

FWC

Division of Law Enforcement Weekly Report



March 16, 2018 through March 22, 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

BAY COUNTY

Lieutenant Allen and Officer Coker were working the area of the DuPont Bridge when they observed a subject standing next to his truck holding a large red drum. They observed the subject open the toolbox on his truck and place the red drum in it without measuring it. They waited several more minutes and then contacted the subject, who stated several times to the officers that he had not caught anything. Lieutenant Allen asked the subject if they could look at the fish that he placed in his toolbox. The subject opened the toolbox and the officers measured the fish which was over the slot limit. He was charged with the violation.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Officer Specialist Pifer was on land patrol conducting fisheries inspections and license compliance checks along Gulf Boulevard and Pensacola Beach and saw an individual actively engaged in fishing on the Gulf side of the beach. Officer Pifer asked the subject if he had caught any fish and the individual stated he had caught a red drum. A large redfish tail was sticking out of a cooler nearby. The length of the oversized red drum was 36 inches. The subject was issued a notice to appear citation.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

While on patrol in Eastpoint, Officers Kossey and Travis conducted a resource inspection and found the subject to be in possession of 71% undersized oysters. The

officers issued the subject the appropriate citations and returned the oysters to the water alive.

GULF COUNTY

Officer McMillion was patrolling Lands Landing when he saw a vehicle parked near the boat ramp with the front passenger door open. An 18 pack of beer was on the floorboard with two open beer cans near it. The owner of the vehicle stated to the officer that he had left the open beers in the vehicle because he thought he would get in trouble if he was caught drinking at the picnic tables. A warrant check revealed an active warrant out of Manatee County with full extradition for net violations that occurred in 2014 – for which he failed to appear. A \$1,500 bond had been set for each of the three felony net charges. He was arrested for the warrant and taken to the Gulf County Jail.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officer Specialists Bartlett and Pifer were on vessel patrol conducting boating safety inspections in the Crab Island area and saw a pontoon not displaying the required navigational light after sunset. The officers determined the pontoon was rented and the operator was having navigational issues in getting the pontoon back to Destin Marina. The officers assisted the operator in getting the pontoon back to the marina. During a safety inspection, the operator could not provide the required boating safety education card and stated the livery did not administer the temporary boating safety exam. When the officers arrived at Destin Marina, they contacted the livery owners. The owner was issued a notice to appear citation for renting a pontoon to an operator without the required boating safety education card.

WALTON COUNTY

Lieutenant Clark and Officer Wilkenson responded to Grayton Beach State Park to assist the Walton County Sheriff's Office regarding a subject who fled from deputies. The subject was hiding in a thick wooded area inside the state park. The subject had an active felony warrant out of Bay County. With the assistance of a K-9 unit, the subject was located quickly and was safely taken into custody. The subject was issued a no trespass warning.

Officer Tison responded to assist Walton County deputies with a subject threatening to commit suicide aboard a vessel on the Choctawhatchee Bay. Officer Tison launched his patrol vessel and assisted the deputies in gaining access to the subject's vessel and securing it. The subject became compliant and he was safely placed in custody for treatment.

WAKULLA COUNTY

Officer Carr was patrolling near the border of Wakulla Springs State Park checking a bait site that he and Officer Hofheinz had located the week before. The site was baited with approximately 50 to 100 pounds of corn spread out on the ground and in a pile within 80 yards from a ground blind. An adult subject and a juvenile were at the ground blind. Officer Carr gathered the evidence and issued the subject a citation for hunting turkeys less than 100 yards from game feeding station.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Officers Maltais and Rockwell taught the law portion of a Hunter Education class. There were 39 students with several parents in attendance for the spring class. Several related questions were answered. Officer Maltais served as a firearm instructor for the follow-on skills evaluation portion of the class.

Officer Jarvis and Lieutenant Clark assisted the Park Staff and Gulfarium Staff at Henderson Beach State Park with the release of two loggerhead turtles and three green turtles. Four of the sea turtles were rescued during the recent cold snap. The other sea turtle had a fish hook removed. There were approximately 400 to 500 people who attended. The officers provided security and traffic control.

