

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

August 14, 2020 through August 20, 2020

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

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

BAY COUNTY

Senior Officer M. Webb and Officer Specialist K. Alsobrooks were conducting boating safety patrol on Econfina Creek. The officers stopped a personal watercraft (PWC) operator for a safety inspection. The operator showed signs of impairment and was taken on board for standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST). The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and was transported and booked in the Bay County Jail.

Senior Officer H. Webb and the other Panama City area BUI Task Force members conducted a Targeted Enforcement detail in the area of Econfina and Bear Creek. Senior Officer H. Webb performed a boating safety inspection on a vessel returning to Cherokee Landing. The operator of the vessel displayed several signs of possible impairment and Standardized Field Sobriety Tasks (SFST) were utilized. The operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Bay County Jail.

Officer Gore developed information of a subject in illegal possession of a captive whitetail buck. Officer Green and Lieutenant Walsingham assisted Captive Wildlife Investigator Williams in the investigation where a subject was keeping an adult ten-point buck as an unpermitted personal pet. The officers took possession of the buck and transported it to a licensed wildlife rehab specialist in the region. Investigator Williams issued the appropriate citations for the violations.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Officers D. Humphrey and K. Baber responded to a landowner complaint in which they found suspects trespassing and picking saw palmetto berries on the landowner's property. Two suspects were cited for harvesting saw palmetto berries without a permit. The following night Officer Baber received a call from a landowner who had just captured a picture on a game camera of someone trespassing on his property. Officer Baber responded and located a suspect picking saw palmetto berries on the landowner's property. The suspect was charged with harvesting saw palmetto berries without a permit and trespass.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Cushing and Lieutenant B. Lambert were on vessel patrol in Bayou Chico when they observed a 37-foot vessel being operated without working navigational lights. They stopped the vessel for a safety inspection and the operator showed signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks (SFST) were utilized and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and transported and booked into the Escambia County Jail.

Senior Officer Specialist Clark and Officer Long were on vessel patrol on Escambia Bay when they were dispatched to a possible boating accident. Once on scene they observed two pontoons slowly operating away from the area of the accident. Officer Clark contacted the operator of the first pontoon, and it was determined there was no accident. The operator showed signs of impairment and standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST) were conducted. The operator was arrested for BUI and transported and booked into the Escambia County Jail.

Senior Officer Specialist Clark and Officer Long were on vessel patrol in Pensacola Bay when they were contacted by dispatch to assist Senior Officer Specialist Cushing with a vessel stop at the Navy Point boat ramp. Once on scene Officer Cushing observed the operator and passengers on the vessel were showing signs of impairment. Officer Cushing conducted standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST) on the operator and he was arrested for boating under the influence. A second impaired operator boarded the vessel and attempted to leave the area. The second operator was arrested for BUI and both were transported to the Escambia County Jail. Both operators were charged accordingly.

JACKSON COUNTY

Officers E. Meade and T. Scott received a complaint from a landowner stating that he received information that one of his employees had killed a doe deer. The officers went to the subject's residence and conducted an interview. The subject admitted to killing the deer and showed the officers two fresh deer hams in his freezer. The subject was charged with taking deer during the closed season.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Brown and McVaney were patrolling in Destin Harbor when they observed a vessel with no navigation lights present after sunset. They conducted a vessel stop to conduct a safety inspection and the operator showed several signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST) were utilized and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Brown and McVaney were on water patrol in the Destin Harbor when they observed a pontoon boat violating the idle speed zone. They conducted a vessel stop to address the idle speed violation and the operator was showing signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST) were conducted and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject was booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

Officer Brown and McVaney were on water patrol in the Santa Rosa Sound when they observed a vessel violating the idle speed zone. They conducted a vessel stop to address the idle speed violation and the operator displayed signs of impairment. Standardized field sobriety tasks (SFST) were conducted and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence. The subject was booked into the Okaloosa County Jail.

WALTON COUNTY

Officer Brown was on land patrol when he received information of individuals taking over the bag limit of red drum. After arriving in the area, Officer Brown observed the individuals matching the description he had received coming back to the boat ramp. Upon contacting the two individuals and conducting a resource inspection, one red drum was located on the vessel. One of the subjects admitted to catching two additional red drum earlier in the day. Officer Brown followed the individuals to their beach house where he located the other two red drum. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Walton County officers participated in a detail organized by Officer Graves addressing recent vehicle/ATV accidents and violations occurring on the Point Washington Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Twenty-four citations were issued for driving on posted closed roads and twenty-one warnings were issued for various WMA violations.

