

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

November 22, 2019 through December 5, 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

BAY COUNTY

Officer Specialist N. Basford was on patrol in St. Andrews State Park and observed a vehicle parked outside the gate. The park was closed and only campers and persons with a park pass could enter. Another vehicle pulled up to the closed gate and entered the code. As the gate opened, the parked vehicle pulled behind the vehicle that was coming into the park. The driver of the first vehicle stopped, stepped out of his vehicle, and told the driver behind him that he could not come into the park. Officer N. Basford approached the driver of the second vehicle who displayed signs of being impaired. After field sobriety tasks, the driver was arrested for DUI and booked into the Bay County Jail.

Officer N. Basford received a complaint of a van that was stuck down a service road at St. Andrews State Park. When she arrived on scene, she observed the operator sitting in the driver seat with the vehicle keys in his lap. The operator displayed signs of impairment and field sobriety tasks were conducted. The operator was arrested for DUI and booked into the Bay County Jail.

Officer T. Basford received a complaint of individuals keeping undersize fish at the Deer Point Dam. Once Officer Basford arrived, he conducted several resource inspections of individuals fishing in the area which located an undersized red drum in an individual's cooler along with several legal spotted sea trout. The appropriate citations were issued, and the fish was returned to the water.

Lieutenant J. Allen was on patrol in St Andrews State Park at the Jetties when he saw four individuals placing fish in a cooler. During a resource inspection, only one of the four individuals could produce a valid saltwater fishing license and they were in possession of 11 mangrove snapper, eight of which were undersized. The appropriate citations were issued, and the fish were returned to the water.

LEON / JEFFERSON COUNTY

Officers from the Leon and Jefferson squads conducted a Targeted Enforcement Detail created by Officer Pekerol for duck season. On opening day, Officer Specialists Miller and Brookes each wrote a citation for hunting from a permanent blind on Lake Iamonia. A few days later Officer Pekerol and Officer Specialist Brookes issued citations to three individuals for hunting from a permanent blind on Lake Jackson. The following day, Officer Specialist Miller and Officer Pekerol issued two citations for the same offence on Lake Miccosukee. During this time, there was also one citation written for motor restrictions on Lake Iamonia and two citations written for hunting license violations.

LIBERTY COUNTY

During Thanksgiving weekend, the Liberty and Gadsden County squads recorded 72.5 hours of forest land patrol in the Apalachicola National Forest area. During these patrols, 207 users were checked; this resulted in 16 written warnings, eight license violations, shining a light in a manner capable of disclosing the presence of wildlife, allowing a minor to hunt without supervision, prohibited method of take, two criminal traffic arrests, and four incident summary reports.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Lieutenants Molnar and Bartlett observed a male and female fishing from the bank at Highway 2 Boat Ramp on the Yellow River. As they approached the couple to check their fishing licenses, the male subject fled on foot, jumped into the river and started swimming down river. While Lieutenant Bartlett maintained a visual on the subject, Lieutenant Molnar drove across to the west side of the bridge and located the subject in the middle of the river. The subject refused to comply with verbal commands, so Lieutenant Molnar entered the waist deep water and took the subject into custody. The subject was booked into the Okaloosa County Jail for obstruction of a Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation (FWC) Officer and issued a citation for not having a fishing license.

Officer Murphy and Investigator Pifer were on water patrol conducting resource inspections in the Destin Pass. The officers conducted a vessel stop and discovered 10 undersized greater amberjack. The vessel owner was issued a notice to appear citation.

Officers Hahr and McVaney received information about a man that had killed a velvet antlered buck before the hunting season. A Facebook post made by the man's girlfriend

showed him posing with the buck two days before archery season began. The officers located the man and the remains of the deer. Interviews with the subject and girlfriend verified the violation. The man was charged with taking deer at night with a gun and light, taking deer out of season, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The woman was also charged for her role in taking deer at night with a gun and light and taking deer out of season.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officer Roberson was on land patrol in the Escambia River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Keyser Landing when he saw a vehicle parked in the woods. Officer Roberson approached the vehicle and observed an individual with a lighter, heating up a clear pipe commonly used to cook drugs. Officer Roberson identified himself and observed another individual in the truck, along with a white substance in a clear plastic baggy in between the individuals. K-9 Officer Hutchinson arrived shortly after to assist. Both suspects were booked into the Santa Rosa County Jail for the possession of methamphetamines.

Officers Andrews and Allgood were conducting water patrol on opening morning of duck season in the Santa Rosa Sound and observed three male subjects in waist deep water near a camouflaged hunting blind. A resource and license inspection found an unplugged shotgun. The appropriate citation was issued.