SEARCH AND RESCUES

OKALOOSA COUNTY

While patrolling the Choctawhatchee River, Officer Tison was flagged down by kayakers who reported that one of their party had flipped his kayak and was in distress. The kayaker was hanging onto a limb and his flipped kayak when Officer Tison arrived. Officer Tison got the man into his patrol vessel and safely returned him to a nearby boat ramp.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Officer Brookes was on routine patrol when he received a call regarding a search and rescue on the Wacissa River. Four females and one male rented five kayaks and launched from the headwaters. Two of the kayaks sank about 6.6 miles from the headwaters and the party of five became stranded. Officer Brookes responded to the headwaters and located all 5 kayakers at Yaeger Mound Hunt Camp. They were cold, but all five were safe and uninjured. Officer Brookes placed them in his patrol boat and returned them to the headwaters where two Jefferson County deputies were waiting. The kayakers sat in the deputies' patrol vehicles to warm up. The original caller helped shuttle the kayakers to their vehicle and they all returned home safely.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

CASES

TAYLOR COUNTY

Officers Wilder and Robson were working youth turkey hunt opening day at a location where they had previously found a baited site with a blind nearby. Three areas were baited within 100 yards of the blind at 52 yards, 36 yards and 17 yards. Just before daylight, a vehicle pulled in and an adult male subject and juvenile walked into the baited area and got into the blind. A short while later after day break the subject was heard calling turkeys from the blind. The officers identified themselves and cited the adult subject for unlawfully hunting turkeys within 100 yards of a baited area.

BAKER COUNTY

Officer Barber was working opening weekend of turkey season on a baited site that he had found several weeks earlier. After daylight, a subject set out a turkey decoy, entered a hunting ground blind, and begin to call for turkeys. The subject was hunting in proximity of the bait and was cited for attempting to take turkeys over a baited area.

UNION COUNTY

Officer Gill was working active bait sites during the opening of turkey season and saw a subject enter one of the baited sites after daylight and begin to call for turkeys. The subject was cited for attempting to take turkey over a baited area. Later in the morning, Officer Gill checked another bait site several miles away. At that location, a subject was found calling for turkeys with a decoy in close proximity of the bait. The subject was cited for attempting to take turkey over a baited area.

Officers Fanelli, Tyler, Burnsed, and Gill were working a hunting club during the opening of turkey season that contained numerous active bait sites. The officers positioned themselves in several different locations to check for illegal turkey hunting activity. Shortly after daylight, the officers observed five subjects go to each of the bait sites that were discovered previously. All the subjects began to actively call for turkeys at their locations. All five subjects were cited for attempting to take turkey over baited areas.

NORTHEAST REGION

CASES

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Officers Ward, Edson, North, Sapp, Bellville, Lieutenant Baer and Captain Frerking teamed up with investigators Jabluszewski and Wilkenson to patrol three different properties on opening day of spring turkey season. Blind locations that were baited with

cracked corn and bird seed just prior to the season opener were located on all three of the properties. As a result of the investigative efforts, four criminal citations were issued for attempting to take turkeys within 100 yards of bait.

MARION COUNTY

Towards the end of the 2017 spring gobbler season, Officer Dias observed evidence that a gobbler had been killed over an active feeding station. Prior to the 2018 season, Officers Dias and Rice checked the same piece of property and located two hunting blinds set up within 25 yards of automatic feeders filled with cracked corn. On opening morning, Officer Dias set up surveillance approximately 30 yards behind the hunting blind. Just before daylight, Officer Dias heard footsteps approach the blind and heard the zipper closing on the blind. After approximately an hour of surveillance, with a gobbler gobbling very close, Officer Dias heard hen turkey calls emitting from the blind. Officer Dias made contact with the subject who was actively hunting with a compound bow. The subject was cited for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of an active feeding station.

On the opening morning of turkey season, Officer Hargabus was conducting surveillance on private land in Reddick where he located a ground blind in an area baited with cracked corn. Shortly before daybreak, Officer Hargabus observed a man place three hen turkey decoys 20 yards in front of the blind where corn was on the ground and take position in the blind. Shortly thereafter, he heard a hen turkey call coming from the blind. At safe light, Officer Hargabus made contact with the subject who was hunting with a shotgun. The subject admitted to placing the bait and was issued a notice to appear for attempting to take turkey within 100 yards of a bait station.

