

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



*Patrol, Protect, Preserve*

**February 7, 2020 through February 13, 2020**

*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**

Officer Kossey was on patrol around Phipps Critical Wildlife Area when he observed two subjects returning from fishing. Officer Kossey recognized one of the subjects from previous encounters and knew his fishing license had been revoked. He conducted a resource inspection and found the subject was also in possession of 135 mullet, 85 over the daily bag limit. The subject was arrested, and the fish were seized and entered into evidence.

Twenty-two officers from FWC Northwest and Northcentral Regions conducted Operation "Friends and Neighbors" in the Tate's Hell Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The two-day operation addressed elevated tensions between local and non-local sportsmen (dog hunters) within the management area. During the operation 620 hunters were checked, 19 warnings and 13 citations were issued, two of which pertained to the illegal harvest of antlerless deer and possession of deer in violation of the forked-horn requirement.

**JACKSON COUNTY**

Officer H. Forehand was on patrol when a car came by with a light being displayed out the passenger side window. Officer Forehand conducted a traffic stop and found that two suspects in the car were in possession of a loaded 30-06 rifle. Both suspects were issued citations for night hunting.

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Officers found a baited hunting site within Eglin Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The officers worked the baited area along with the assistance of a K-9 officer. Two subjects were found hunting over bait and one of the subjects shot a hog well before hunting hours on the WMA. A bow equipped with a light was seized as evidence and the subjects were charged with distributing bait on a WMA and hunting before legal hours. The Eglin Range Patrol responded and revoked the hunters' Eglin permits.

## WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Specialists N. Korade and P. Schulz along with Officer S. Gray were working the deer decoy in the Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in response to complaints of illegal deer being shot. The officers set up the decoy and a hunter stopped, exited his vehicle, and fired several shots at the decoy (an antlerless/doe deer). The subject was cited accordingly.

## WALTON COUNTY

Officer Hahr received information about a 16-year-old that killed a buck not meeting the antler restriction. He located the student at his high school and interviewed him with his father present. During the interview, it became apparent that the father committed several violations along with his son. While hunting with his son, he killed a six-point buck and told his son to shoot the other deer. The deer was a spike buck well under the required size by law, and neither deer had been reported as required. The man was cited for failure to comply with deer reporting requirements. The juvenile was issued a warning for the shorthorn buck and failing to report the deer, as well as hunting without the required licenses.

Officers Brown, Tison, and Letcher questioned a subject about a deer the officers suspected of being shot at night based on information Officer Brown had received. The subject had knowledge of the Harvest Reporting System but had not reported the deer harvest. The suspect was in possession of two additional deer at the time he was questioned. Further investigation determined the additional deer had been taken by other subjects who had not reported the harvests as well. The three subjects were cited accordingly.

Lieutenant Hollinhead and Officer White stopped a vehicle on Eglin Air Force Base property after hearing two-gun shots from the road. The two subjects in the vehicle shot a buck with antlers less than ten inches in length. The portion of property was open to hunting and has an antler restriction requiring a minimum of three points on one side. The subjects were aware of the antler restriction and were cited accordingly.

## **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **CASES**

#### **TAYLOR COUNTY**

Officer Wilcox checked fishermen returning to the boat ramp at the Aucilla River and saw a vessel from Georgia pull up to the boat ramp. The vessel did not have registration numbers or a registration decal. Officer Wilcox conducted a vessel safety and resource check on the vessel and found thirty spotted sea trout. Officer Touchton arrived to assist and the officers found twenty-seven of the sea trout were undersized. The three subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Touchton checked fishermen on the Aucilla River. He inspected a cooler possessed by two subjects and found one catfish and eleven redfish. Three of the eleven redfish were undersized. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Wilcox conducted vessel safety and resource inspections in the Spring Warrior area. He conducted a resource inspection on a vessel returning from a day of fishing. The vessels two subjects possessed three undersized redfish and were over the bag limit. The subjects were cited accordingly.