Officer Specialist Lewis was on land patrol in Blackwater River State Forest on opening day of General Gun Season when he heard a shot at the final minutes of legal shooting hours for deer. The shot sounded like it originated on private property near his location. Officer Lewis located a hunter with an antlerless deer, which the hunter admitted to shooting on the property. Antlerless deer were not permitted to take on that day and the hunter was cited appropriately.

Officers Hutchinson and Hicks were on patrol near Blackwater State Forest when they observed a deer being cleaned behind a barn. They conducted a resource check and found that the deer had not been recorded on a harvest log. The person admitted to knowing he had to log the deer, but chose not to do so. The subject was issued a citation and a Santa Rosa County Court date for failure to report the deer.

Officers Hicks and Hutchinson were patrolling the Blackwater State Forest when they located three large piles of trash that had been dumped along one of the roads. They collected evidence from the trash piles that led them to a residence. Once at the residence they contacted three male subjects who all admitted to dumping the trash in the woods. The appropriate citations were issued with a court date and the men were instructed to remove the trash and properly dispose of it.

Officers Murphy and Hutchinson received a complaint of a subject who had shot a spotted fawn with his bow and left it to waste in the Blackwater State Forest. While conducting their investigation, Officer McVaney helped them identify the subject and

confirm that he had already harvested and registered his yearly bag limit for antlerless deer. The subject was located and admitted to shooting the fawn and leaving it in the woods. An arrest warrant was filed through the State Attorney's Office for the violations of taking a spotted fawn and taking over the yearly bag limit of antlerless deer.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Officers Bradshaw and Korade were on water patrol in Ochlockonee Bay when they observed a vessel with no navigational lights displayed. They initiated an inspection and found the two subjects onboard retrieving a net partially constructed of monofilament webbing. Once retrieved, the net was transferred to the patrol vessel and transported to Mashas Sands boat ramp. Lieutenant Marlow, Officer Specialist Raker and Officer Nelson arrived on scene to assist with the investigation. The investigation led to two felony charges, three misdemeanors for net violations and two infractions for boating safety violations. The subjects were booked into the Franklin County Jail.

GULF COUNTY

Officer Specialist Lipford checked two subjects duck hunting on Lake Wimico. The inspection revealed one of the subjects was attempting to take waterfowl with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells. Several other violations relating to license and permits were discovered. The appropriate citation and warnings were issued.

Officer T. Basford and Lieutenant J. Allen were on patrol when they saw three individuals working a seine net in St Joe Bay. They watched and could see that several of the seine nets were connected. Officers Gerber and Hellett who were on vessel patrol in St Joe Bay were called to assist. An inspection of the nets revealed four nets connected to make one larger net. The connected nets and 416 pounds of mullet were seized. Each of the three individuals received a citation for nets connected, exceeding 500 square feet.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officers Scott and Humphrey responded to a complaint at the Apalachee Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The check station operator stated a hunter drove by the check station without signing in. The officers located the subject's vehicle where he had driven down a closed road. When the subject returned to his vehicle, the officers found that he had been hunting with a crossbow and was in possession of methamphetamine and a drug pipe. The subject was booked into the Jackson County Jail and the appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Bradshaw was patrolling in the area of the Mashas Sands boat ramp when he observed a vessel displaying fishing gear come to the dock. He conducted a boating

safety and resource inspection of the vessel, which had five subjects on board. The investigation resulted in two subjects being cited for oversize red drum.

Officers Schulz was on water patrol south of the St. Marks Lighthouse. He conducted a boating and resource inspection on a vessel actively engaged in fishing with three subjects on board. Officer Schulz cited the captain of the vessel for undersize seatrout.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Officer Parrish conducted a resource inspection of three subjects hunting ducks in a small cypress pond. The subjects were attempting to take waterfowl with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells and approximately 200 pounds of shelled corn was scattered around the edge and in the pond. Appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

On the opening of General Gun Season, Officer Gore was on land patrol and encountered a group of hunters in the Sand Hills area. During his check, he inspected a gobbler turkey which was laying in the bushes near the group and had been cleaned. Officer Gore inspected the craw and found fresh corn. The hunter cooperated with Officer Gore showing him the baited tree stand where the turkey was killed. Officer Gore utilized his K-9 to locate the spent shell casing. The distance the turkey was taken over bait was at 48 yards. The appropriate citation was issued.