Officers Brooks and Mursch were on water patrol on the Choctawhatchee River when they observed bush hooks baited with freshwater gamefish (bream). The officers waited in the area until the owner of the bush hooks returned to check them. It was determined the subject had knowledge that gamefish was a prohibited bait to use on bush hooks and he was cited accordingly.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

CITRUS COUNTY

Officers Suttles, Read and Hughes were conducting patrols on the offshore patrol vessel Fincat when they observed a vessel quickly pull anchor and make way upon seeing the officers' approach. The vessel was stopped for a marine fisheries inspection. Officers contacted four spear fisher men and the captain and located several undersize grouper and hogfish in a cooler. All five subjects were issued federal citations for the violation.

Officers Suttles, Hughes and Browning were conducting patrols on the offshore patrol vessel Fincat when they observed a vessel at anchor with a dive flag displayed. The officers waited in the area until the divers surfaced and then made contact to conduct a marine fisheries inspection. Two subjects were in possession of undersize gag grouper, hogfish and mangrove snapper. The two divers were cited accordingly.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Douglas was on patrol in Osceola National Forest WMA, when he located sign of people picking palmetto berries. K9 Officer Specialist Gill was called to assist and deployed K9 Friar to track the subjects. K9 Friar tracked the subjects about a mile and located them actively picking palmetto berries. One subject was detained and two more fled. The detained subject was given a citation for picking palmetto berries on a WMA. K9 Friar continued to track the other two subjects. Due to the extreme temperatures, the track was called for the safety of K9 Friar. Lieutenant Douglas located the two subjects later and cited them for picking palmetto berries in a WMA.

DUVAL COUNTY

Lieutenant Arkin was on patrol along the perimeter of Half-Moon Island Preserve Recreation Area. While on patrol, he observed the driver of a vehicle lose control and swerve into oncoming traffic and then spin out. The driver ran over a DOT boat launch sign and proceeded to leave the scene. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver stated their license was suspended. The driver had a felony warrant for burglary and was wanted for interviewing prior to booking for other related felony crimes. In addition, the vehicle the subject was driving was also reported stolen. The warrant and stolen vehicle were confirmed, and the subject was arrested.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Edwards and McDonald were working at the Econfina State Park boat ramp. They found undersize red drum and spotted sea trout and one person with five spotted sea trout fillets hidden under a legal trout. All subjects were cited accordingly.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

FLAGLER COUNTY

Officer Campbell worked the opening night of phase one of gator season and found a couple of trucks and trailers parked at a small boat ramp. Officer Campbell parked his truck and watched from the shore as the boats hunted gators. A resource inspection was conducted when the boats returned, and Officer Campbell found a subject hunting during the incorrect phase. The subject harvested one six-foot gator. The individual was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Chriest was conducting resource inspections when she observed a vessel returning to the boat ramp in the early morning hours. Officer Chriest saw two freshly harvested alligators onboard and neither of the alligators had the harvest tags securely attached to the tail as required. The permit holder was cited for failure to immediately attach harvest tag upon harvest.

Officer Specialists Chriest received information related to an alligator that had been harvested illegally. The officer found the subject at a nearby residence and discovered a freshly killed alligator dismembered and placed inside a cooler. Upon further inspection, it was determined a harvest tag hadn't been affixed immediately upon harvest as required. The permit holder was cited for the violation.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice received a call from the Sheriff's Office requesting assistance in locating a subject at risk of suicide. Officer Specialist Rice responded to a lake where the subject had last been seen wading out into the water. Officer Specialist Rice received an update from the Marion County Aviation Unit that the subject was spotted approximately 500 yards from the shoreline. Officer Specialist Rice, along with a Marion County Marine Unit, responded to the subject's location and successfully talked the subject into coming onboard the vessel to be evaluated. The subject was safely transported to the boat ramp to be evaluated by medical staff.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officer Hardgrove observed a vehicle that had been identified as possibly having undersized snook. The officer conducted a stop and located two undersized snook in a

bucket on the passenger floorboard. The snook were seized and both subjects were issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officers Zenoniani and Goggin were on patrol when they received a call from dispatch about a subject harvesting saw palmetto berries in the Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Officer Zenoniani contacted two subjects on Tucker's Grade just east of Road Six. The subjects threw down their belongings and started to run. Officer Zenoniani initiated a foot pursuit and caught up to them quickly. They were escorted back to his patrol vehicle where they were cited for unlawful harvest of berries in a WMA and no day use fee.

