agencies answered questions and provided educational materials to attendees and their children.

Officer Conroy joined deputies for a Collier County Community Crime Prevention event in North Naples. Officer Conroy brought a juvenile alligator for exhibition and educated stakeholders and their children on safe practices when alligators are encountered in the wild.