While on land patrol, Officer Parrish encountered a subject with an 8-point buck deer head in the back of his truck. The subject stated he had killed it in Kentucky. Officer Parrish documented the check and later contacted a Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Officer to determine if the deer was harvested legally. It was determined the subject did not tag the deer out as required by their rules. The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Officer cited the subject accordingly for the violation. Officer Parrish educated the subject further on the Chronic Waste Disease (CWD) rule restrictions and violations concerning bringing whole deer or deer heads back into Florida.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officers Boone and Touchton were patrolling the Hatchbend area. They found tire tracks and followed them to two men standing next to a vehicle in the road. While watching, one of the men shot at an antlerless deer that was crossing the roadway. The rifle was seized, and citations were issued for taking wildlife from a public road and for the illegal taking of antlerless deer.

BAKER COUNTY

Officer Fanelli located a tree stand and game camera in Osceola Wildlife Management Area with fresh whole corn placed nearby. After an investigation, Officer Fanelli located a suspect who confessed to placing the bait. Charges were filed with the State Attorney's Office.

BRADFORD COUNTY

K9 Officer Gill received a complaint from a landowner about a deer being illegally killed on his property. Officer Gill arrived and deployed Canine Friar and searched the area for evidence. Friar located three spent .223 caliber casings. Officer Gill located the suspects at a residence nearby, conducted interviews, and obtained a confession for the illegal taking of the deer. The appropriate citations were issued.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Sweat checked two men as they were exiting a hunt lease. One of the men had harvested two legal deer but had not recorded the deer as required by rule. Before the inspection was complete, it was discovered that the man was a convicted felon. Officer Cheshire arrived to assist with the seizure of one shotgun, two centerfire rifles and ammunition. A warning was issued and charges will be filed with the State Attorney's Office.

DUVAL COUNTY

Investigator Izsak and Officer Schirbock were working a general gun quota hunt in Cary State Forest. They heard a rifle shot near the entrance to the property and located a hunter who stated that he had shot at a buck but was unable to locate it or a blood trail. They walked back to the location where the hunter said he fired his rifle and found a blood trail and a doe deer carcass was within 75 yards of the subject's stand. The officers watched the area overnight and into the next day and observed the subject return to the location, process the deer, pack the meat in a plastic bag, and exit the forest. Citations/warnings were issued.

MADISON COUNTY

Officers Ransom, Vazquez and Waychoff discovered several baited duck ponds. On the opening weekend of duck season, the officers returned to the ponds and watched several individuals actively hunting. Thirteen misdemeanor charges were issued that included taking ducks over a baited area, hunting ducks with shotguns capable of holding more than three rounds, and no Federal Duck Stamp.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer Pelzel was conducting resource checks on subjects fishing from shore. She approached an adult female actively fishing and found the subject possessed mangrove snapper, spotted seatrout, black drum and sheepshead. The fish were measured and were undersize. A warrants check revealed the subject was in violation of probation. She was arrested and booked into the Volusia County Jail.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice and Officer Hyde were checking recreational fishermen along the bank of the Ocklawaha River. They contacted a male and female actively fishing. The subjects did not have valid fishing licenses and the odor of marijuana was present inside their vehicle. A search of the vehicle revealed multiple paraphernalia items, two plastic bags containing methamphetamine, and a plastic bag containing marijuana. The male subject also possessed a shotgun shell, which is prohibited due to being a convicted felon. The subject was arrested and booked into the Marion County Jail.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Mendelson and Summers patrolled the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge during a quota duck hunt. The officers observed one group of individuals with a high volume of shots and approached the blind area later in the morning to conduct an inspection. One individual had an unplugged shotgun and he was issued a criminal citation for hunting migratory birds with a shotgun capable of holding more than three rounds. Several hunting license violations were also addressed.

ORANGE COUNTY

Officers Mendelson and Hocker were on patrol and heard a shot before legal shooting hours near their location. As they worked their way to the area of the shot, two more shots were fired before legal shooting hours for hunting waterfowl. The officers approached the duck blind where the shots originated and found three spent shotgun shell casings. The officers identified the individual and issued a notice to appear for the violation.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

LEE COUNTY

Officers Winton, Parker and Lieutenant Spoede checked a seafood retail establishment for proper licenses. The owner had been issued a warning less than a year ago for

selling saltwater products to the public without the proper license. The owner still had not purchased a license and was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officer Winton was on patrol off the coast of Sanibel when he saw a fishing vessel returning from offshore waters. He conducted a vessel stop and found the vessel's operator in possession of a redfish. Snook, redfish and trout are currently closed from harvesting in Lee County. The vessel's operator was issued a notice to appear for the violation and the redfish was seized as evidence.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on patrol near Sand Key Park, Officer Pettifer observed an individual fishing from shore. He conducted a fisheries inspection and found the subject in possession of an undersized gag grouper. The appropriate citation was issued.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Buckson and Lieutenant VanTrees received a complaint that an individual was keeping cardinals. They found the suspect in possession of five cardinals along with several other small birds. The subject was cited criminally for violating the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He was also given several warnings pertaining to the caging and care requirements for the birds. The birds were seized, and the subject will have to appear in court for his violation.