SUMTER COUNTY

On opening morning of spring turkey season Officer Phillips and Investigator Douglas checked a subject who was actively hunting turkeys in a blind less than 25 yards from a feeder with cracked corn. During the investigation, the subject denied that anyone else was hunting on the property. Officer Phillips and Investigator Douglas went with the subject to the two other feeders on the property and found another subject actively hunting turkeys in a box stand within 35 yards of a feeder containing cracked corn and bird seed. Both subjects were cited appropriately.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Officer Campbell was dispatched to a gopher tortoise complaint and found a piece of property that was being mechanically cleared of underbrush. He also found that there were four gopher tortoise burrows on site, one of which had been disturbed. Officer Campbell found that the property owner had made an application for development with the county which changed the land status and they would need a permit to clear. The landowner will need to get a disturbed lands permit from FWC and the appropriate paperwork was issued.

Officer Miller and NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service Enforcement Officer Boots ventured offshore and conducted a day-long JEA patrol of the area fishing sites east and northeast of St. Augustine Inlet. The two officers boarded a commercial shrimping vessel and several recreational vessels. Officer Miller issued multiple federal citations to include: three to subjects who harvested red drum from federal waters, possession of undersized vermillion snapper, failure to maintain vermillion snapper in whole condition, and harvesting red snapper during closed season.

Officers Lawrence and Thomas conducted JEA patrol out of St. Augustine Inlet and boarded several recreational fishing vessels out to about 20 miles offshore. During one boarding, the officers received a tip from the vessel's captain about a smaller skiff-type boat with a fishing party that harvested and filleted multiple red snapper. Upon locating the vessel that matched the description of the skiff, the officers observed the captain actively cleaning the deck of the vessel with a scrub brush in his hand. Officer Lawrence boarded the skiff and during his inspection located one red drum in a cooler along with a Ziploc bag of fish fillets tucked up under the back platform. The vessel's captain admitted to catching and filleting four red snapper. Officer Lawrence issued him a federal citation for harvesting red drum from federal waters, harvesting red snapper from federal waters during closed season, and possession of red snapper not in whole condition while on federal waters.

Officers Harris and Lawrence were on JEA patrol off St. Augustine Inlet in state waters. During a resource inspection, the officers located two undersized red snapper on board the vessel. Officer Harris issued the subject a citation for undersized red snapper.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Officers Wester and Mason were conducting surveillance on a hunting blind within 15 feet of cracked corn and birdseed when they observed two subjects with a gun enter the blind. Within a few minutes, one of the subjects began calling for turkeys. A short while later the officers contacted the subjects. One subject admitted to putting out bait before the hunt and not making sure it was gone. He was issued a citation for the offense.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE

ST JOHNS COUNTY

Officers Campbell, Lawshe and Ramsey were called to the St. Augustine Beach area to check on a stranded manatee. They found a young manatee in distress. A biologist arrived and stated it would have to be taken in for medical attention. The crew of officers and bystanders loaded the young manatee into an FWC trailer for transport.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

BREVARD COUNTY

Port K9 Officer Sidor, K9 Harry and Investigator Wayne participated in an outreach event and K9 demonstration for second graders at Manatee Elementary School in Viera. There were approximately 100 students in attendance.

SOUTHWEST REGION

CASES

HERNANDO COUNTY

Officers Little and Henry located a baited area on private land leading up to the opening of spring turkey season. Two subjects were observed hunting over the baited area. The subjects were cited accordingly.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

While on water patrol near downtown Tampa, Lieutenant Van Trees stopped a vessel to conduct a boating safety inspection. During the inspection, signs of impairment from the operator were apparent and the subject was asked to do some field sobriety exercises. After completing the field sobriety exercises with the subject, it was determined that the subject was under the influence and the subject was arrested for boating under the influence (BUI). At the Hillsborough County jail, the subject refused to provide a sample of his breath for testing. The subject was booked into jail for BUI and refusal to submit to a breath test.

Officers Martinez and Phillippi were on water patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway when they stopped a personal watercraft (PWC) to conduct a boating safety inspection. Immediately after stopping the PWC, the officers noticed signs of impairment from the operator. Field sobriety exercises were administered and the operator was determined to be under the influence and was subsequently arrested for BUI. The operator was verbally combative and argumentative. Once at the Hillsborough County jail, the operator provided a breath sample of .151, nearly twice the legal limit and an enhanced penalty. The operator was booked into the jail for BUI.

