

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



Patrol, Protect, Preserve

September 4, 2020 through September 10, 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.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Lieutenant Ward with Officers Sapp, West, and O'Regan responded to a call for assistance from the Volusia County Sheriff's Office. The call was in reference to a female aboard an underway vessel who was a possible victim of domestic violence. Officers Sapp and West located the vessel and the sheriff's office conducted a domestic violence investigation. Officer Sapp conducted a boating under the influence investigation on the vessel operator. The operator was arrested for BUI and refused to submit to a breath test.

Lieutenant Riley received a call to assist the Volusia County Sheriff's Office with an impaired individual in a swampy area. The man was under the influence of controlled substances and was trespassing on private land. When the subject was located, he refused to listen to lawful commands and eventually fled on foot. Lieutenant Riley pursued the subject and made an arrest. Charges included trespassing, resisting arrest without violence, giving false name to a law enforcement officer and an outstanding warrant.

BREVARD COUNTY

Officers Maggio and Kearney received word that snook was being harvested during closed season. They arrived on scene and observed a man place a fish into the bed of a truck. Officers Maggio and Kearney performed a resource inspection which revealed a

33-inch snook sticking out of a five-gallon bucket in the corner of the truck bed. The legal-size limit for snook is 28-32 inches. The subject was issued the appropriate citation.

Officers Maggio and Kearney performed a resource inspection at Ketcham Park. During the inspection one undersized mangrove snapper and one undersized mutton snapper were found in his possession. The subject was issued the appropriate citation.

Officer Mock responded to a call about several individuals harvesting saw palmetto berries on state property. When Officer Mock arrived on scene, two of the individuals fled. Officer Mock detained one of the individuals and cited him accordingly.

While on patrol in a wildlife management area, Lieutenant Lightsey observed an airboat actively hunting alligators. Lieutenant Lightsey conducted a resource inspection which revealed an alligator had been harvested but not properly tagged. A notice to appear was issued for the violation.

Lieutenant Lightsey observed a man using a cast net along the shoreline. The man used a concealed position as he caught and turned his fish over to another man with a bucket. Investigator Saunders with Officers Balgo and Snyder conducted surveillance of the men and when they were done fishing, a resource inspection was conducted. A cooler was recovered from the shoreline that contained seventeen undersized sheepshead and two mangrove snapper taken by illegal method. A notice to appear and warnings were issued for the violations.

LAKE COUNTY

Investigator Sumpter and Officer Morrow were on water patrol when they stopped a vessel and conducted a boating safety inspection. The officers noticed indicators of the operator being impaired during the boating safety inspection. The vessel operator refused all field sobriety tasks and was arrested for boating under the influence.

MARION COUNTY

Officer Specialist Rice and Officer Carey were on patrol when they observed a personal watercraft (PWC) violating a boating safety no wake zone. Officer Carey contacted the operator to conduct a vessel safety inspection and address the boating safety violation. During the inspection, Officer Carey observed several indicators suggesting the operator's normal faculties were impaired. Field sobriety tasks were concluded, and the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator refused to provide a breath sample and was transported to the Marion County Jail.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Salem, Goggin and Lieutenant Ruggiero were on patrol when they saw a group of men wading around in the water and collecting shellfish. The officers saw the men putting shellfish into various buckets and coolers and carry them onto an island. A resource inspection found they were in possession of twenty-one scallops, forty-four fighting conchs, 102 cross-barred venus clams, lightning whelks, fan shell mussels and some undersized hard-shell clams. Taking scallops in Charlotte County is prohibited. The officers sorted through all the shellfish and allowed the men to keep their daily bag limit of shellfish but the portion over the bag limit was returned to the water alive. Six misdemeanors and ten written warnings were issued.

Officers Lejarzar and Hardgrove were on water patrol when they saw a vessel stuck in shallow water and listing to one side. The operator was revving the engines as other people outside the vessel attempted to push it free from the shallow water. The officers quickly approached the vessel in order to ensure the safety of all the bystanders in the area who were at high risk of being injured due to the careless operation. While speaking with the operator, the officers saw indicators of impairment. They moved the operator onto their patrol vessel and conducted sobriety exercises. The operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Charlotte County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

While on water patrol, Officers Goggin and Geeraerts, along with Captain Carpenter and Major Young, stopped a boat violating a slow speed zone. While the speed zone violation was being addressed, the operator displayed several signs of impairment. Seated field sobriety tasks were utilized, and the operator was arrested for boating under the influence.

