



# GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Commissioner  
Mark Williams

Director  
Colonel Thomas  
Barnard



Law Enforcement Division  
FY 2024 Annual Report

# Headquarters



**Colonel Thomas Barnard, Director**



**Lt. Colonel Mike England,  
Assistant Director**



**Major Stephen Adams**



**Major Bob Holley**



# Headquarters Support Staff



**Lt. Mark Patterson**



**Lt. Wanda Roberts**



**Lt. Judd Smith**



**Jen Hammonds**



**Jamie Hawkins**



**Mark McKinnon**



**Ashley Moon**



**Lt. Sam O'Neal**



**Taye Pierce**



**Dewayna Pullum**



**Sharon Sims**



**Shannon Witcher**

**The Vision of the Law Enforcement Division is to ensure that Georgia's natural resources will be conserved for our present and future generations.**

**The Mission of the Law Enforcement Division is to conserve our natural resources and to protect the people we serve. We maintain public support through fair and vigorous law enforcement, quality education, and community involvement. We commit ourselves to our Vision and Mission by practicing our core beliefs, which are trust, fairness, and professionalism.**



## **Headquarters**

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division, currently has 200 POST-certified Game Wardens with statewide authority and full arrest powers and 25 non-sworn staff members. The primary duties of these Game Wardens are enforcement of all laws and regulations pertaining to hunting, fishing, commercial fishing, environmental violations, and recreational boating, as well as to provide public safety on all our DNR-controlled properties.

The Law Enforcement Division operates with a straight-line chain of command. It consists of the Colonel, Lt. Colonel, two Majors, eight Captains (6 Region Supervisors, 1 Training Director, 1 Pilot), six Lieutenants (database management, special permits/captive wildlife and wild animals, boating law administrator and administrative support, investigations, and 2 pilots), and 182 field Game Wardens (Sergeants, Corporals, Game Wardens First Class, and Game Wardens).



## **Vehicles & Equipment**

Throughout the year, the Law Enforcement Division acquired some new vehicles and equipment, utilizing funding from various sources. Forty-two new 4x4 Chevrolet patrol vehicles and four new 4x4 Fords were purchased for field personnel. The Harris radio transition, which began in 2023, was completed with over 600 radios deployed statewide. Game Wardens now have the capability to talk on multiple radio systems throughout the state to various other public safety organizations. Currently the Division is testing Smart Evidence, an evidence management system that works with the current Smart Cop CAD system they currently utilize. This evidence system will standardize evidence records procedures statewide. This system is expected to be fully in place by the end of the year.

## **Ranger Hotline**

The Ranger Hotline program, which provides a way for citizens to report anonymously potentially illegal wildlife and other conservation law violations, continues to be successful. If the information leads to an arrest, the tipster receives a cash reward funded by the [Georgia Natural Resource Foundation](#), whose mission is to protect wildlife by increasing public support for wildlife law enforcement. Last year, 274 tips were received for various violations.

## **OTHER SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

### **JEA Patrols**

The Joint Enforcement Agreement #23 between Georgia DNR and NOAA office of Law Enforcement called for GADNR enforcement personnel to provide a total of 1100 hours of marine law enforcement or related work under the agreement. Georgia has 5 Execution Priorities. Execution Priority 1 was Endangered Species Act. There were 190-man hours and 70 hours of at-sea vessel patrol hours dedicated to this priority. These patrols were checking Shrimp Trawlers for TED and net compliance. Execution Priority 2 was dedicated to Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. There were 240-man hours and 70 hours of at-sea vessel patrols dedicated to priority 2. These patrols were to check Red Snapper compliance and any other violation dealing with Snapper/Grouper and HMS species. Execution Priority 3 was the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. There were 150-man hours and 50 hours of at-sea vessel patrols dedicated to Priority 3. Execution Priority 4 was Marine Mammal Right Whale. There were 150-man hours and 50 hours of at-sea vessel patrols. These patrols were during the months of November to March and were specifically targeting Right Whale enforcement. Execution Priority 5 was Lacey Act/International (IUU). There were 130 personnel hours dedicated to IUU enforcement. These patrols were assisting NOAA Enforcement Officers with inspection of containers at the Georgia Ports. Vessel patrol hours targeted the following areas: 1) shrimp trawlers checking for TED compliance, 2) intercepts of recreational and commercial fishing vessels returning to Georgia seaports from fishing trips in federal waters, 3) offshore patrols to Special Management Zones and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, 4) concentrations of fishing vessels wherever they occur in the Exclusive Economic Zone adjacent to the State of Georgia, and 5) intercepts of recreational fishing vessels for Red Snapper compliance. During this time, Georgia DNR detected 14 federal violations during these patrols and federal referrals were sent to NOAA Office of Law Enforcement for prosecution.