Officer Martinez and Lieutenant Van Trees were at Marjorie Park in downtown Tampa and observed a vessel in the middle of the channel operating suspiciously. During a boating safety inspection, the officers noticed numerous signs of impairment from the operator. Officer Martinez conducted field sobriety exercises and subsequently arrested the subject for boating under the influence. A sample of the operator's breath registered a BAC of .10. The subject was booked into the Hillsborough County jail for BUI.

While on water patrol near the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Officers Phillippi and Martinez stopped a vessel returning to the ramp to conduct a boating safety inspection. During their interaction with the operator they noticed signs of impairment. Officer

Martinez conducted field sobriety exercises with the subject, and at the conclusion found the operator of the vessel to be impaired. The operator was arrested for boating under the influence and booked into the Hillsborough County jail.

LEE COUNTY

While on uniformed patrol, Officer Hardgrove encountered a commercial fisherman who had just finished pulling in and clearing his nets. There were four seine nets in the well deck area of the boat, with two of them inside his small "kicker" boat. This arrangement of nets appeared to be used for getting around state law prohibiting the use of more than two nets from a boat. The officer explained that subjects must use their "kicker" boat as a separate boat, and either tow it, paddle it or push it to deploy the nets out of it, and then work the nets back into the boat. The subject stated that he was familiar with the law. Approximately 45 minutes later, Officer Hardgrove returned to the same area and observed the same subject as he deployed his four nets and "kicker" boat from his main boat around a school of fish. He then retrieved all four nets back into his main boat. At no point did he use the "kicker" boat to deploy or retrieve the two nets that were carried in it. Additionally, the weights and rings that assist in pulling each net off the boat were all placed onboard the main boat. The subject was issued a notice to appear for using more than two nets from one vessel. His main boat, "kicker" boat, nets, and fish were seized. The subject has a history for the same violation within the past year.

While on water patrol Officer Hardgrove initiated a resource inspection on an individual fishery quota (IFQ) vessel returning from offshore waters. The grouper and snapper appeared to be within legal allocation and size requirements. However, when Officer Hardgrove asked if there were any other fish onboard, the captain stated that there were some African pompano as well. Officer Hardgrove located four African pompano onboard the vessel. The captain was issued a notice to appear for over the commercial vessel limit of African pompano.

MANATEE COUNTY

Officer Klobuchar was conducting fishery inspections on the South Skyway Fishing Pier and approached a group of people who were fishing. Two coolers were in the trunk of their vehicle. The subject opened the first cooler and showed Officer Klobuchar that it was full of food and drinks. The second cooler contained an undersized and out of season gag grouper. The subject was issued a citation for possession of gag grouper during closed season and a written warning was issued for possession of undersized gag grouper.

PINELLAS COUNTY

While on water patrol near Pass-a-Grille, Officers Bibeau and Bibler stopped a vessel for a resource inspection. During the inspection, Officer Bibeau located an undersized red grouper and an undersized gray triggerfish. None of the occupants onboard wanted to take responsibility for the undersized fish and claimed they didn't know who caught

them. After further investigation, Officer Bibeau cited the captain of the vessel for possession of undersized triggerfish and warned him for undersized red grouper.

While offshore of Johns Pass, Officer Bibeau and Officer Bibler stopped a vessel returning from offshore to conduct a fisheries inspection. A resource inspection revealed two red snapper hidden in a large cooler, one of which was undersized. Officer Bibeau read the occupants of the vessel their Miranda rights and after some questioning, the operator admitted to catching both fish. Officer Bibler cited the operator for the fisheries violations.

Officer Phillippi observed a subject trespassing on SWFWMD property behind a fence that was posted "No Trespassing." The area has had numerous problems with people trespassing on the fenced off weir. Officer Phillippi approached the subject who was fishing from the closed area and addressed the violation with him. The subject was cited for trespassing.

While on water patrol, Lieutenant Wells and Officers Pettifer and Hughes observed a vessel actively engaged in fishing. A resource inspection revealed the captain of the vessel to be in possession of one undersized red grouper. The captain was cited for possession of undersized red grouper and the fish was returned to the water alive.

While Officer Pettifer was on land patrol he observed an individual fishing from a water control structure owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The structure was clearly marked with no trespassing signs and access to the structure was restricted by a fence. After conducting a resource inspection, the individual was cited for trespassing.