While on patrol at the Cockroach Bay boat ramp, Lieutenant Laskowski observed a vessel operator drop an individual from his boat onto the ramp to pick up a truck and trailer to load the boat. Upon seeing Lieutenant Laskowski at the ramp, the individual operating the vessel began to drive away from the ramp towards Cockroach Bay. Lieutenant Laskowski used the lights and sirens from his patrol vehicle to signal the individual back to the ramp and conducted a fisheries inspection. The subjects possessed seven undersized mangrove snapper and one undersized sheepshead and were cited accordingly.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Officers Morgan and Defeo were on water patrol in Pompano when they observed a vessel operating at night without the required navigation lights. They stopped the vessel to address the violation and observed signs of impairment from the vessel operator. The operator was arrested for BUI.

While conducting a detail targeting the opening weekend of waterfowl season, Officers Tarr, Hart, Fuller, and Armstrong cited multiple subjects for violations. Violations included two subjects hunting without a federal duck stamp, one subject over the daily bag limit of pintails, one subject over the daily bag limit of fulvous whistling ducks, one subject over bag limit of scaup, seven subjects for trespassing, and one citation for possession of more than one black bass over 16 inches in total length.

Officer Dudas and Lieutenant Brock were on water patrol on the New River in Fort Lauderdale. They observed four subjects fishing at Cooley's Landing and conducted a saltwater fisheries inspection. During the inspection, one of the subjects was found to have a warrant out of Broward County. The subject was taken into custody and transported to the Broward County Jail.

Officer Nall was patrolling the intracoastal waterway when he saw a vessel coming in Port Everglades Inlet from offshore. The vessel was speeding through a manatee idle speed zone and a stop was conducted to address the violation. Fishing rods were on board and a resource inspection revealed the two subjects had multiple resource violations. Officer Fuller arrived on scene to assist with the resource inspection. Violations included over the bag limit of mangrove snapper, undersized mangrove snapper, over the aggregate bag limit of snapper, undersized mutton snapper, undersized gray triggerfish, undersized king mackerel, undersized yellowtail snapper, undersized red grouper, and harvesting marine life species illegally. Forty-two mangrove snapper, ten yellowtail snapper, three red grouper, one gray triggerfish, one king mackerel, two wrasse, one doctor fish (tang), one lane snapper, and one mutton snapper were seized. The subjects were issued 19 criminal citations and given a mandatory notice to appear in court.

Officer Nall and Hart were patrolling the intracoastal waterway and observed a vessel with multiple fishing rods returning from offshore through the Port Everglades Inlet. A resource inspection revealed one of the individuals on board was in possession of nine undersized yellowtail snapper. The individual was given a criminal citation and issued a mandatory notice to appear in court.

Officers Armstrong and Harris observed a vessel coming into the Port Everglades area from offshore with multiple fishing rods displayed. A resource inspection revealed the two individuals possessed undersize mutton snapper and red grouper. The appropriate citations and warnings were issued.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Hudson observed a commercial vessel fishing at sailfish flats. He waited until the vessel stopped fishing and began to head toward the Stuart Causeway to conduct a fisheries inspection. He observed a trash can half full of Spanish mackerel with no ice and a hatch full of pompano with ice on them. When asked why the Spanish mackerel did not have ice the operator said the ice just melted and that those fish were caught

earlier that morning. The pompano were undersize and the subject was cited accordingly.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol near Peanut Island when a PWC was observed violating the posted Idle Speed Zone in the Palm Beach Inlet turning basin. A stop was initiated to address the violation and the operator said the vessel was rented from a nearby livery. The operator did not receive instruction from the livery regarding the safe operation of the vessel. Officer Brodbeck escorted the PWC back to the livery and issued the employee a misdemeanor citation for the violation.

While on patrol in the Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Officer Norbrothen observed a vehicle operating off a named and numbered roadway in violation of WMA rules. A stop revealed the driver did not have a valid license, never registered the vehicle, attached a license plate not assigned to the vehicle, and the passenger had an active warrant for failing to appear in court. The passenger was arrested and booked into jail and the operator was cited accordingly.

Officer Langley was conducting fisheries inspections at the Lake Worth spillway and saw a bucket behind a bush with a fish tail sticking out. A subject cast netting on the spillway claimed ownership of the bucket. An undersized snook was inside the bucket which had been caught with the cast net. The subject was cited for the violations and the snook was returned to the water alive.