Investigator Cooke observed a vessel entering the waterway in the area of Ponce De Leon Park Boat Ramp without displaying the appropriate navigational lights. Investigator Cooke performed a vessel safety inspection and determined all five passengers on the vessel appeared to be intoxicated. Field sobriety exercises were utilized, and the vessel operator was arrested for BUI and transported to the Charlotte County Jail.

Investigator Cooke was on land patrol at the Placida Park Boat Ramp when he observed a vessel tie up to the dock. A few minutes later, Investigator Cooke observed a truck pull up next to the vessel while it was being loaded onto the trailer. The operator of the truck began talking to the vessel operator. When the conversation ended, the truck operator accelerated to the point that a cloud of white smoke began rising from the tires. Investigator Cooke conducted a traffic stop on the truck in the boat ramp parking lot and performed field sobriety exercises on the operator. The operator was arrested for DUI and transported to the Charlotte County Jail.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Investigator Ervin was on foot patrol at Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Highlands County when he observed two subjects carrying firearms in a low ready position and walking through the woods. They were both wearing fluorescent orange vests which are required when hunting deer on state lands. Investigator Ervin conducted a resource inspection and determined that the men were in fact hunting hogs in the WMA during a closed season. The subjects were issued the appropriate citations for the violations.

LEE COUNTY

Officer Garcia, Investigator Ruggiero and Lieutenant Ruggiero were on water patrol when they saw a vessel leaving a popular fishing area. The officers stopped the vessel and conducted a fisheries inspection. During the inspection, one of the men on board was quick to tell the officers they had caught and kept some trout and mangrove snapper. When asked how big the smallest trout was, one of the men said fourteen inches. Trout are currently illegal to keep and, when the season is open, the minimum legal-size limit is fifteen inches. The men were educated on the violation and the officers helped them get accurate information on the fishing regulations for the area. They were issued a warning for the violations and the fish were returned to the water.

Officer Parker was on patrol when she saw an individual fishing near the mangroves by New Pass. A resource inspection revealed eight mangrove snapper and one thirteen-inch spotted sea trout. The individual was cited for possession of undersized spotted sea trout and given warnings for the remainder of the violations. The subject was allowed to keep five mangrove snapper which is the legal bag limit. The remaining fish were seized and photographed for evidence.

Officer Self, along with Lieutenant Spoede were on uniform water patrol in Estero Bay when they observed several PWCs operating at night. They stopped the vessels to address the violation. Upon contacting one of the operators, signs of impairment were exhibited. The operator refused to perform field sobriety tasks and was arrested and transported to Lee County Jail where he refused to provide a breath sample.

Lieutenant Spoede and Officer Self were on uniformed patrol when they saw several individuals walking out on the mud flats near the New Pass bridge collecting items off the ground and placing them in a mesh bag. Based on their observations and the extremely low tide they suspected that the individuals were collecting live shells. When the subjects exited the water, they conducted a resource inspection and found live conch shells, live pen shells, snails, live whelks, live tulip snails and over 200 hard clams (thirty-seven of which were undersized). The individuals were cited for harvesting shellfish in a closed area, possession of undersized hard clams and possessing live shells in Lee County. They were also given a warning for no valid fishing license. The live shells were seized, photographed and returned to the water unharmed.

Officers Self and Bell were on uniform water patrol in the Caloosahatchee River in a slow speed zone inside Popcorn Bay (next to Big Shell Island). A vessel stop was

initiated on a white skiff containing fishing rods to perform a resource inspection. The vessel operator said he had three spotted sea trout on and admitted to catching and keeping all three fish. The trout were seized, and the operator was issued a notice to appear for being in possession of spotted sea trout when an executive order is in place prohibiting the harvest, take and possession of trout. He was also issued a uniform boating citation for not having his vessel registration on board and four additional written warnings regarding other boating safety/resource violations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officers Hinds and Miller watched as people on a boat appeared to be hunting alligators on Lake Manatee. They observed the subjects harvest an alligator and conducted an inspection. The hunters did not have a harvest permit for the lake. They were issued the appropriate citations.

