

Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division

Field Operations

Weekly Report
August 3-9, 2014

This report is a broad sampling of events that have taken place in the past week, but does not include all actions taken by the Law Enforcement Division.



Region I- Calhoun (Northwest)

GORDON COUNTY

On August 1st, Cpl. Shawn Elmore received a call from Gordon County Sheriff Mitch Ralston requesting assistance to search for a missing Calhoun man. Cpl. Elmore met with Sheriff Ralston and obtained information about the missing man. Cpl. Elmore and a Gordon County deputy searched the Oostanaula River and the Conasauga River. On Sunday night the missing man's badly decomposed body was located. It was determined the victim had been murdered.

On August 4th, Cpl. Elmore assisted with a search for the victim's truck. Gordon County Air Unit located the truck and Cpl. Elmore with a Gordon County investigator secured the truck until it could be processed by crime scene technicians. The investigation into the murder still continues by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Gordon County Sheriff's Office.

On August 8th, Cpl. Shawn Elmore responded to Fairmount in reference to a Fairmount Police officer in a vehicle chase and the vehicle went off road into a hunting area very familiar to Cpl. Elmore and other DNR LED rangers. Cpl. Elmore and Fairmount Sgt. Lane Bennett searched the woods and located the vehicle hidden in a logging road. The suspect had fled on foot. Cpl. Elmore then contacted RFC Brooks Varnell and K-9 Rock. RFC Varnell and Rock arrived as well as Sgt. Mike Barr, Cpl. James Keener, and RFC Zach Hardy and a perimeter was set up. Rock tracked the suspect over a mile and a half. The suspect got away this day but his identity is known to authorities.

Region II- Gainesville (Northeast)

GWINNETT COUNTY

On August 4th, Cpl. Eric Sanders and Cpl. Eddie Tompkins conducted an On-Line Hunter Education Class at Bass Pro Shops. During this class a total of 21 students were certified in Hunter Education.

On August 5th, RFC Mark Stephens conducted a vessel inspection at Bass Pro Shops in Lawrenceville. 9 vessels were inspected.

LAKE LANIER (DAWSON, FORSYTH, GWINNETT, HALL, & LUMPKIN COUNTIES)

On August 3rd, Sgt. Lee Brown and Cpl. Eddie Tompkins patrolled Lake Lanier. The rangers checked fisherman and pleasure boaters for compliance with license requirements and safety equipment. The rangers checked 17 vessels and 6 fishermen. The rangers issued citations and warnings for operating vessel without registration, operating vessel with insufficient PFD's, 100' violation on PWC, allowing underage child to ride in vessel without PFD, and fishing without license.

On August 4th, Cpl. Eddie Tompkins responded to a call for assistance from the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office at Two Mile Creek Park. The deputy stated a subject had jumped into the water to evade police and not returned. RFC Mitchell Crump and Cpl. Tompkins searched with sonar for the subject with no luck. During the next two days RFC Mark Stephens, RFC Grant Matherly, Cpl. Adam Loudermilk, and Sgt. Greg Colson also assisted with the search. On August 7th the subject was recovered.

ROCKDALE COUNTY

On August 9th, Sgt. Lee Brown and two Parks, Recreation and Historic Site Law Enforcement Rangers were patrolling Panola Mountain State Park. The rangers patrolled the walking and bike trails, day use areas, archery range and the two fishing lakes. Three subjects were issued citations for fishing without a license.

HALL COUNTY

On August 9th, Corporal Jason Roberson and Sargent Mike Burgamy arrested one subject for possession of marijuana in Shoal Creek on Lake Lanier.

Region III- Thomson (East Central)

OCONEE COUNTY

In March while on foot patrol for turkey hunting activity, CPL Mark Patterson and RFC Tim Butler located several illegally set snares. After several days of checking the traps, RFC Butler determined the trapper was only checking the snares every 7-10 days. After turkey season, the trapping activity stopped. On August 4th RFC Butler located the trapper responsible for setting the snares. Violations documented were setting snares more than 10 feet from water, trapping without a license, failure to check traps within 24 hours, and failure to tag traps.

LAKE OCONEE

On August 8-10, Sgt. John Harwell, Cpl. David Allen, RFC Tim Butler, and RFC Niki Spencer cited numerous individuals for boating violations including: towing skier without wearing a PFD, failure to obey regulatory marker, violation of the 100' rule, towing a skier on a PWC without an observer, and operating vessels without PFD's.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

On August the 11th, Cpl. Ryan Swain and RFC Robert Timmerman conducted a concentrated boating safety patrol of the Little River area near Mistletoe State Park on Clarks Hill Lake. No boating violations were detected during the patrol.

