

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement



Weekly Report **January 5, 2018 through January 11, 2018**

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.

Patrol, Protect, Preserve

NORTHWEST REGION

CASES

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Pettey checked a pair of fishermen at Quintette Boat Ramp. He discovered that they were in possession of 120 panfish, 20 over their allowable daily bag limit. A notice to appear citation was issued for the violation.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Pifer was on land patrol responding to River's Edge Boat Ramp in Holt in reference to an individual shooting at black vultures, commonly referred to as buzzards, on the Yellow River. The complainant provided a description of the shooter and vessel. When the officer arrived, the complainant was standing by and identified the subject's vehicle. FWC Officer White arrived on scene to assist. Within a few minutes, the officers observed a vessel with one individual matching the description given by the complainant, returning to the boat ramp. The officer determined the vessel operator was returning from a hunting trip. The subject had shot one wood duck. A resource inspection revealed that the shotgun was unplugged, capable of holding more than three shells. The individual admitted that he shot at a buzzard but did not hit it. The subject was issued a notice to appear resource citation for failure to plug the shotgun and a warning for shooting at a protected species.

Officer Corbin was on land patrol at the Fisherman's CO-OP in the Destin Harbor when he observed a federally documented commercial fishing vessel tying to a dock. The

officer determined the vessel was returning from a commercial fishing trip. The vessel harvested red snapper and vermilion snapper. Under the federal commercial vessel program, when landing red snapper, the operator or owner of vessel must report a three-hour landing notification prior to docking, which did not occur. Officer Corbin had seen the vessel in the harbor earlier with an individual cleaning the fish and tossing some back into the water. The officer determined the deckhand was tossing all undersized fish back into the water. The remaining fish included undersized red snapper and undersized vermilion snapper, both in violation of federal and state fisheries laws. The operator of the vessel was found in the cabin sleeping. In plain view, Officer Corbin observed glass smoking pipes next to the boat operator used in a method of inhaling illegal drugs. Residue on the pipe was field tested as positive for methamphetamine. In close vicinity, other additional smoking glass pipes were found along with a small container with substance that tested positive for methamphetamine. The operator was arrested, handcuffed and transported to Okaloosa County Jail where the intake process was completed. The intake officer located a controlled substance in the operator's wallet. The operator was charged with two felonies and one misdemeanor. A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) officer arrived on scene to address the failure of providing a landing notification and the undersized fish.

Officer Pifer met with a complainant after they reported witnessing an antlerless deer shot from a state highway. The complainant provided a statement of what he observed which included a tag number of the vehicle. Officer Pifer located the deer which appeared to have been shot with a shotgun. Lieutenant Hollinhead met Officer Pifer at the residence of the registered owner of the vehicle. After a short interview, the driver and passenger admitted to shooting the deer from the side of the roadway. Both subjects were charged with taking an antlerless deer and the passenger was also charged with discharging a firearm from the roadway.

SANTA ROSA

Officer Hutchinson was working late at night in the Blackwater State Forest when he observed two vehicles with a bright light being shined from the driver side window of the first vehicle. As he watched, the driver shined the light into the tree line and across an open field on private property. When the two vehicles stopped at a large tree beside the roadway, Officer Hutchinson pulled in behind them and observed one of the subjects standing in the road shining his light in the top of the tree. Officer Hutchison determined that the men were hunting raccoons with the use of a light from a moving vehicle which is prohibited. Officer Hutchison issued the man who used the light a notice to appear for attempting to take racoon with the use of a light from a moving vehicle.

Officer Hutchinson and Lieutenant Hahr assisted Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources with a night hunting case before the 2017 hunting season. The case involved two subjects who killed two bucks in velvet in Alabama at night before the hunting season. Officer Hutchinson and Lieutenant Hahr caught the subjects in possession of the deer in Florida and worked in conjunction with the Alabama officers to make the case. Officer Hutchinson appeared in court in Alabama along with the

Alabama Conservation Officers resulting in a conviction for one of the subjects. The other subject failed to appear in court.