While on water patrol, Lieutenant Wells, Officer Pettifer, and Officer Hughes observed two individuals actively fishing from a vessel. A resource inspection revealed the individuals to be in possession of two gag grouper during closed season, four undersized red grouper, and two undersized triggerfish. The two individuals were cited accordingly.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

HERNANDO COUNTY

Hernando and Pasco County officers responded and assisted the Sheriff's Office with a bomb threat at a local high school.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MANATEE COUNTY

Lieutenant Hinds was asked to give a speech at a Masonic Lodge and talked to a small group of about twenty, and gave the men a general overview of the FWC, its different

divisions, and the missions which drive the Division of Law Enforcement. He also talked about general boating safety regulations, boating under the influence enforcement, and answered many questions about fisheries regulations. Lieutenant Hinds spoke and answered questions for about 40 minutes and the men were very appreciative of his time.

PINELLAS COUNTY

Lieutenant Hinds was asked to speak on behalf of the FWC at a National Accreditation hearing for the St. Petersburg Police Department. The hearing was held at St. Petersburg City Hall and the event was open to the public. Lieutenant Hinds gave a statement to the National Accreditation Board complimenting the St. Petersburg Police Department and reaffirming the great relationship that the FWC has with the City of St. Petersburg. Accreditation for a police agency is achieving and maintaining the highest level of standards an agency can have. It also shows the public that the agency is committed to giving its citizens the very best service possible. The FWC has just received its third reaccreditation this year.

SOUTH REGION A

CASES

GLADES COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on land-based water patrol at Sportsman's Canal boat ramp and saw a vessel load onto a trailer with three occupants and fishing equipment in plain view. A resource inspection revealed 13 black crappie less than the 10 inch size minimum. The vessel owner took responsibility for the violation and was issued a citation for the violations. The fish were photographed and returned to the water.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Officer Brodbeck was on land-based water patrol at night conducting surveillance at the Scott Driver boat ramp and observed a vessel approach the ramp with no navigation lights visible. Upon approach, the officer observed fishing equipment and a bucket of fish in plain view on the deck of the vessel. After inspecting the fish on board, the officer found black crappie measuring less than the required 10 inches. The operator of the vessel was issued a citation for the fisheries violation and a boating citation for not displaying navigation lights at night. The fish were photographed and returned to the water alive. After completing the stop, Officer Brodbeck observed a cargo van traveling Eastbound on State Road 78 with no lights on. The officer was able to catch up to the vehicle and initiated a traffic stop. Using the patrol vehicle spotlight, the officer observed the driver and passenger switch seats inside the vehicle. Upon searching both the driver and passenger through law enforcement databases, the driver of the vehicle was found to have a revoked driver's license with habitual offender status. The driver was placed under arrest for the felony violation and transported to the Okeechobee County Jail by

an Okeechobee Sheriff's deputy. Located in the rear of the cargo van were four young children, one of whom was an infant, without any type of seatbelt or restraint. FDLE and DCF are investigating possible child endangerment charges against the driver and passenger of the vehicle.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Officers Trawinski, Merizio, and Langley assisted the USCG in conducting a resource inspection of a vessel they intercepted 13 miles off the coast of Boynton Beach. The subjects were found to be in possession of 22 wrung lobster tails, 2 hog snappers, and 50 skinless filets. The subjects said they purchased everything from a Bahamian vessel and were bringing it back home. There are specific regulations for bringing resources back from the Bahamas and federal waters. The subjects were in violation of multiple state laws and issued citations and warnings.

Officer Ryan was on patrol in western Palm Beach County and conducted a freshwater fisheries inspection on a couple of individuals that were fishing near the Miami Canal. Pursuant to the inspection, one individual was placed under arrest for two warrants, one out of Palm Beach and one out of Hendry. He was transported to the jail in Belle Glade.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

While on land patrol targeting spring turkey hunting activity, Investigator Patterson and Officer Allen responded to assist the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office with a trespass complaint on private property. Patterson and Allen observed a hunting blind, turkey decoys and a dead bearded Osceola Turkey underneath a large oak tree. Patterson and Allen also observed corn and milo on the ground within 5 feet of the blind. A brief time later, two subjects arrived at the location in a truck. When questioned regarding the dead turkey, the subjects stated they killed it from the blind. One of them shot and missed the turkey using a bow, the other subject killed the turkey using a shotgun. Both subjects also took responsibility for the corn and milo. Investigator Patterson issued both subjects citations for taking turkey over bait. The turkey was seized as evidence and the trespass complaint is pending further investigation.