## **Public Affairs**

### Media Relations and Public Outreach

News releases, radio and TV interviews, and social media posts were the primary information channels for the start of the boating and hunting seasons, “Operation Dry Water,” and the July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday weekend to promote safe boating and swimming safety and to educate citizens on boating laws and how they are applied. Additionally, news releases, I & E presentations and speeches to various civic groups, and regular news media interviews and interaction were utilized throughout the year to disseminate information to the public on the Division’s hunting, fishing, and boating enforcement efforts, and awards and recognitions received by game wardens.

### Social Media

LED manages a Facebook page with over 85,000 page “Likes” (people who regularly view the page). Many of LED’s Facebook posts have a “Reach” (number of people who may see the post through their friends who “Like” the page) that exceeds 100,000, and occasionally, some are above 500,000. The Division also has an Instagram account with over 8,600 followers, an X (Twitter) account that currently has over 1,750 followers, and a YouTube Channel with multiple safety-related videos that has over 1,170 subscribers.





## Previous Game Wardens of the Year

William Powell	1980	Derek Dillard	2002
W.D. Hill, Jr.	1981	Mike Barr	2003
Michael Bone	1982	Harry E. Akins	2004
William Vickers	1983	Eric Brown	2005
Dan Parrish	1984	John Murphy	2006
Ronald Bailey	1985	Shane Sartor	2007
Ralph Sheppard	1986	Mike Binion	2008
Roger D. Garrison	1987	Brian Hobbins	2009
James McDaniel	1988	Cindy Miller	2010
Doug Lewis	1989	Timothy Butler	2011
Terry West	1990	Jason Roberson	2012
W. Howard Hensley, Jr.	1991	David Webb	2013
Dennis Aderholt	1992	Greg Wade	2014
Bill Bunch	1993	Casey Jones	2015
Arvid Edwards	1994	Eddie Tompkins	2016
Mitchell H. Yeargin	1995	Brian Adams	2017
Jeff Weaver	1996	Cody Jones	2018
Mike Commander	1997	Quinn Fogle	2019
Phillip Scott	1998	Ryan Locke	2020
Stanley Elrod	1999	John Rhodes	2021
Rick Sellars	2000	Brock Hoyt	2022
David Ruddell	2001	Tyler Lewis	2023



## **Region I- Acworth**

Region I consist of the Northwestern part of Georgia and includes the City of Atlanta and surrounding metro counties. Captain James McLaughlin is the Region Supervisor and Sergeant Bart Hendrix is the Administrative Sergeant. The Administrative Assistant is Joyce Holland and Sherry Rollins fills the Administrative support position.



*SGT Eric Brown's Work Unit (L/R): Cpl. Zack Hardy, GW Joe Ballard, GW Chandler Traylor, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, GWFC Ryan Shorter, and SGT Eric Brown*

The past calendar year for Sergeant Eric Brown's section has shown great enforcement efforts and community involvement. The section, in total, has 57 hunting without permission cases, 46 fishing without permission cases, apprehended 6 baited dove fields, located 4 drowning victims, worked 4 SAR missions, and conducted 36 separate education and outreach events in Fulton, Carroll, Coweta, Paulding, Douglas, and Haralson Counties. Sgt. Eric Brown has entered year 26 with the state, Cpl. Zack Hardy enters year 15, Cpl. Brock Hoyt and GW Ryan Shorter enter year 7, GW Chandler Traylor enters year 4, and Game Warden Joe Ballard enters his third year.

### **Coweta County:**

On November 24, 2023, Game Warden Joe Ballard received a call from a Coweta County hunter regarding a trespass that occurred on his property. The suspect was hunting without permission and without a fluorescent outer garment. GW Ballard was able to identify the suspect and also determined that the suspect stole the landowners trail camera. After investigating the case, GW Ballard was able to utilize the camera's GPS tracker to discover it was located two counties away in Pike. GW Ballard traveled to the camera's location and discovered the suspect hunting from a blind. GW Ballard apprehended the suspect and located the stolen camera in the suspect's backpack. The suspect faces charges of hunting without permission, hunting without orange, and theft by taking.