Officer Trawinski investigated a derelict vessel located north of Snook Island. The vessel was hard aground without effective means of propulsion. The engine room was taking on water and the vessel was listing. Officer Trawinski established the last registered owner and contact information. The owner agreed to have the vessel removed and destroyed.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

MARTIN COUNTY

Officers Johnson, Carroll and Brevik responded to Pineapple Park in Jensen Beach in reference to a four-foot alligator walking around on the soccer fields. Officers arrived on scene and captured the alligator. The alligator was relocated and released unharmed.

PALM BEACH

Officers Boyd, Partelow, Ames and Investigator Booth assisted an FWC biologist in the rescue of a mother manatee and its calf. The manatees were transported to Miami Seaquarium for rehabilitation.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Officers and Investigators worked jointly with National Park Service Rangers during the Sons of a Mudder detail. The detail focused patrol in wildlife management areas and South Florida Water Management District lands to enforce rules and regulations. The detail resulted in 16 misdemeanor arrests, 25 written warnings, 12 trespass warnings, 12 infractions, and a total of 125 users checked.

Officer Hart conducted a resource inspection on a recreational saltwater shoreline fisherman. The inspection revealed one undersize grouper, one undersize mutton, one undersized yellowtail, over the aggregate bag limit of snapper and over the bag limit of mangrove snapper. The appropriate citations were issued.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Landa responded to a report regarding a monkey in a cage. Upon arrival, he found one vervet monkey in an enclosure. Further investigation revealed the owner did not have the required license to possess the animal. The monkey was turned over to a licensed facility and the subject was cited accordingly.

While on patrol near Fowey Lighthouse, Officer Hedgepeth observed a vessel with four people actively fishing. A sailfish was online and once it was landed, he conducted a resource inspection. The sailfish was undersize, and citations were issued accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Conroy observed a vessel with an improper display of navigation lights. While speaking with the operator they saw signs of impairment. Field sobriety exercises were conducted, and the operator was arrested for BUI. Lieutenant Mahoney assisted the officers by transporting the violator to jail where he refused to provide a breath sample. Criminal charges and boating citations were issued appropriately.

Officers Knutson and Araujo watched an individual retrieve a monofilament entangling gill net that had been hidden in mangroves, load it onto a kayak, and set it into the waters of Chokoloskee Bay – which is a felony violation of state law. Several hours later, they saw him return to shore and attempt to re-hide the net in mangroves. Officers Yurewitch, Conroy and Georgevich arrived to assist with the case and seizure of the net for evidence. The subject had two prior instances of being criminally charged with net violations. The subject was arrested and cited appropriately.

Officer Rubenstein and Officer Specialist Polly saw a house with a gopher tortoise enclosure in plain view on the property. When speaking with the homeowner and gaining consent to enter the property to check for other animals, the officers discovered

multiple prohibited species including eight turtles/tortoises. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Yurewitch was on patrol when he observed multiple people fishing under the S.S. Jolly Bridge near Marco Island. He conducted a resource inspection and fishing license check which revealed a bucket with two undersized mangrove snapper and an undersized seatrout. The appropriate citations were issued.

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Kiefer and Hettel received a call from FWC dispatch about multiple persons in possession of Queen Conch on Big Pine Key. They discovered seven Queen Conch located in the subject's freezer. The appropriate citations were issued.

DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL

Officers Georgevich, Conroy and Yurewitch conducted panther zone speed enforcement in Ochopee. The highest recorded unlawful speed was 83 MPH, 38 MPH over the posted 45 MPH speed limit. The officers issued six citations for unlawful speed, three that require mandatory court appearances, two citations for littering, and multiple warnings.

Officers Conroy, Yurewitch, Georgevich, and Lieutenant Mahoney conducted directed state park patrol focusing on park rule violations at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park. They issued 10 citations and multiple warnings for violations.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Araujo, Polly, and Recruiting Officer Pestka attended Collier County Public School Board's "Heroes in Action" First Responders Career Day. This outreach event provided students with the opportunity to learn about different careers associated with public safety and law enforcement. FWC officers provided an exhibit of a patrol jeep, airboat and answered many questions.

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Hein, Officer Dube, McKay, and Reserve Officer Belz, along with four park rangers from John Pennekamp State Park, assisted the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Investigations Unit on a cleanup project located on a bayside island in Key Largo. The island has been a dumping ground, party place, and weekend tent-city. The officers assisted in loading and ferrying a park pontoon barge to and from the island. Two loads of debris were removed and taken to the local transfer station by county works.