Officer Payne was called to assist the US Coast Guard with a possible impaired boat operator. It was reported that a commercial fishing vessel operator had been involved in an altercation at a local fish house, leaving the area by boat. The US Coast Guard stopped the vessel and had it return to a dock. While conducting a boarding, the officers with the US Coast Guard observed the operator to have signs of impairment and contacted FWC to conduct a Boating Under the Influence (BUI) investigation. Officer Payne arrived and observed signs of impairment as well. Officer Payne conducted field sobriety tasks and the subject performed poorly. The subject was arrested and transported to the St Lucie County Jail where he provided a breath sample of 0.199 g/210L. A check of his records showed that he had been arrested for (BUI) in North Florida less than a year ago.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby responded to a report of a free roaming African warthog. He received multiple eye witness accounts and photographs from homeowners in the area that confirmed it was a warthog. Investigator Toby coordinated a multi-agency response in attempt to capture it and after several days of effort they managed to successfully capture the animal.

Captive Wildlife Investigator Toby was notified by FWC Officer Crosby of a juvenile whitetail deer that was located on a residential property with a collar around its neck. The deer allowed hand feeding and was not afraid of humans. Investigator Toby contacted all permitted captive wildlife stakeholders in the area and this deer was not identified as being part of anyone's legal stock. With the assistance of Officers Crosby, Fijalkowski, and Investigator Lafoy, the deer was successfully removed from the property and transported to a properly licensed facility.

SEARCH AND RESCUES

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Webb responded to an RV fire in Jonathan Dickinson State Park. No one was injured, but the RV was a total loss. He assisted the Martin County Sheriff's Office track down the owner and notify them. Officer Webb then helped the owner gather what was left of his belongings. With the officer's local knowledge, the displaced camper was able to find lodging and a place to store their kayaks and bikes.

Officer Kirkland responded to the Dupuis WEA about a vehicle accident. All three occupants were uninjured, but due to extensive damage, the vehicle had to be towed. A traffic crash report was taken and the parties involved in the crash were transported to the family campground where they are currently residing.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

MARTIN COUNTY

Officer Kirkland taught the law portion of the hunter safety course in Palm City.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Three local officers attended FWC dive team training. All team members are now certified rescue divers and overhead/cavern divers. All team members also were trained on the operation of sector scan sonar, side scan sonar, and dry suit operations.

Officer Stone went to Independence Middle School for career day. In the classroom, he spoke to the students about conservation law enforcement. Then they went outside where they learned more about FWC's specialized equipment. The students enjoyed the hands-on experience.

SOUTH REGION B

CASES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

The FWC responded to an armed suspect in Oleta River State Park. Witnesses observed a male with a rifle in the brush laying in prone position. In conjunction with other agencies, FWC formed a perimeter and shut down the entrance/exit to the park. The subject was located and the weapon was verified to be a pellet gun. The subject said he fired a few shots in the park to test it out. The subject was educated on rules on discharging a firearm in the park and gun safety.

The FWC was contacted by two subjects who reported that numerous animals were allegedly stolen from their possession. The animals included nine monkeys, seven lemurs, twenty tortoises, and several species of birds. The same individuals that reported this theft had eight kinkajous removed from their possession the previous week by FWC's captive wildlife section. Captive Wildlife Investigator Smith received information that the animals were not stolen and that the owners themselves placed the animals at an out of state facility. Investigator Smith initiated a multi-agency investigation into the allegation and secured a written statement and pictures from the out of state facility where the animals were relocated. Investigators Smith and Landa assisted Miami Dade Police in apprehending the subjects on multiple felony charges for filing the false police report.

MONROE COUNTY

Lieutenant Payne and Officer Piekenbrock were on water patrol on Stock Island in the Lower Keys. They observed a commercial crawfish vessel, loaded with traps, returning to the docks. The vessel was stopped to conduct a marine resource inspection. Upon inspection, a garbage can partially covered with trash was discovered. Hidden in the garbage can were 175 wrung spiny lobster tails, 133 of which were undersized. A bag containing what appeared to be reef fish filets was also discovered. The captain and mate were arrested and transported to the Stock Island Jail where they were cited appropriately for the violations.