Officer Jones was on patrol in South Santa Rosa County, in Navarre Beach, when he noticed a man exit an old sailboat that was anchored in Santa Rosa Sound. The man boarded a small dinghy and proceeded to the boat ramp. As Officer Jones approached the vessel to conduct a boating safety check, the operator of the vessel turned the vessel and began to motor away. The subject refused to comply with repeated instruction to return to the dock and returned to his sailboat, where he removed the small motor from the dinghy. The operator then paddled to the dock where Officer Jones was located and was placed under arrest for interference with an FWC officer and booked into the Santa Rosa County Jail. The subject was also issued a uniform boating citation for an expired registration.

WALTON

Lieutenant Hollinhead and Officer Letcher received information about a subject taking an illegal deer. The officers located the subject and questioned him about the information they received. The officers were provided the antlers of the deer which measured only four inches and the name of another subject involved with taking the deer. Both subjects were juveniles and were educated on the law of antler restrictions.

LEON

After receiving information from the investigations section, RPS Officers Miller and Pekerol began investigating illegal fishing that was possibly taking place on Lake Overstreet in Maclay Gardens State Park. Lake Overstreet is closed to fishing at all times. After an initial investigation, a small boat was found stashed on the bank of the lake. After surveillance of the area, Officer Miller was able to catch the suspect fishing on the lake. The subject was issued citations for evasion of state park fees and fishing in a closed area.

LIBERTY

While on uniform patrol just south of Hitchcock Lake, Officer Bell observed an individual standing near his truck holding a shotgun. After driving past the individual, Officer Bell turned around to conduct a resource inspection. The subject advised the officer that he was not hunting, but only listening to the dogs trailing deer. Officer Bell inquired about the shotgun that he was holding. After a short search of the area, a loaded 12-gauge shotgun was found approximately ten yards from where the individual had been standing. After speaking with dispatch, the individual was confirmed as a convicted felon. The individual was placed under arrest and transported to jail for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm.

FRANKLIN

While on patrol, Officers Richardson and Sauls spotted a commercial net boat east of Carrabelle. The officers traveled down by foot from the highway and observed fishermen actively retrieving a net from the water and removing fish from it. During a subsequent resource inspection, it was determined that two of the nets were connected and exceeded one thousand square feet. All the nets were seized for more precise measurements to be conducted. After completing the measurements, four misdemeanor charges were filed for fishing with a net exceeding five hundred square feet, connecting two nets so as to exceed five hundred square feet, carriage of nets exceeding five hundred square feet on a vessel less than twenty-five feet with a forward mounted motor and not marking nets with saltwater products license number.

WAKULLA

While on patrol, RPS Officer Raker responded to a complaint of an individual harvesting oysters from prohibited waters within Dickerson Bay. Upon arrival, an individual was seen exiting Dickerson Bay with three bags of oysters on a bicycle. Officer Raker identified himself and showed his badge to the individual. The individual refused to stop for Officer Raker and then ran into the adjacent woods. Officers Nelson and Matechik responded to the area to assist Officer Raker in apprehending the fleeing subject. Officer Nelson was able to locate the individual a short distance away and take him into custody. The officers then completed their investigation resulting in six misdemeanors and one felony charge being filed. The violations included harvest of oysters from a prohibited area, over the bag limit for oysters, possession of undersized oysters, giving a false name to a law enforcement officer, interference with an FWC officer, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

CALHOUN

Officer Hayes responded to a complaint from a landowner about trespassing. The landowner had game camera photos of a vehicle on his property. The landowner stated he knew who the suspect was and had previously told him to stay off his property. Officer Hayes tracked down the suspect who was currently in the Liberty County Jail on unrelated charges. The suspect admitted to trespassing, charges have been filled with the State Attorney's office for the violation.