### **Douglas County:**

In November 2023, Game Warden Chandler Traylor investigated a felony dumping case in Douglas County. The suspect was hired for approximately \$3000 to dump multiple truckloads of household trash and furniture. GW Traylor took an arrest warrant on the suspect subsequent to his investigation. The following day, GW Traylor received a call from Atlanta Fugitive Task Force. They advised that South Fulton PD performed a traffic stop on the suspect based off GW Traylor's



warrant, which ended up in a shootout. The suspect fled the scene, but was captured later based on information provided by GW Traylor.



*SGT James Keener's Work Unit: Left to Right: CPL Roger McConkey, CPL Shawn Elmore, CPL Kalem Burns, SGT James Keener, GWFC 1 Hunter Rush. Not Pictured: GWFC 2 Travis Shrader and GW Ryan Thomas*

The "Mountain Work Section" of Region I is comprised of Catoosa, Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, Pickens, and Whitfield Counties. Section assignments are as follows: Catoosa – GW Travis Shrader, Gilmer – Cpl. Kalem Burns, Gordon – Cpl. Shawn Elmore and Cpl. Roger McConkey, Murray – GW Ryan Thomas, Fort Mt. SP / Murray – GW Hunter Rush, and supervisory Sgt. James Keener. Pickens County is currently vacant. The section covers a vast area of both state owned or controlled properties as well as large expanses of National Forest Lands.

Section officers completed two very large investigations during the past year and numerous additional smaller investigations. The large investigations were conducted primarily by Wardens Elmore, McConkey, Thomas, and an assisting officer. It included twelve suspects and approximately 392 violations including numerous counts of hunting without permission, hunting out of season, hunting deer at night, bag limits, harvest reporting requirements, taking over the limit, possession of illegally taken wildlife, and hunting over bait. These violations were in reference to multiple species including deer, turkey, hogs, and waterfowl in Gordon, Murray, and Whitfield Counties. Warden Thomas was submitted as the Region I Investigative Officer of the Year for his work with his case.



Mtn. Section SAR Operations this past year in the air and on the water.





*SGT Ben Cunningham's Work Unit Left to Right: GW Isaac Roberson, GWFC 2 Mark Moyer, CPL Daniel Gray, SGT Ben Cunningham, CPL Chad Cox, GWFC 2 Andrew Crider Not Pictured: GWFC 2 Kyle Faulknor*

Sgt. Ben Cunningham's work section consist of Polk, Floyd, Chattooga, Walker and Dade Counties.



Cpl. Chad Cox joined a new hunter and his father during a Safari Club International Hunt in Polk County. The young hunter was able to harvest his first deer.



GWFC Kyle Faulknor set up a Chronic Waste Disease Detail (CWD) on I-59 in Dade County. GWFC Kyle Faulknor was Dade/Trenton's DNR law enforcement recipient at the Optimist Club's annual awards banquet.

GW Isaac Roberson completed his Field Training after spending several months being trained by Cpl. Chad Cox. GW Isaac Roberson made a case in Floyd County for taking over the bag limit of bucks. Cpl. Chad Cox and GW Isaac Roberson caught a group of night hunters in Polk County. GW Isaac Roberson caught a group of night hunters in Floyd County and confiscated a doe. GW Isaac Roberson located two individuals returning to a boat ramp on Coosa River and discovered the two had 88 fish over the creel limit of white bass. Each person was charged, and the fish were confiscated.





*SGT Byron Young's Work Unit: Left to right: CPL Jason Roberson, GWFC 2 Steven Martinez, CPL Philip Stout, CPL Tyler Lewis & K9 Axle, GWFC 2 Jason Warren, SGT Byron Young Not Pictured: GW 2 Amy King*

### **Allatoona Lake Work Section**

Over the last 12 months, Sergeant Byron Young's work section has shown great commitment to conservation law enforcement. This work unit is comprised of Sgt. Young, Corporal Tyler Lewis, Corporal Philip Stout, Corporal Jason Roberson, Game Warden First Class Steven Martinez, and Game Warden First Class Jason Warren. Since July 2023, this work unit has totaled 951 violator contacts. These contacts consisted of 64 hunting without permission cases, 24 fishing without permission cases, and 34 Boating Under the Influence arrests including 11 BUI child endangerment cases. The Allatoona Lake work section also worked 4 drownings and 10 boating incidents and completed 28 Information and Education programs in Bartow, Cobb, and Cherokee counties. In March, GWFC Jason Warren returned to the work section after a year-long deployment overseas to Camp Buehring with the United States Army National Guard. Cpl. Tyler Lewis became the Region 1 Game Warden K-9 handler in July.