Officers Garrison and Carroll were dispatched to help the local sheriff's office with a violation of an injunction/restraining order on a vessel. Due to high winds and rough seas, the officers made a quick approach and boarded the vessel. The subject refused to come out and attempted to conceal himself in a forward sitting area of the vessel. Officer Carroll spotted the subject and ordered him to show his hands. He initially refused but then complied and was taken into custody. The subject resisted lawful orders from Officer Garrison to remain seated and was escorted back to land and turned over to a local sheriff's deputy for transport to the jail. The suspect was charged with violating a no contact order and resisting without violence.

Investigator Mattson was on unmarked water patrol when he received a call about possible trap robbing on the bayside in Islamorada. A single diver was seen in the water hoisting up a PVC pipe. The pipe was dumped into the boat and put back in the water. Investigator Mattson approached quickly and identified himself as FWC law enforcement. Inside the boat were 10 undersized spiny lobsters and 11 lobsters over the legal bag limit. The suspect was also charged with diving on artificial habitat. The appropriate citations were issued.

Investigator Williams, Officers Garcia and Petru witnessed an individual actively fishing near Conch Reef. Upon inspection of the subject's catch, he was found to be in possession of a black grouper and was in the process of fileting fish that was stuffed under a seat in the stern of his boat. The subject was cited for possession of Black grouper during closed season, possession of fish not in whole condition, and interference with an FWC officer.

Officer Petru observed a vessel approaching Snake Creek. The vessel had fishing gear in plain view and a resource inspection of the operator's cooler revealed a red grouper and a gray triggerfish with the tails cut off. The subject was cited for possession of red grouper during closed season and possession of an undersized gray triggerfish.

COLLIER COUNTY

Officers Kleis and Arbogast were conducting night water patrol when they observed a commercial fishing vessel returning from offshore. A resource inspection revealed a gag grouper in one of the vessel's coolers. The captain stated that he kept the grouper for himself. Gag grouper season is open June 1st – December 31st. The captain was charged with possession of an out of season gag grouper and the fish was seized as evidence.

Officer Thurkettle conducted a resource inspection on a vessel 20 miles offshore and found four undersized red grouper inside the live well along with several other baitfish. The subject admitted catching the grouper and stated he planned on using them for bait. The subject was cited appropriately for possession of undersized red grouper and for over the bag limit of red grouper.

SEARCH AND RESCUES

MONROE COUNTY

Officers Garcia and Petru responded to a boating accident where a sailboat got caught under the Whale Harbor Bridge and was about to capsize. Officers responded quickly from Tavernier Creek. Upon arrival the owner/operator was still onboard his vessel and acknowledged he was ok and that no others were in the water. Officers gave him a life jacket, got him aboard the FWC vessel, and called a towing salvage company to come pull the sailboat out from under the bridge. The cause of the accident was due to a

strong current that pulled the sailboat into the bridge – wedging the mast under the bridge.

USCG called FWC and advised of a medical emergency at Tarpon Belly Key in Kemp Channel where five people spent the weekend camping. The vessel the campers were using was aground on the beach due to the tide going out while they were sleeping. There was a 39-year-old female having severe abdominal pain that was requesting immediate medical assistance. USCG advised FWC that they could not respond due to the low water level at low tide. FWC dispatch called Officer Messier at his residence and he responded. When Officer Messier arrived at Tarpon Belly Key he found the victim and assisted her into the patrol boat. Officer Messier transported her back to shore to EMS at Venture Out Marina and she was taken to the hospital.

Officer Sapp received a call regarding a vessel in distress near Bahia Honda Key. A concerned citizen stated that as he drove by on the bridge, he observed a blue center console vessel with two children onboard taking on water and on the verge of sinking. Within fifteen minutes, multiple FWC vessels and two land officers were in the area searching for the vessel. Officer Carroll observed a vessel matching the description heading into a local boat ramp. Officer Carroll assisted the subjects by getting the vessel out of the water moments before sinking. A vessel inspection revealed the operators were new boat owners and forgot to install the drain plug before launching. Although the children were wearing floatation devices, the vessel had numerous safety violations.