HARDEE COUNTY

Officer Karr saw a truck driving slowly on a rural road at night. Officer Karr saw a light shine out of the passenger window in a manner capable of disclosing wildlife along a set of railroad tracks. Officer Karr saw the truck stop along the road and continue to shine the spotlight around the surrounding properties. Officer Karr initiated a traffic stop and Officer Franks arrived as backup. As Officer Karr was walking up to the cab of the truck, he could see in plain view a buck and doe deer in the bed of the truck. A scoped rifle was found in the grass next to the passenger side door by Officer Franks. After being read their Miranda rights, the driver and passenger admitted to shining the light, shooting both deer and throwing the rifle and ammunition out of the window. Both subjects were arrested and charged accordingly. The rifle was seized, and the deer were donated to a local wildlife rehabilitation center.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Officer Adams was patrolling along Riverdale Road near Avon Park and observed a pickup truck parked on the east side of the road. A passenger got out to survey the area and Officer Adams approached the truck. Large feed sacks were in the truck's bed, which appeared to be filled with berries along with a type of bucket commonly used for palmetto berry harvesting. He also observed palmetto berries in plain view on truck bed floor as well as a piece of a palmetto frond. The truck was occupied by two subjects who were not in possession of a harvesting permit. Both subjects were issued a notice to appear for the violations.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Officer McCormack observed two males fishing along the sea wall at Davis Island Seaplane Basin Park in Tampa. He approached the two fishermen to conduct a resource inspection and located four undersized gray (mangrove) snapper in a sealed five-gallon paint bucket. One subject was issued a citation for the violation.

Officer McCormack observed two males fishing at the North Skyway Fishing Pier State Park in Tampa Bay. He approached the two fishermen, to conduct a resource

inspection and located a fourteen-inch spotted seatrout. The subject was cited accordingly.

LEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Spoede was on patrol when he saw two individuals walking out on the mud flats near the Sanibel billboards collecting items off the ground and placing them in a bucket. Based on his observations and the extremely low tide he suspected that the individuals were collecting live shells. When the subjects exited the water, Lieutenant Spoede conducted a resource inspection and examined the contents of the bucket. He identified multiple live conch shells, live pen shells snails and live whelks. The individuals were issued the appropriate citations and the live shells were returned to the water unharmed.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Dalton observed a subject snorkeling in the waters of Tampa Bay. When the subject returned to their vehicle carrying a bag the officer conducted a resource inspection. The inspection revealed the fisherman was in possession of thirty stone crab claws. Twenty-eight of the thirty claws were undersized. The stone crab claws were seized and the fisherman was issued a notice to appear for possession of stone crab claws during closed season.

Officer Hardgrove conducted a resource inspection of a subject cast-netting along the shoreline. An inspection of the fisherman's bucket located a whole stone crab and an undersized sheepshead. The stone crab and sheepshead were seized, and the fisherman was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Hardgrove conducted an inspection of a fisherman packing up his gear. The inspection revealed a bucket containing two cast nets and nine mangrove snapper and two sheepshead. One of the mangrove snapper and one sheepshead were undersized. The undersized fish were seized, and the fisherman was issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Hardgrove observed two subjects fishing along a jetty. When the fishermen returned to the shoreline the officer conducted a fisheries inspection. The inspection revealed four whole stone crabs, undersized stone crab claws, possession of egg-bearing whole stone crabs and one undersized sheepshead. The stone crabs and sheepshead were seized, and the fishermen were issued a notice to appear for the violations.