#### **DUVAL COUNTY**

Officers Christmas and McGregor responded to an apartment complex in reference to an anonymous complaint about someone possessing a gopher tortoise. They located a dog cage containing a gopher tortoise outside one of the apartments. The resident said he got the tortoise from an unknown female who found it in her yard and did not know what to do with it or who to call. The subject was educated that the gopher tortoise is a protected species and that he could not legally possess it. The tortoise was taken to the Jacksonville Zoo for a health evaluation and will eventually return to the wild. The subject was issued a warning for possessing the tortoise.

#### **LEVY COUNTY**

Officer Fox was on water patrol in Withlacoochee Bay when he observed a commercial oyster vessel with two subjects on board. The vessel had multiple bags of oysters and he followed it to the Highway 40 boat ramp in Yankeetown to conduct a resource inspection. The inspection revealed 14 bags of untagged oysters which were seized and returned to the water. The subjects were cited accordingly.

Officer Fox was on water patrol on Long Cabbage Reef near Suwannee Sound. He saw a vessel with four subjects coming in with fishing gear on board. Officer Fox stopped the boat to conduct a resource inspection and found 26 undersize spotted seatrout and one undersize sheepshead. The subjects were cited and warned accordingly.

## LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Officer Davenport discovered an illegal campsite with a smoldering fire, trash left everywhere, and several cut down trees while patrolling Steinhatchee Springs Wildlife Management Area. He located a receipt from a local store in the trash and reviewed security footage to identify the subjects. The subjects were located and confessed to the violation. The appropriate charges will be filed with the Lafayette County State Attorney Office.

## OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL FIN CAT

Officers Suttles and Willis conducted federal fisheries patrol in federal waters off Crystal River. They conducted a marine fisheries inspection on a recreational fishing vessel and discovered seven undersize mangrove snapper and one undersize hog snapper. The captain was cited accordingly and the case will be turned over to NOAA for prosecution.

## NORTHEAST REGION

### CASES

#### VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officer West was on patrol in the New Smyrna Beach area and observed a vehicle swerving and unable to maintain a lane on the highway. The officer conducted a traffic stop and noticed signs of impairment from the driver. The driver performed field sobriety exercises and was arrested for DUI. The driver refused to submit to a breath test and was booked into the Volusia County Jail.

#### MARION COUNTY

Officer Hayes was on patrol and observed a subject actively throwing a cast net in an area known to attract small game fish. He watched the subject utilize the cast net to harvest freshwater fish. Upon inspection, Officer Hayes discovered the subject possessed 29 bream (panfish). The subject was cited accordingly and the cast net was seized as evidence.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Lieutenant Dickson responded to a noise complaint in Rodman Campground. Park staff had been to the site several times and the campers refused to comply with their requests to maintain quiet. Lieutenant Dickson contacted the father of the group and advised him of the quiet time violation. The father acted like he was going to bed, but approximately 20 minutes later Lieutenant Dickson could hear the camper's voice again from across the campground. Lieutenant Dickson returned to the site and the camper

failed to comply with several other orders. The camper was charged with resisting an officer without violence and was transported to the Putnam County Jail.

#### BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Beck, Delano, Eller and Hallsten conducted federal water patrol over several days. Vessels were inspected and citations and warnings were issued for resource violations which included possession of American red snapper during federal closed season, undersized black sea bass, undersized vermilion snapper, undersized spanish mackerel and undersized gray triggerfish. Federal citations were filed with NOAA and state citations were filed with the State Attorney's Office.

#### COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING – EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION

#### ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Miller and Harris attended a youth duck hunt at Guana. One young hunter successfully shot his first duck which happened to be a banded mallard.

#### PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers worked the Bassmaster Elite Series fishing tournament. The tournament was successful without any issues other than weather delays.

### **SOUTHWEST REGION**

#### CASES

#### HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Captain Carpenter and Officers Rorer, Dalton and Carter observed a vessel operating at night without the proper use of navigation lights on the Hillsborough River. The vessel was stopped for the navigation light violation and the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Seated standardized field sobriety tasks were performed by the operator and he was arrested for BUI and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail.