Region IV- Macon (West Central)

BALDWIN COUNTY

On the afternoon of August 9th, RFC Jeremy Reese and Sgt. Bo Kelly patrolled Lake Sinclair. Numerous vessels were stopped to include a PWC without registration displayed. It was determined the operator was under the influence and he was arrested and transported to the Baldwin County Jail after being charged with boating under the influence.

BUTTS COUNTY

On the evening of August 8th, RFC Keith Page and Sgt. Tim Kendrick found four people fishing on High Falls State Park after hours. Page and Kendrick watched as two boats of people fished jugs in a small oxbow lake off the Towaliga River that is part of High Falls Lake. It is illegal to fish on High Falls Lake after dark. It is also illegal to fish on any state park by any means other than pole and line. The men were charged with fishing by illegal methods on a state park and operating a vessel on a state park after hours.

HEARD COUNTY

On August 5th, Sgt. Brent Railey, Cpl. Jeremy Bolen, and Cpl. Travis Sweat presented a hunter development program to a local church group at Rockridge day camp. The officers set up archery targets and taught the kids firsthand how to shoot bow and arrows.

HENRY COUNTY

On Sunday, August 3rd, RFC Kevin Godbee and Deputy Ranger Joe Sebo located an illegal basket set in Henry County. The basket was confiscated and the fish inside released back into the lake.

JASPER COUNTY

While patrolling Jackson Lake on August 9th, RFC Keith Page and Sgt. Tim Kendrick witness a man driving an unregistered jet ski. The rangers also noticed that the man was wearing a life vest that was too small to buckle around his chest. After stopping the man, RFC Page and Sgt. Kendrick noticed that the man had been drinking. After failing field sobriety exercises, RFC Page arrested the man and charged him with operating a vessel under the influence of alcohol. The man was also charged for operating an unregistered vessel and operating a vessel with an improper life preserver.

MERIWETHER COUNTY

On Tuesday August 5th, at about 11:00 PM Cpl. Keith Waddell received information from Meriwether County Sheriff's Office of a possible missing person and boating incident on Lake Meriwether. He responded with Cpl. Travis Sweat to the scene and they found a kayak and a PFD adrift in the lake but could not find the operator. A vehicle was nearby that was believed to belong to the kayak owner, who they learned was a male in his 70's that lived in a nearby county. Over the next two days, DNR Law Enforcement along with Meriwether County Sheriff's Office deputies, Meriwether County Fire and Rescue along with numerous volunteers searched the lake and shoreline for the victim. They used Side Scan Sonar, body drags, DNR helicopter to flyover the area, volunteers searched the banks of the lake, cadaver dogs and tracking dogs to try to locate the victim but were unsuccessful. On the morning of Friday, August 8th, the body of the victim was located, floating in the lake near the initial search area. It was ruled a fatal boating incident and is being worked by DNR's CIRT team members.

PUTNAM COUNTY

On the afternoon of August 8th, RFC Jeremy Reese completed an unlawful dumping investigation on the Oconee National Forest. One subject was cited for unlawful dumping.

UPSON COUNTY

On August 8th, RFC Keith Page and K9 Drake were patrolling areas around the Flint River. RFC Page found a man wading in the water while fishing near the Hwy 19 South Bridge. The man had fifteen Shoal Bass on his stringer. Once the man was back at his truck, RFC Page used K9 Drake to locate ten more shoal bass in a cooler located on the back of the man's truck. Out of the twenty five Shoal Bass that the man had, seventeen of them were under the legal size limit for the Flint River (twelve inches). The man was charged with possession of more than the daily creel limit of Shoal Bass and possession of illegal sized shoal bass. RFC Page seized the seventeen short fish and donated them to a less fortunate family.



On August 10th, RFC Keith Page and Sgt. Tim Kendrick were patrolling areas of the Flint River. While underneath the Hwy 19S Bridge, a man pulled up to the boat ramp in a jon boat with a 9.9 horsepower motor. The man was found to be under the influence of alcohol. The man's blood alcohol concentration was nearly three times the legal limit to operate a boat. The man was arrested after failing field sobriety test and charged with operating a vessel under the influence of alcohol.

Region V- Albany (Southwest)

Region VI- Metter (Southeast)

LAURENS COUNTY

On August 3rd, Cpl. Dan Stiles and RFC Allen Mills conducted patrols on the Riverbend WMA and the Hugh M. Gillis PFA. A total of nine fishing licenses and three vessels were checked on the patrols. One citation was issued for operating a vessel without CGA PFD's (life jackets).