Officers Johnston and Gonzales conducted a resource inspection of two subjects fishing from a bridge in Bradenton. The inspection revealed an undersized snook buried below mullet in a cooler. One of the fishermen was issued a notice to appear for possession of snook during closed season and possession of undersized snook. The snook was seized and returned to the water.

Officers Hinds, Miller and Lieutenant McCorkle conducted a resource inspection on two subjects matching a description provided by an anonymous tip regarding people keeping redfish on a stringer. The officers found them in possession of redfish and sea trout, both of which are closed by executive order. The subjects were issued notices to appear for the violations.

Officers Hinds and Miller waited for wade fishermen to return to their vehicle in the Bishop Harbor area after dark. When the first one came back, he got into his truck and drove away to pick up the other fisherman. When he stopped the truck, the officers announced their presence and the driver drove away. One fisherman dumped out a cooler of fish onto the road. The officers caught up to the truck and had it return to the original location. There they discovered some of the dumped fish were snook. Citations were issued for possession of snook and driving without a driver's license.

PASCO COUNTY

Senior Officer Pulaski and Officer Rothchild were on land patrol in the Hudson Beach area when they observed a vessel violate the idle speed zone. A stop was initiated to address the violation and the operator exhibited signs of impairment. Senior Officer Pulaski asked the operator to submit to field sobriety tasks. The operator was arrested for BUI.

Senior Officer Pulaski was on land patrol in the Hudson Beach area when he noticed a vessel heading to the boat ramp operating in violation of the idle speed zone. He stopped the vessel to address the violation and the operator displayed signs of

impairment. Field sobriety tasks were used, and the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator refused to provide a breath sample.

Officer Specialist Tsongranis and Officer Swindell were on land patrol in the Hudson Beach area when they observed a vessel return to the boat ramp. The vessel appeared to have been engaged in fishing, so the officers conducted a resource inspection to determine compliance. The officers located two bags that contained red grouper fillets. The fillets were seized as evidence and the officers issued citations for the violations.

Officer Rothchild responded to Anclote River Park Boat Ramp regarding a single vessel accident which had occurred in the area. The accident involved a PWC at the dock when the throttle malfunctioned and sent the PWC up the concrete ramp into the turn basin. One individual sustained a minor injury and no other pedestrians or vehicles were struck or injured. Officer Rothchild will complete the accident report.

POLK COUNTY

Officer Earls and Officer Munkwitz were patrolling near Lake Shipp when they observed a PWC operating after hours. Officer Earls was able to stop the ski in the Lake Shipp Lake Lulu canal to address the violation. Upon completing a boating safety inspection Officer Munkwitz noticed signs of impairment. The operator consented to Seated Field Sobriety Tasks. Upon completion of the tasks, the operator was arrested for operating a vessel while normal faculties were impaired and issued an infraction for the PWC violation. The subject was transported to the Polk County Jail without incident.

Officers Earls and Carter were on patrol at the Lake Shipp boat ramp of the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes when they observed a vessel operating with no visible navigation lights. They conducted a vessel stop and observed the operator showing signs of impairment. Field sobriety tasks were utilized, and the subject was arrested for operating a vessel while normal faculties impaired and issued an infraction for the navigational light violation. The subject was transported to the Polk County Jail.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officer Miller was checking fishermen near New Pass when he found a man in possession of undersized mangrove snapper. The subject was issued a notice to appear for the violation.

Officers Johnston and Gonzales conducted a resource inspection of a subject fishing from a pier. The inspection revealed an out-of-season spotted seatrout and an undersized mangrove snapper. The fisherman also had an active warrant for his arrest out of Marion County. The fisherman was arrested on the warrant and booked into the Sarasota County Jail. He also received a notice to appear for possession of out-of-season spotted seatrout and undersized mangrove snapper.

Officers Johnston and Gonzales were conducting foot patrol when they observed two people fishing from a pier. A resource inspection revealed one subject in possession of two spotted seatrout and one redfish. The fisherman was issued a notice to appear for possession of spotted seatrout, a redfish during closed season, as well as possession of an undersized spotted seatrout. The fish were seized and returned to the water.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

BROWARD COUNTY

Captive Wildlife Investigator Corteguera responded to the report of a black leopard attack. It was determined that an individual licensed to possess the leopard accepted payment from an individual to enter the enclosure. After entering the enclosure, the victim suffered a bite from the leopard, resulting in substantial injuries. Misdemeanor citations were issued for allowing full contact with the leopard and for creating a dangerous situation resulting in injury to a member of the public.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Partelow and Brodbeck were dispatched to a report of a short horn deer that was checked into the south check station at Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) during archery season. Upon arrival, the officers located the subject and the deer. The officers measured the deer and it failed to meet the required size limits. The subject was cited accordingly, and the deer was seized for evidence.