JACKSON

Officer Forehand responded to a call from an FHP Trooper who had conducted a traffic stop on I-10. The Trooper noticed blood on the bumper of the car and had been told by the two occupants that they killed a four and six-point buck earlier that morning. When Officer Forehand arrived, he found two ice chests with fresh untagged deer meat in the trunk of the car. He also found two fresh deer tails but no deer antlers. He noticed the deer back straps seemed very small to have been legal deer. Subsequent interview revealed both suspects admitted to killing two doe deer that morning. Charges have been filled on both subjects for of taking doe deer during the closed season and possession of deer meat without sex evidence.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Maltais conducted an outreach event for the Boys Scouts #522. The officer covered fishing regulations, fish identification, fishing methods, boating safety, and answered numerous questions resulting from the group discussion. The scouts met their elective requirements for "A Bear Goes Fishing."

RESCUES

HOLMES

Officers assisted Holmes County Sheriff's Office with a search for two lost hunters in the Choctawhatchee River WMA after dark. With freezing temperatures, the subjects were found quickly and had no medical conditions.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

GULF

The Gulf County squad braved frigid freezing temperatures to rescue cold water stressed sea turtles in St Joe Bay. Approximately ninety-five stunned turtles were recovered and delivered to Gulf World to be cared for until the water temperatures rise and they can be released.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

DUVAL COUNTY

Officer Schirbock was on routine land patrol on Jacksonville Electric Authority/Florida Power and Light property off Yellow Water Road in Jacksonville. He observed a gold 2003 Jeep Liberty driving under the power lines and turning its headlights on and off. Officer Schirbock initiated a traffic stop for trespassing on posted private property. Both driver and passenger stated they did not know that they were trespassing and that they were just cruising roads. In a search of the vehicle, a bag and a jar of 28 grams of marijuana was found. A check of records through dispatch revealed that both subjects had active warrants. One subject had a warrant issued out of Duval County for battery. The other subject had a warrant issued out of Nassau County for failure to appear for driving while license is suspended or revoked. Both subjects were placed under arrest for the warrants. Both subjects were charged for trespassing on private property. The

driver of the jeep was also charged with felony possession of cannabis. Both subjects were transported to the Duval County Jail.

NASSAU COUNTY

Officer Barry was on land-based vehicle patrol in Snowball Hunting Club in Nassau County when she heard multiple gunshots. Three subjects were exiting the woods after sunset from where the shots were fired. All three subjects admitted to shooting at ducks. The three subjects were also using shotguns that were not plugged, allowing them to hold more than three shells. One of the subjects did not possess a Federal duck stamp. Officer Barry issued notices to appear to two of the adult subjects for shooting ducks after sunset and for shooting with unplugged shotguns. The juvenile subject was issued written warnings for the same violations. In addition, one of the adult subjects was also issued a written warning for not having his Federal duck stamp.

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Albritton and Wilder were checking fishermen and their vessels at the Petersons Landing boat ramp in Taylor County. During this time, the officers found two vessels and a total of five fishermen to be in possession of 13 redfish. Most were undersized. The officers also located five undersized sheepshead and undersized flounder and black drum. Evidence was seized and the appropriate citations were issued.

UNION COUNTY

Officer Gill received a call of rifle shot coming from a county road and the caller suspected a deer could have been unlawfully shot. Officer Gill responded to the area and located fresh tire and foot sign on the dirt road. He located a freshly spent .270 rifle casing where the suspect had been standing. Approximately 30 yards off the road, Officer Gill found a freshly killed buck. The deer was undersized as it did not possess the required three points on one side or a ten-inch main beam. Officer Gill left the area and returned a brief time later on his ATV which he could conceal better than his patrol vehicle. Officer Gill maintained surveillance on the illegal deer for several hours until a vehicle with the exact tire match came back to retrieve the deer. After being interviewed, the subject admitted to shooting the deer with a .270 rifle while it was standing in the road. The subject will be charged with taking wildlife from a roadway and for taking a short antlered deer.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

BREVARD COUNTY

Officer Dubose received a complaint that a man on Sebastian Inlet State Park's north jetty had caught and kept a lemon shark. After arriving and conducting resource inspections in the area, Officer Dubose was able to find the lemon shark in the man's possession. It is illegal to harvest lemon shark in Florida. A citation was issued for the offense.