#### LEE COUNTY

Officer Lejarzar and Lieutenant Ruggiero were on land patrol at a local boat ramp when they observed a vessel coming down the canal with its lights off and its radio blaring loud music. The subjects on board were drinking what appeared to be alcoholic beverages. The vessel did not stop at the closer ramp but continued towards another ramp that was further away. The officers drove to the other public ramp, identified the operator of the vessel, and waited until he had loaded his vessel on the trailer to

conduct a boating safety inspection. The operator exhibited signs of impairment and field sobriety exercises were conducted. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and was transported to the Lee County Jail. He was also cited for operating a vessel at night without navigation lights.

## **PINELLAS COUNTY**

Officer Specialist Bibeau received a call about an individual that caught and kept a redfish at an apartment complex. He arrived on scene and met with the property manager who said the subjects had already walked back to their apartment. Officer Specialist Bibeau went to the subject's apartment and located three out of season redfish (one of which was undersized) and eight out of season and undersized snook. One of the individuals admitted to catching all the snook and the redfish and was issued the appropriate citations.

Officer Specialist Bibeau observed an individual fishing from the shoreline and conducted a fisheries inspection. Officer Specialist Bibeau found the individual in possession of four out of season seatrout and six whole stone crabs with undersized claws. The appropriate citation and warnings were issued.

## **SOUTH REGION A**

### **CASES**

#### **GLADES COUNTY**

Lieutenant Brown was targeting black crappie violations and found an individual in possession of 14 undersized black crappie. The subject received a notice to appear for the violation.

#### **MARTIN COUNTY**

Officer Hudson investigated a hit and run boating accident at Sailors Return Bar. He gathered photographs from witnesses of the subject who was operating the vessel. Security cameras revealed the subject sitting at the bar the night before. The officer contacted the operator who admitted to hitting the vessel. The officer filed a subpoena and charged the operator with failure to report a boating accident to law enforcement or to attempt to notify the person affected.

#### **PALM BEACH COUNTY**

Officer Schroer received a complaint about an individual using a net to catch fish at the Phil Foster Boat ramp. Phil Foster Park is designated as part of the Blue Heron Bridge Special Marine Life Area. No tropical ornamental marine life species or plants may be harvested from the park or surrounding waters lying within a geographical boundary

specified by Florida Administrative Code 68B-42. The fisherman also did not have a saltwater fishing license and was cited accordingly.

Officers Ames and Riggs conducted a quality control inspection at a local fish house. While inspecting the fish, documents and licenses, it was found that the owner had not renewed his wholesale, retail or freshwater licenses in the past six months. The owner was cited accordingly.

Officers Ames and Brodbeck conducted a fish house inspection at a local supermarket. An inspection of the fish, documents, licenses revealed the seafood manager was not keeping adequate records. Officers Ames and Brodbeck seized several fish that were not suitable for human consumption and the sea food manager was cited accordingly.

## **SOUTH REGION B**

### **CASES**

#### **COLLIER COUNTY**

Officers Conroy and Yurewitch were patrolling near Marco Island when they observed a vessel violating the posted slow speed manatee zone. The vessels all-round white light was also improperly displayed. The stop revealed there was a discrepancy between the registered owner of record and the operator claiming ownership of the vessel. The new owner had failed to transfer the title within 30 days of vessel purchase and the vessel's trailer was displaying a tag assigned to another vehicle. Appropriate citations were issued.

Officer Conroy was on patrol around the Jolly Bridge in Marco Island and saw a subject fishing with a cast net. A resource inspection revealed the subject had multiple undersized Sheepshead with no fishing license. The violator was cited appropriately.

Officers Yurewitch, Kleis, and Lieutenant Mahoney were on water patrol near Goodland and conducted a resource inspection on a vessel. The inspection revealed seven undersized sheepshead. The subjects were cited accordingly.

### **DIRECTED CONSERVATION PATROL**

#### **COLLIER COUNTY**

Officers Yurewitch and Kleis and Lieutenant Mahoney were on water patrol in the area of Naples Bay focusing on boating safety. They found that a vessel had struck a channel marker and failed to report the incident. This left the hazard just beneath the surface of the water endangering passing boaters. The officers removed the submerged hazard with no danger to boaters or damage to vessels transiting the area. An investigation is being conducted to identify the responsible party.