Officer Brodbeck was on patrol and observed a vessel violating the slow speed zone west of Peanut Island. A stop was initiated to address the violation and conduct a vessel safety inspection. During contact with the vessel operator, numerous indicators of impairment were detected. Seated field sobriety tasks were utilized, and the operator was arrested for BUI. The operator was transported to the Palm Beach County Jail, where he refused to provide a breath sample. The operator received the appropriate citations and warnings.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby encountered a group of individuals fishing with a cast net in a prohibited area. Upon inspection, he found the group in possession of game fish harvested by illegal method. After obtaining their identities, one individual was found to have an active federal warrant for his arrest. A search of this individual found him in possession of cocaine as well. The subject was arrested and turned over to federal authorities for the warrant. Investigator Toby issued an additional felony citation for possession of cocaine, and a misdemeanor for trespassing in the prohibited area. Warnings were issued for obtaining game fish by illegal method and to the other members of the group for trespassing. Lieutenant Hankinson and Officers Schroer and Boyd assisted with this incident.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

FWC Investigators along with Officers Hart and Gomez were conducting stops of individuals illegally launching personal watercraft (PWC) from a South Florida Water Management Canal bank. After conducting several inspections, the officers found one PWC with several Hull Identification Number (HIN) discrepancies and the trailer had its Vehicle Identification Numbers (VIN) removed. The PWC and trailer were seized for further investigation. With the help of an investigator, officers were able to gather enough evidence to prove the owner had changed the PWC's HIN, removed the VIN from the trailer and placed different manufacturer identifiers on it. The owner was arrested for removing the trailer's VIN, committing trailer registration fraud, PWC HIN fraud and Title fraud.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Trueblood and Sutter performed an offshore Joint Enforcement Patrol south of Marathon and Islamorada. During their patrol they inspected multiple vessels. Three of the vessels inspected during the JEA patrol had violations. The officers stopped a charter vessel, trolling for dolphin and blackfin tuna. The operator of the vessel did not have the appropriate federal fisheries permits required for charter captains. He was cited accordingly.

Officers Trueblood and Sutter conducted a vessel stop to perform a fisheries inspection. The vessel was within the southern boundary of East Hump Marine Protected Area. As the officers approached the vessel, they observed an electric deep-water reel, deployed in the water actively fishing. Deep drop fishing for snapper/grouper within the MPA is prohibited. The individuals on the vessel were cited accordingly.

Officers Trueblood and Sutter observed a vessel returning from the offshore fishing grounds near the Conch Reef Sanctuary Preservation Area. The officers conducted a fisheries inspection of the vessel and located one legal swordfish, and multiple other species of fish. The subjects on board the vessel were asked to provide the appropriate Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit for harvesting swordfish. The captain of the vessel stated he did not have a permit for his vessel, or for himself and was cited accordingly.

While conducting Critical Wildlife Area patrol, Officer Thurkettle noticed a kayaker fishing well inside the restricted CWA zone. While addressing the CWA violation, Officer Thurkettle asked to see a lifejacket and fishing license. The individual did not have either and appropriate citations were issued.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Oldsen and Thurkettle assisted the Collier County Sheriff's Office and Marco Island Police with locating a person reported as struggling in the water. Officer Oldsen located the person from the land and relayed the information to Officer Thurkettle, who along with a deputy, boarded a Good Samaritan's vessel and headed to the reported location. As the officers approached, Officer Thurkettle observed a Marco Island Officer in the water with the subject, who was belligerent and refusing help while struggling to stay afloat. Officer Thurkettle entered the water to assist the officer. The subject, who was aggressive and appeared intoxicated, lost consciousness and was safely removed from the water.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Public Information Officer Ronald Washington and Public Information Coordinator Parrish released a video on boating safety and rental tips for social media. This video showed best practices for consumers and businesses in the livery industry and provided practical advice to stay safe. The post was shared and viewed by thousands of visitors to our social media page.