Lieutenant Lightsey received information that subjects were keeping undersized permit at Sebastian Inlet State Park. Upon arriving and beginning to conduct inspections, a subject was found to be in possession of five undersized permit. A citation was issued for possession of over the bag limit and undersized permit.

FWC Captive Wildlife Investigator Saunders was notified by Brevard County Animal Services that while conducting an investigation at a residence, they observed two Florida native pygmy rattlesnakes being held in captivity. The subject was not licensed to keep venomous reptiles. Investigator Saunders interviewed the subject and the subject admitted to having the rattlesnakes. The subject was cited for possessing venomous reptiles without a permit and issued five warnings for caging violations. The subject released ownership of the rattlesnakes to FWC and they were released into the same wildlife management area from which they had been removed.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Officers Norris, Stasko, and Birchfield were patrolling the Charlotte Harbor Buffer Preserve State Park when they came across a vehicle that was stuck in the Myakka River. The driver attempted to drive on the exposed river bottom due to the severe low tide and eventually got stuck. He was able to coordinate a tow company to come remove the truck before the tide came back in. He also received a citation for destruction of state lands.

Officer Morrison responded to a boating accident near Ponce De Leon boat ramp. The accident involved a powered vessel and a sailing vessel. One person was transported to the hospital for treatment and the operator of the powered vessel was cited for improper lookout.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on land patrol at the Courtney Campbell Causeway Bridge, Lieutenant Van Trees was checking fishermen fishing the seawall. He noticed another group about 100 yards away and saw a young man alert another man of Lieutenant Van Trees' presence in the area. Lieutenant Van Trees left the group he was with and watched as the second man walked towards a five-gallon bucket placed in the rocks. Before anything could be done

with the bucket, Lieutenant Van Trees contacted the subjects and found the second subject to be in possession of his bag limit of spotted seatrout. Out of the four-seatrout allowed, three were undersized. The subject was cited accordingly for the violation.

Lieutenant Van Trees was patrolling near Davis Islands when he stopped a vessel returning from a day of fishing. The four subjects on board stated they didn't have any fish. During a boating safety inspection, three snook and four sheepshead were found concealed in a livewell. The three snook were all undersized and two of the sheepshead were undersized. After being read their Miranda rights, one subject admitted to catching all three snook and another admitted to catching the undersized sheepshead. All subjects were cited accordingly for their resource violations, and numerous warnings and citations were issued for license and boating safety violations.

While on patrol, Officer Caldwell observed an individual fishing under a bridge. As he approached he saw someone yelling and pointing at him. The individual he observed fishing ran to the seawall and began throwing fish from a bucket into the water. Officer Caldwell ordered the man to stop. He did not stop throwing fish until Officer Caldwell closed the distance between them. Upon inspecting the bucket with the remaining fish in it, Officer Caldwell found the man to be in possession of 14 spotted seatrout. Some of the fish were undersized. The individual was cited for possession of over the bag limit of spotted seatrout, possession of undersized spotted seatrout, for interfering with the duties of a FWC officer, and for disobeying the lawful command of a law enforcement officer.

LEE COUNTY

Officers Winton and Hazelwood were on water patrol in Pine Island Sound late at night when they saw a vessel being operated without the required navigation lights. As the officers approached they noticed that the vessel was a commercial net fishing boat. The officers conducted a commercial fisheries inspection, at which time it was determined that the fishermen had been using a seine net that exceeded the 500-square foot maximum. The vessel occupants were charged with the appropriate violations.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Hinds was responding to a complaint of subjects keeping undersized snook at the Green Bridge Fishing Pier. Two of five subjects were actively fishing with cast nets. He waited for the subjects to return to the parking lot and inspected their catch, which revealed 42 undersized sheepshead and one undersized snook. One subject was cited for possession of snook during closed season and possession of undersized sheepshead, and was issued warnings for taking snook by illegal method, possession of undersized snook, and not having a fishing license. The second subject was cited for possession of undersized sheepshead and over the daily bag limit, and a written warning was issued for no fishing license.