DODGE COUNTY

On August 9th, Cpl. Dan Stiles was followed by a vehicle driving aggressively and erratically. Cpl. Stiles initiated a traffic stop on the vehicle and the driver attempted to avoid Cpl. Stiles' patrol vehicle and pulled into the driveway of a residence claiming to be visiting a relative at the location. The occupants of the residence did not know the driver of the vehicle. Cpl. Stiles contacted the Dodge Co. Sheriff's office and a deputy responded and arrested the driver for DUI (drugs). Three juvenile passengers in the vehicle were released to parents.

WILCOX COUNTY

On Aug 9th, Cpl. John A. Stokes answered a complaint of hog hunting without permission in northwest Wilcox. Hunters were found on adjacent land to complainant's property. One citation was issued to a hunter for hunting without a license.

CHARLTON COUNTY

On August 8th, Ranger Sam Williams received a call from the Georgia Forestry Commission in reference to an individual in the St. George area burning illegal materials. Upon arrival, the officer observed three separate piles of debris burning. Ranger Williams spoke with the individuals that were cleaning up the property to determine who was responsible for the fires and to find out what items were being burned. One subject stated that they were mostly burning leaves and limbs in an effort to clean the property up. Ranger Williams began to move the leaves around in the fires and found pieces of insulation along with other household garbage in two of the piles from an old residence onsite. There were other debris piles on the property from previous fires that contained springs from bed mattresses that had been burned. The property did not have running water, so a fire truck was dispatched to the scene to extinguish the burning piles containing illegal materials. Ranger Williams explained to the individuals what materials could legally be burned and the violation was documented.

On August 2nd, Ranger Sam Williams conducted a boating safety check at Trader's Hill boat landing. Numerous boats were checked during the afternoon and early evening. One violation for operating vessel with insufficient PFD's was documented.

WARE COUNTY

On August 9th, Ranger Sam Williams conducted an information & education program at Laura Walker State Park. Participants in the program learned the benefits of using native plants around their homes to attract various types of wildlife. The information provided instructed participants on what types of plants attract different wildlife and the times of year that the plants are the most beneficial so that they could enjoy wildlife viewing year round.

On August 9th, Ranger Sam Williams conducted a boating safety patrol on the lake at Laura Walker State Park. During the patrol, one violation for operating vessel within 100' of object/shore was observed. A vessel stop was conducted and guidance was provided to the operator on safely operating the vessel while on waters of the state. The operator also had questions on required equipment and what was needed to update the registration for the vessel. Ranger Williams provided the boat operator with the additional information.

LOWNDES/BROOKS COUNTY

On August 6th, Ranger Daniel North participated in a live radio interview on WAFT 101.1 during the "Jumpstart Your Morning" show. During the course of the interview questions concerning wildlife rehabilitation were discussed. Ranger North also used the opportunity to provide the public with information about what to do when "abandoned" deer fawns are found. Georgia DNR contact information was also provided to listeners.

CLINCH COUNTY

Sgt. Patrick Dupree, Cpl. Jason Shipes, RFC Mark Pool, and Ranger Daniel North attended the funeral of retired U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) officer William Clifton "Barney" Cone as honorary pallbearers at the request of the family. The USFWS' honor guard coordinated the funeral detail. Mr. Barney was a 27-year veteran of wildlife law enforcement with the USFWS in the Okefenokee Swamp area, retiring in 1977.

Region VII- Brunswick (Coastal)

BRANTLEY COUNTY

On August 5th, RFC John Evans was patrolling an area on foot next to the Dixon Memorial WMA for illegal hunting activity. He discovered a small marijuana patch. After further investigation, he found three more large patches. RFC Evans contacted the Brantley County Sheriff's Office and together they pulled 66 plants from the four plots. Plants ranged in height from 3 feet to 7 ½ feet tall.



BRYAN COUNTY

During a two-week period, Ranger Jason Miller set up a hidden trail camera on a location on Dunham Marsh Rd. where illegal dumping of trash and yard waste was occurring and recorded pictures of two separate persons dumping truckloads of trash on three different occasions. On August 7th, Ranger Miller along with RFC Jack Thain and Cpl. Bill Bryson interviewed the two suspects who admitted to dumping the trash. Both subjects were cited for illegal dumping of waste (over 500 pounds).



On the evening of August 9th, Ranger Jason Miller, RFC Jack Thain, and Cpl. Bill Bryson worked a night hunting detection detail in the northern part of the county. One vehicle was stopped after the driver used the headlights to sweep the field. The only weapon in the vehicle was a .40 caliber pistol. The driver was cited for blinding wildlife with lights.