Officer Hardgrove conducted a license and fisheries inspection of a commercial fishing vessel. The inspection revealed the captain's commercial decal on the vessel was expired. The captain provided the officer with a current commercial fishing license with the proper endorsement. However, the current license does not authorize the crew to commercially harvest saltwater products. At the time of the inspection there was one

crewmember onboard with an expired commercial license and a cooler full of mullet and pinfish on ice. The commercial fishing captain was issued a Notice to Appear for not possessing a saltwater products license with restricted species endorsement for every person harvesting commercial saltwater products from his vessel.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Lieutenant Bibeau observed four individuals actively fishing from underneath a bridge. He tied his patrol vessel to a nearby boat ramp and approached the individuals on foot. Lieutenant Bibeau contacted the individuals and conducted a fisheries inspection which found one of the individuals in possession of eighteen undersized mangrove snapper. Lieutenant Bibeau issued the individual a misdemeanor citation for the fisheries violation.

Lieutenant Bibeau observed two individuals actively wade fishing and waited until they returned to their vehicle to conduct a fisheries inspection. The individuals possessed two mangrove snapper and five out of season trout. One of the individuals admitted to being responsible for the trout and was issued a misdemeanor citation for the fisheries violation.

Lieutenant Bibeau observed three individuals whose actions were consistent with the harvest of scallops. A fisheries inspection and found the individuals in possession of sixty-four bay scallops. Lieutenant Bibeau cited the individuals for harvesting bay scallops in a closed area.

Officer Conrad observed two separate groups harvesting marine life near the Skyway Bridge. Upon completing a resource inspection, each group was found to be in possession of bay scallops in a closed zone. The individuals were cited accordingly.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Hardgrove conducted a resource inspection of a fisherman fishing near a bridge. The subject was in possession of a bonefish. The bonefish was seized, and the fisherman was issued a notice to appear for harvesting a bonefish.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Madsen and Lieutenant Brown worked the opening night of Alligator Hunting Season. They wrote numerous navigation light violations and observed a subject attempting to harvest an alligator without an agent's license. Appropriate citations were issued for all violations.

HENDRY COUNTY

Lieutenant Steelman, Officer Specialist Nasworth, K-9 Officer Delatorre and Officer Shouse responded to a wildlife management area in reference to individuals picking saw palmetto berries. With the assistance of Pilot Simons overhead, the officers were able to locate two bags of berries. Officer Delatorre utilized his K-9 Diesel and located two subjects. Both subjects admitted to picking berries and were taken to the Hendy County Jail.

Captain Sushil, Lieutenant Steelman, Officer Specialist Nasworth, Officer Flynn and Officer Shouse responded to a wildlife management area (WMA) in reference to individuals picking saw palmetto berries. While in the WMA, a vehicle was spotted matching the description given and Lieutenant Steelman conducted a traffic stop. Multiple bags full of berries were in the bed of the truck. Eight subjects were arrested for removing berries from the WMA.

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Willems was on land patrol when he was dispatched to a complaint regarding an individual picking saw palmetto berries in the Allapattah Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Once on scene, the officer observed an individual standing behind by his vehicle in possession of a white bag containing saw palmetto berries. The individual was questioned and admitted to harvesting the berries. The individual was issued a criminal citation for removing saw palmetto berries from a WMA.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol in federal waters approximately 10 miles offshore of Lake Worth Inlet when a vessel was observed with several people on board actively fishing. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection which revealed several undersize dolphin. The vessel had on board a measuring device listing the correct minimum size limit for dolphin. The owner of the vessel took responsibility for the violation and was issued a resource citation. The undersize dolphin were photographed and seized for evidence.

Officer Brodbeck was on vessel patrol in federal waters approximately 11 miles offshore of Lake Worth Inlet when a charter fishing vessel was observed actively harvesting small dolphin while engaged in a for-hire trip. A vessel stop was initiated to conduct a resource inspection which revealed several undersize dolphin and a skipjack tuna. The captain of the vessel did not possess the required Federal Atlantic Dolphin/Wahoo charter permit or Highly Migratory Species permit. The captain of the charter vessel received a resource citation for possession of undersize dolphin and written warnings for the federal permit violations. The undersize dolphin was photographed and seized for evidence.

Officer Brodbeck received a call from a fisherman who claimed an out of season and undersize snook had been stolen by a group of fishermen. The caller stated he was reviving the fish in the water for release when the group asked if they could take a picture with it. They then proceeded to leave with the fish. Officer Brodbeck coordinated with officers from the West Palm Beach Police Department to observe the subjects that had taken the snook. Once the group got into a vehicle and left the area, a vehicle stop was initiated. Located in a cooler in plain view in the rear of the vehicle was a 23-inch snook. The driver and owner of the vehicle received resource citations for possession of undersize snook and possession of snook during closed season. The snook was photographed and seized for evidence.

