



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission sworn personnel are fully constituted police officers with the authority to enforce all laws of the state, not just those relating to resource conservation.

After the fall

A citizen told Officer Stephen Wicker he had seen a drunken man fall out of his boat and the man was now towing the boat toward them on the roadway. Officer Wicker conducted a vehicle stop after observing many violations. Field sobriety tasks indicated the operator was impaired. During the arrest, the operator fell unconscious four times and the officer dispatched emergency medical personnel. Intoxilyzer testing documented a blood alcohol level of 0.27. After being released from the hospital, the suspect was delivered to the jail and charged with DUI.

Turtle rescue

Investigator Ken Holmes, with the assistance of Lt. David Ferguson and Officer Kevin Losee, arrested a 25-year-old man from Gainesville after a successful undercover buy of two eastern box turtles. The Commission's Northeast Region received information about a person who was offering two box turtles for sale for \$230 on a popular Internet Web site. Investigator Holmes set up a meeting with the suspect and learned the suspect had knowledge that the turtles were illegal to sell. Investigator Holmes, posing as a turtle enthusiast, purchased the turtles and the uniform officers then issued two misdemeanor notices to appear citations to the suspect.

K-9 on the right track

Officers Scott VanBuren and John Wilke were patrolling when they observed a subject, with rifle in hand, exit private property and throw something to the ground. Officer Eddie Brown and his partner, K-9 Grady, responded to track a second subject still in the woods. Officer Greg Louque assisted with perimeter surveillance. Officer Brown and Grady located the second subject and the object that had been thrown to the ground, which turned out to be a key chain and cocaine. The first subject also admitted to discarding a beer can. He was jailed for armed trespass and possession of a controlled substance as well as being issued a citation for littering. This incident was Grady's first successful track.

Good Samaritan to a cat

Officer Felix Collazo responded to a complaint relayed by Investigator Jeffrey Burke that a panther was trapped along a roadway inside the parallel fences of the Panther Zone. The panther was unable to find a way through to the safety of wooded wilderness. A Good Samaritan, who initially identified the cat, helped the officer locate the panther concealed in tall grass. The panther weighed approximately 50-60 pounds and appeared stressed and exhausted. A Collier County Sheriff assisted with traffic control while Officer Raul Sanchez, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent, and FWC biologist Mark Lotz arrived to assist. Together, they helped the panther to safety through an opening in the fence created by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent.



MARK LOTZ

The cost keeps rising

One evening, Officer Fred Rondeau was fueling his vehicle at a local convenience store when he noticed the a man fueling a truck on an adjacent island. Officer Rondeau observed the driver give hand signals to the attendant inside to start the pump. The driver then hung up the hose, jumped into the cab, started the engine and accelerated hard, squealing the tires as he exited the station. The store attendant ran outside yelling, "He left without paying and he owes \$70!" Officer Rondeau pursued and caught the suspect vehicle. The suspect was charged with theft of fuel, careless driving and driving with a suspended driver's license as well as for issuing a worthless check. Interestingly, this person had been issued a citation for littering a few days prior by Officer Gary Ridaught.

Expensive meal

Officer Lee Birge was checking several small lakes when he came across a man and two female juveniles fishing. He observed the man and one of the juveniles feeding pieces of a hot dog to a large alligator. The man was issued a notice to appear for feeding an alligator and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. The juveniles were given a verbal warning. The alligator was later removed by a nuisance alligator trapper.

Three freezers full

A concerned citizen called in a complaint to Officer Bill Lowry with detailed information about the killing of a large alligator. Officer Kevin Hansen and Lt. Rob Rowe responded and observed the suspect's front porch appeared to have been recently sprayed with water. There were various fillet knives lying on the ground with several small pieces of fresh alligator meat on the concrete and a nearby bench. K-9 Officer Jeff Gier and K-9 Bubba were called to the scene. A search of the property behind the dwelling revealed four separate alligator carcasses and 31 half-frozen alligator eggs in a zip-type freezer bag. Bubba also alerted on three freezers. Officers Herbert Frerking and Darrin Riley joined in the search and recovery of evidence. Shortly thereafter, the homeowner arrived and gave Officer Hansen permission to search the three freezers and the dwelling. The officers found approximately 100 pounds of alligator meat, half a freshly killed deer, a six-point velvet deer rack, several squirrels and breast meat from what appeared to be a white ibis and a white ibis carcass. Multiple criminal charges will be filed.

Right place, right time

Officer Alan Kirchinger observed a vehicle chase involving a county sheriff's officer and a fleeing suspect. The suspect forced the deputy's car off the road and it crashed. Officer Kirchinger and another deputy pulled the injured deputy from his vehicle as it began to burn.