PASCO COUNTY

Officer Pulaski responded to a call of an individual who had harvested snook in the area of Bailey's Bluff. Officer Pulaski arrived on scene and witnessed the subject attempting to catch snook with a cast net. A fisheries inspection revealed the subject was in possession of four undersized snook. The subject was charged with a major violation for possession of three snook in excess of the daily bag limit, possession of snook out of season, possession of undersized snook, and taking snook by illegal method. The subject was issued a warning for not keeping the fish in whole condition.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on land patrol at the Friendship Trail, Officer Martinez observed two men fishing and initiated a resource inspection. Officer Martinez began speaking to the two men and saw that they were fishing for sheepshead and noticed that they were using stone crab as bait. He found both men to be in possession of multiple undersized stone crab claws, as well as being in possession of whole stone crabs. The crabs were seized and the subjects were cited accordingly.

While on land patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Lieutenant Van Trees watched from a concealed position as a subject fished from underneath a small relief bridge. The subject caught numerous sheepshead and placed them on a stringer that was in the water. Lieutenant Van Trees decided to inspect the subject and found her to be in possession of 15 sheepshead, nine of which were undersized. The subject was cited accordingly for her violation and the nine undersized sheepshead were released back into the water.

Officer Phillippi received a report of two subjects cast netting snook along the Courtney Campbell Causeway from Officer Gaudion who was off duty at the time. Upon arrival, Officer Phillippi observed one of the subjects throwing a cast net and two live snook in a bucket. After making contact the subject throwing the cast net, he admitted cast netting the two snook, one of which was undersized. The subject was cited for illegal method, undersized and out of season snook. Both snook were released alive.

While on land patrol in south Pinellas County, Officer Bibeau observed an individual wade fishing and made contact with him as he was returning to his vehicle. The individual advised that he had caught his bag limit of sheepshead, which were in a catch bag in the mangroves. The individual removed multiple sheepshead from the catch bag and threw them back in the water. After being instructed to stop releasing his caught fish, the subject was found to still be over the daily bag limit of sheepshead. Officer Bibeau wrote the subject a misdemeanor citation for being over the daily bag limit of sheepshead and a warning for interference with a FWC officer.

While on water patrol, Lieutenant Laskowski and Officer Caldwell observed an individual fishing under a bridge. In the rocks at the base of the seawall the officers observed several small sheepshead. Eleven undersized sheepshead were recovered from the

rocks. The individual admitted to catching the sheepshead. He was cited for possession of undersized sheepshead.

SARASOTA COUNTY

Officers Miller and Hinds were working the New Pass area and observed a subject walking toward the parking lot of the New Pass Bait Shop carrying what appeared to be two fish. After looking through binoculars it was confirmed that the subject was carrying two fish and they appeared to be snook. The subject then walked back to the dock without the fish. Officers Miller and Hinds approached the subject to conduct a fisheries inspection. The subject stated he had no fish. When asked about the two fish he was seen with he stated that he released them. The officers walked back to the area where the subject was last seen and found two undersized snook hidden inside a BBQ grill. The subject then admitted to cast netting the snook, as well as knowing they were out of season, undersized, and over the bag limit. The subject was cited appropriately.

While on patrol around the New Pass Bridge, Officer Grenz watched a man cast net a snook out of season and then take it back to his truck. After performing a fisheries inspection on the individual, the subject was given two citations for possession of snook out of season and taking snook by illegal method. The subject was also given two written warnings. He will have to appear in court for his violations.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

HENDRY COUNTY

Officer Keen observed a vehicle driving at night while using artificial light to disclose the presence of wildlife. The vehicle continued to make several passes near the same area. Officer Keen stopped the vehicle and after his investigation, both subjects admitting to hunting. A Ruger .22 caliber rifle was found along with a box of ammunition. Officer Keen issued the appropriate citations.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

While on land-based water patrol near Fisherman's channel in Miami-Dade, Lt. Reynaud, and Officers Washington and Fernandez responded to a complaint of possible commercial shrimp violations. They observed three vessels actively engaged in the commercial harvest of shrimp by wingnet during prohibited hours. One vessel was

using food shrimp equipment to harvest live shrimp and a subject was observed actively transferring live shrimp from his vessel to a live bait truck at the seawall. The vessel did not have the required navigational lights for shrimping vessels by Florida Statute. There was no all-around white light displayed. Subjects were cited for shrimping during prohibited hours and improper vessel lighting.