**Cherokee County:** On November 24, 2023, Cpl. Jason Roberson located three vehicles parked behind a locked gate in Cherokee County. They were parked on affidavit property and appeared to be hunting without permission. Sgt. Byron Young and Cpl. Tyler Lewis responded to assist. Five hunters were located, and an investigation was initiated. Two of the hunters claimed to be hunting on a 1.43-acre tract inside the 2300-acre affidavit property and three of the hunters claimed to be hunting on Allatoona WMA, which borders the property. Following over 20 miles of foot patrols and numerous ATV patrols, Cpl. Roberson located vast amounts of evidence on the property including ATV tracks, boot tracks, numerous ground blinds and deer stands, gut piles, and deer carcasses. The DNR Investigative Unit aided with phone and cell tower data analysis. In conclusion, thirteen search warrants were executed, and seventy-five violations have been identified on ten suspects. The violations range from Hunting without permission, Hunting big game over bait, Failure to record deer harvest, Failure to sign in a WMA, Hunting without a license, Interference with a Rangers Duties, and Unlawful use of ATV on WMA.



On April 24, 2023, K-9 Officer Corporal Tyler Lewis and his K-9 Axel were called on to locate a weapon used in an aggravated assault case in Jasper County. Two males were involved in an altercation on April 22 when one of the males stabbed the other with a knife. Investigators were unable to locate the weapon used in the assault. Once on scene, K-9 Axel was deployed in a wooded area behind a residence. K-9 Axel soon located the 7" Kitchen knife, covered in blood. This was K-9 Axel and Cpl. Lewis' first deployment.

On December 13, 2022, Cpl. Tyler Lewis responded to an in-progress hunting without permission complaint in Cherokee County. The complainant advised that he captured an image of an individual hunting without permission on a cellular trail camera. Cpl. Lewis arrived on scene and searched the area but was unable to locate the suspect. Later that evening, after locating a vehicle parked at a residence nearby, Cpl. Lewis was able to tie the vehicle's registered owner to the original photograph. After interviewing the subject, it was determined that he was the individual captured in the photograph and was hunting without permission. The suspect was also determined to be a convicted felon. 5 total charges were filed including: hunting without permission, hunting without license, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and hunting big game over bait. The case is pending in the state court of Cherokee County



*SGT Keith Waddell's Work Section: L to R: CPL Russell Epps, GW Bo Townsend, GW Mason Miller, SGT Keith Waddell, GW Matthew Bramblett, & CPL Austin Biggers*

## West Point Lake Section

The West Point Lake section consists of Meriwether, Troup, Heard, Pike, Fayette, Spalding, Henry, and Clayton Counties. The Game Wardens in this work unit patrol West Point Lake along with sections of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. Several state-owned properties are also located within the work section including 3 Wildlife Management Areas (Joe Kurz WMA, Sprewell Bluff WMA, West Point WMA), and the Little White House Historic Site. Section Game Wardens have been busy over the past year. They documented 812 cases and warnings. 17 of those were Boating Under the Influence charges, 50 were Hunting without permission, and 31 Hunting over Bait violations. The section members instructed as a POST instructor on 96 dates, worked a total of 12 boating incidents, and 6 drownings. The section added 3 PFD loaner stations throughout the area to assist in preventing drownings.

On October 21, 2023 Cpl. Biggers received a complaint in reference to a suspect on a UTV hunting deer at night around 4:30 AM in a residential area of Henry County. The Suspect was recorded another night on a doorbell camera while in the act of night deer hunting at 11:30 PM. Cpl. Biggers immediately began recruiting members of the section to set up regular stationary patrols of the area. Cpl. Biggers and members of the section worked long hours in attempts to apprehend the suspect.



On November 10, 2023, GW Bramblett and Cpl. Biggers were conducting a stationary patrol of the area when they were able to observe and apprehend the suspect for hunting deer at night.