Officers Moss and Brodbeck conducted federal fisheries patrol offshore of Jupiter Inlet. Several vessel stops and boardings were conducted, with numerous violations observed. Violations included no Highly Migratory Species permit, unauthorized use of dealer registration, no skin on fish fillets returning from the Bahamas, possession of undersize dolphin, and possession of stone crab claws during closed season. The appropriate law enforcement action was taken for the violations.

Officer Boyd responded to a call at John MacArthur Beach State Park about a person trespassing who had previously received a trespass warning for life. When Officer Boyd arrived, he was told the subject was on the beach. When the subject returned, he was issued a notice to appear in court for the misdemeanor charge of trespassing after warning in a state park. Officer Boyd escorted the subject out of the park.

Officer Boyd and Officer Partelow responded to a call in Jonathan Dickinson State Park about campers who failed to vacate their campsite by the checkout time. When they arrived the recreational vehicle (RV) and possessions still occupied the spot and litter was all over the campsite. When the subjects returned, they were issued citations for failing to comply with state park staff and littering.

Lieutenant Hankinson, Officers Boyd and Ames responded to a call about individuals picking saw palmetto berries within the boundaries of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The complainant stated a subject driving a red SUV was seen picking berries. Upon entering the park, Officers Boyd and Ames observed the vehicle matching the description with a female driver and traffic stop was initiated. The officers observed bags of berries in plain sight in the SUV. Five bags containing palmetto berries were found and the driver was issued a notice to appear for driving without a valid driver license and cited accordingly for violation of state park rules.

Lieutenant Warne was on land patrol when he responded to a call about individuals walking out of the J.W Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) with saw palmetto berries and loading them into their vehicle. Lieutenant Warne located the vehicle and could see the saw palmetto berries in the bed of the truck. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver admitted to harvesting the berries inside the management area. The appropriate misdemeanor citations were issued.

Officers Norbrothen and Stoker were on land patrol when they responded to a call regarding individuals removing a fence blocking access into the J.W Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). When the officers arrived on scene, the fence was down, and it was obvious vehicles had illegally entered the WMA. During this time of year J.W Corbett is closed for two weeks prior to the start of hunting season. The officers located the vehicles in the back of the WMA off-trail. The officers interviewed the individuals and then issued misdemeanor citations for criminal mischief, Illegal entry into the WMA and entering the WMA while closed to public access.

Officer Webb was on land patrol when he received a call regarding a jeep that illegally entered and drove around the North Check Station locked gate at the J.W Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). During this time of year, the J.W Corbett WMA is closed to the public for two weeks prior to the start of hunting season. The jeep was located at the South Check Station exit but was blocked in by the locked gate. Officer Webb arrived on scene and issued the driver a criminal citation for entering the WMA during a time that it is closed to public access.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Officer Cernuto observed a vehicle with no lights operating down a county-maintained roadway. Upon stopping the vehicle to address the violation, the driver's license was suspended, and he exhibited signs of impairment. Field Sobriety Tasks were used, and the subject was arrested for DUI and transported to the county jail. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officer Cernuto observed a subject stopped in the roadway, appearing to be disabled. Upon activating the emergency lights, the subject pulled to the roadside. A query of the vehicle tag revealed its decal was expired. Upon contacting the driver, signs of impairment were exhibited. Field Sobriety Tasks were used, and the subject was arrested for DUI and transported to the county jail. The subject was cited accordingly.

Officers Cernuto and Payne observed a subject fishing from a sea wall in Fort Pierce. Upon contacting the subject (who was later determined to have an extensive history with FWC), he appeared to be attempting to quickly pack his things and leave. A resource inspection revealed an undersized lobster tail and a short sheepshead. Officer Cernuto issued a misdemeanor citation reference the violations.

Officer Payne, Cernuto and Lieutenant Rogerson conducted a fisheries inspection of a commercial vessel returning to land. The inspection revealed two undersize/out of season snook, an undersized black drum, and a bonnet head shark; all of which showed signs of having been harvested by a cast net. The illegal fish were seized for evidence and the subject was issued six misdemeanor citations for the violations.