Officer Coscullela stopped a boat in a no-entry zone at Virginia Key. An FCIC check of the operator returned an active warrant for a previous FWC sailfish arrest. The subject was arrested and charged accordingly.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Oldsen, Yurewitch, and Kleis responded to a single vehicle accident with possible injuries at Delnor Wiggins State Park. Upon arriving, the officers found a vehicle that had run off the roadway and hit a tree. The driver had minor injuries and refused treatment by EMS. While speaking with witnesses and the driver, the officers suspected that the driver was under the influence. Officer Oldsen administered field sobriety tasks and subsequently arrested the driver for DUI. The driver refused to provide a breath sample.

Officers Knutson and Plussa were conducting water patrol at Cocohatchee boat ramp and observed a vessel approaching with an apparent navigation light violation. The officers conducted a stop and inspection of the commercial mullet fishing vessel. Their inspection revealed the operator in violation of commercial seafood quality control and failure to display a HIN on the vessel. The operator was criminally charged for these violations and issued appropriate warnings and citations.

Officers Knutson and Plussa were conducting water patrol on the Marco River near the ABC Islands Critical Wildlife Area (CWA) when they observed a windsurfer sailing through the boundaries designating the CWA as a closed area. During the vessel stop, the individual admitted to seeing the signs but disregarded the regulation and could not provide an adequate explanation as to why she did so. Officer Knutson's attempted to explain the severity of the violation and that it was criminal in nature, but she was unreceptive and became argumentative. The subject was issued a criminal citation.

Officers Knutson and Plussa were waved down by a concerned citizen about a vessel blocking residential access to boat docks on a canal in Goodland. Officers responded to investigate and found a large houseboat aground in the canal, blocking access to residents' boat docks and lifts. An inspection revealed the vessel to be an at-risk and pre-derelict vessel, having both registration and MSD violations. The owner/operator was present and cited for interfering with navigation in the canal.

Officers Knutson and Plussa were conducting night speed enforcement of the panther zone within Collier County. They stopped a vehicle driving 66 in a 45 that did not respond to their lights and siren. During the encounter, the subject tried to conceal a knife behind his back and they could smell alcohol and marijuana coming from inside

the truck. When the subject stumbled out, drug paraphernalia fell from the truck. Investigation revealed the subject to be DUI due to a combination of drugs and alcohol, additionally his license was suspended and he had previously refused to submit to breathalyzer testing during a previous DUI. The subject was arrested by the officers.

MONROE COUNTY

Investigator Hein was on land patrol near Islamorada when he observed a commercial truck towing a trailer and unloading construction debris onto the right of way. Investigator Hein separated the two occupants and interviewed them. They admitted to bringing the construction debris from a jobsite in Dade County and deciding to dump it off the roadway on their way to another jobsite in Marathon. Investigator Hein arrested both subjects for felony dumping and one subject was also charged for possession of cannabis under 20 grams.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Officer Washington made a presentation to Miami Country Day School 6th graders. The event was coordinated by the Kids Let's Go Fishing program. He discussed job duties, training, environmental stewardship and ethical sportsmanship. The group consisted of about 168 students.

RESCUES

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Knutson, Plussa and Curbelo responded to a report of a kayaker experiencing a medical emergency in a remote part of the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. While enroute, Officers Knutson and Plussa activated the Collier County Maritime Emergency Response Team (MERT) including Sheriff's Office and Fire Rescue marine units. The individual was successfully located and transported to shore for medical care.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Knutson, Plussa, and Lieutenant Mahoney responded to a bear digging through garbage left in an apartment complex's recycling bin. The bear was already gone when they arrived. The following night, Officers Knutson and Plussa responded to the same call in the same area. While on scene, they observed a bear digging through garbage around a recycling bin. The officers used adverse conditioning and the bear departed. The residents were advised that the bear would continue to return as long as the recycling bins were not secure.