*Region I-Acworth Office Staff from left to right: SGT Bart Hendrix, AOC Joyce Holland, Admin Support Sherry Rollins, & CAPT Al Greer*

The Acworth office serves 28 counties in Northwest Georgia from Meriwether County north to the Tennessee state line and from the Alabama line approximately halfway across the state. The officers in Region I are responsible for over 38 % of the state population.

Captain Al Greer was promoted to Region Supervisor in November of 2023. Mrs. Joyce Holland celebrated her 30<sup>th</sup> year with the Law Enforcement Division in March of 2023. Ms. Sherry Rollins celebrated her five year anniversary with the Law Enforcement Division.



## **Region II- Gainesville**

### **Northwest Section**

The Region 2 Northwest section consists of five county positions and one public lands position. Cpl. Matt Johnson is assigned to Union County and Lake Nottely, GWFC Jeffery Turner is assigned to Towns County and Lake Chatuge, GWFC Savannah Miller is assigned to Dawson County, GWFC Bryan Price is assigned to Dawson Forest WMA and Amicalola State Park, and GWFC Jared Wood and his K-9 Judge is assigned to Fannin County and Lake Blue Ridge. Lumpkin County is also in this section and is currently vacant. This section consists of multiple Wildlife Management Area's, State Parks, and vast amounts of USFS property and popular Mountain Trout Streams. This section is supervised by Sgt. Casey Jones.

### **Towns County**



GWFC Jeffery Turner started PMP this year. He was very active with SOG and our Honor Guard in the past year. Over the past year GWFC Turner caught two sets of night deer hunters and charged a man with multiple counts of possession of bird parts when a local police department found raptor wings in his home after serving a search warrant on the residence. GWFC Turner and GWFC Jared Wood also apprehended a ginseng poacher near Vogel State Park last September.



### **Union County**

Cpl. Matt Johnson had a very productive year working multiple search and rescue missions within the section and extended hours on Lake Nottely. Some of the more notable activity of Cpl. Johnson's year includes charging a Union County man for killing a turkey over bait this past turkey season and apprehending a bear hunter who killed a bear while not having a license.

### **Dawson County**

GWFC Savannah Miller stayed busy this year. After completing her Master's Degree in the fall of 2023, she continued to show her dedication to the mission of our department by instructing Defensive Tactics and Advanced ATV Operation at our Game Warden Academy. GWFC Miller also completed POST I.T. training, FTO training and instructed gas mask training last fall. GWFC Miller is a vital member of our recruiting team and PEER Support Team.

### **Dawson Forest WMA**

GWFC Bryan Price received the Region II NWTF award for the 2024 season. He also made several quality trout poaching cases this year including a recent over the limit case on Amicalola State Park where he charged a suspect for possessing seven trout over the creel limit.



Bryan was able to apprehend two turkey poachers' late last season. The poachers killed two turkeys over bait and were hunting without permission. One of them did not have a hunting license or a big game license. Bryan also confiscated several deer in the 2023 season that were killed illegally and documenting various violations such as killing undersized bucks, killing over season limit, hunting without a license, and hunting without a big game license.



### Fannin County

GWFC Jared Wood had another good year. GWFC Wood was involved in several large investigations over the past season which included illegal bear harvests, illegal bear dog hunting, baiting bears, hunting without permission, and a large night deer hunting investigation where he documented several bucks that had been killed at night, from a motor vehicle, and from a public road. Several buck racks were confiscated and GWFC Wood swore out multiple arrest warrants for four Fannin County men. GWFC Wood also conducted several large I&E programs within our work section this year where he utilized the Aviation unit, SOG unit, Advance ATV operators, and his K-9 unit. GWFC Wood was our State NWTF recipient for the 2023 turkey season and

recently won the James Darnell Award for the second year in a row. GWFC Wood also caught two suspects hunting turkeys this past turkey season. GWFC Wood also caught a suspect digging ginseng out of season and without permission last year.



### Northeast Section



Region 2's Northeast work section is comprised of Rabun, White, Habersham, Stephens, and Franklin Counties. There are 7 lakes, 5 WMAs, 9 State Parks and Historic Sites, approximately 253,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service property, and several busy trout streams throughout the section. Game Wardens include Cpl. Anne Wiley, Cpl. Joe Hill, GW Matt Kiracofe, GW Spencer Palmer, GW TR Dooley, GW Jackson Erwin, Cadet Jacob Erlewine (before transferring to Parks division) and Sgt. Cody Jones.

In addition to their regular duties, this section participates in several collateral duties to include 2 sonar operators, 1 drone operator, 1 tactical flight officer, 1 POST instructor, OWS instructor, EVOC instructor, 2 that assist with Game Warden Academy, 2 FTOs, 1 CIRT, and 3 SOG members.



## Habersham County



Game Wardens responded to assist GSP with a 10-80 for a murder suspect, who wrecked his car, and bush bonded into the woods. Searches were conducted in the area, without success. After night fell, a drone with FLIR was launched to assist with the search. The drone was able to locate the suspect working his way back to the highway. The first picture shows the suspect lying in the ditch, to avoid an oncoming car's headlights. While communicating with the drone operator, Officers moved to a position to intercept the suspect.



Cpl. Joe Hill earned the Region 2 Investigative Game Warden of the Year. He completed a case where he was investigating 2 suspects for hunting deer at night. Cpl. Hill documented twenty-two hunting charges on the two suspects. The primary suspect was charged with four counts of hunting deer at night, five counts of hunting deer from a vehicle, two counts of hunting deer from a public road, and three counts of hunting without permission. The secondary suspect was charged with two counts of hunting deer at night, two counts of hunting deer from a vehicle, two counts of hunting deer from a public road, and two counts of hunting without permission. Ten search warrants were executed on phones, residences, recordable image thermal scope, social media accounts, and Geofence.

## Stephens County



Game Wardens TR Dooley, Spencer Palmer, Matt Kiracofe, Jackson Erwin, Chase Flemming, Jeffery Turner, Jared Wood, K9 Judge, and Sgt. Cody Jones responded, with multiple agencies, to a traffic stop that resulted in the suspect shooting at the Toccoa PD officer and fleeing on foot. Officers set perimeters, search wood lines, culverts, residents, and a local hotel. The suspect was apprehended the next day without incident.

Game Warden TR Dooley was recognized as the 2024 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association (NAWEOA) Region 6 Torch Award winner at the NAWEOA Conference in Penticton, British Columbia. NAWEOA's Region 6 consists of 14 states in the Southeast. Game Wardens from Georgia have been recognized as the Region 6 Torch Award winners for the past 7 years.





## Rabun County



The Tallulah Gorge State Park is one of the most popular state parks in Georgia. It also has an incredibly strenuous 2.5-mile trail that travels over 1,000 steps down to the bottom of the gorge, at which point park visitors realize they now have to climb out of. The park deals with several SARs every year that range from dehydration, cardiac issues, broken bones, getting lost, suicides and drownings. Aviation responded several times this year for rescues off the gorge floor. This year, Aviation transported SAR gear, that will be housed at the bottom of the gorge, which will cut down on response time. GW Matt Kiracofe is the local Tactical Flight Officer.



## White County

Cpl. Anne Wiley and GW Spencer Palmer investigated a complaint in Helen. The suspect saw a bear on the other side of the street, at approximately 02:00 in the morning. The suspect fired several shots from his .22 rifle at the bear, striking his neighbor's car and house. No one was injured and the bear was not found in the area the next day. Cpl. Anne Wiley, GW Spencer Palmer, Cadet Erlewine and Sgt. Cody Jones executed a search warrant at his residence. The .22 casings were found in his driveway and the rifle and ammunition was found in the residence. During the search Game Wardens located illegal THC vape pens. The suspect was arrested and charged with reckless discharge of a firearm, possession of manufactured marijuana, criminal damage to property, hunting at night, use of an illegal caliber on bear, hunting bear out of season, and hunting from a roadway/discharging a firearm across public roadway.



Game Warden Jackson Erwin received a complaint of someone illegally using a cast net in the Chattahoochee River. GW Erwin responded to find that the suspect had 24 trout (legal limit is 8), an undersized bass, and a non-game fish. The suspect also had fishing license violations. The suspect was charged, and the evidence was seized.



Cpl. Anne Wiley works closely with White County SROs to coordinate their Jr. Law Enforcement Academy every year. Local and surrounding Game Wardens assist with this weeklong event, to include Jeffery Turner, Jared Wood, K9-Judge, Matt Kiracofe, and Cpl. Wiley. This year there were approximately 80 kids participating. Cpl. Wiley is with a young angler and his dad.



Cpl. Anne Wiley, GW TR Dooley, Cadet Jacob Erlewine, and Sgt. Cody Jones conducted a wildlife checkpoint on the Chattahoochee WMA. GW Dooley conducted field sobriety tests on a driver, as he was suspected to be under the influence. Before the suspect could be handcuffed, he took off running. GW Dooley and Sgt. Jones gave chase and arrested the suspect a few hundred yards away.

**Hartwell Work Section**

Sergeant Tim Vickery’s work section covers Hart, Elbert, Madison, Oglethorpe, Clarke, and Oconee Counties, as well as Lake Hartwell and Lake Russell.

*Lake Hartwell Work Section L-R: Sgt. Tim Vickery, GWFC2 Brandon Pierce, GWFC2 Joseph Cowart, GWFC2 Noah Osborne, Cpl. Ethan Franklin, GWFC2 Mark Stephens, GWFC2 Phillip Nelson, Cpl. Shane Sartor.*

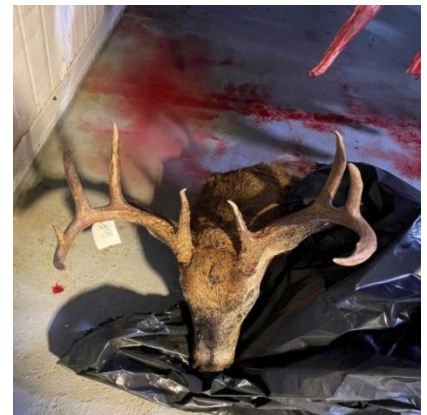


**Hart County**



In October of 2023, GWFC2 Brandon Pierce received information on a large deer that had been taken illegally. After a short investigation, GWFC2 Pierce interviewed a subject who admitted to killing the large buck without any licenses. The subject was cited for hunting without a license, hunting without a big game license, and failure to record harvest. The deer was confiscated.

That same individual was charged in December 2023 for importation of a cervid from a CWD state for a deer that was taken in Missouri. He was cited for that violation and booked into the Hart County Jail. The deer was confiscated.



Confiscated Missouri buck.

**Elbert County**

In January, GWFC2 Phillip Nelson, GWFC2 Noah Osborne, and Cpl. Shane Sartor located several duck hunters in a swamp on the Elbert/ Wilkes line along the Broad River. After making contact with the hunters, it was determined that the swamp was baited and one of the individuals was placed under arrest for hunting under the influence.



On the opening day of rifle season in October 2023, GWFC2 Noah Osborne and Sgt. Tim Vickery were working the south end of Elbert County to check a supposed convicted felon hunting without permission complaint. Upon arriving at the complaint property, the Game Wardens saw a vehicle matching the description of the poacher's vehicle. As soon as they stepped out of their patrol vehicle to check the area, the Game Wardens heard a gunshot close to their location, approximately 100 yards into the woods on the complainant's property. The Game Wardens soon located an individual in a ladder stand who was not wearing any fluorescent orange, as well as a young buck that had been shot a few yards away. After removing the individual from the stand and checking his identification, it was confirmed that he was a convicted felon. The subject was arrested and charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, hunting without wearing fluorescent orange, and possession of drug paraphernalia.



*GWFC2 Noah Osborne with confiscated deer and rifle from convicted felon in Elbert County*

### **Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Award**

Phillip Nelson Region II and State Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Officer of the Year/ Region II Hunter Education Instructor of the Year

*GWFC2 Phillip Nelson putting up duck boxes with Oglethorpe County FFA students.*



### **Madison County**

In November of 2023, GWFC2 Joseph Cowart and GWFC2 Phillip Nelson received a call referencing a night hunter in Madison County. GW Cowart responded to the complaint location and spoke with the complainant. GW Cowart then walked through the field that the deer was shot in and then towards the residence that was located on the property. Upon getting close to the residence GW Cowart heard what was found to be a UTV crank up and pulled to the rear of the residence. Individuals were observed pulling a deer from the rear of the UTV and hanging it up to start the butchering process. GW Nelson then pulled into the residence as GW Cowart walked up from the backside of the residence. It was found that the subject had shot a deer out of their pasture at night. The subject was charged with hunting deer at night.

### **Lanier Section**

Region 2's Lanier work section is comprised of Hall, Forsyth, Banks, and Jackson Counties. The section consists of Lake Lanier, which is 37,066 acres, 2 WMAs, 2 State Parks, 4 county watersheds, and a portion of the Chattahoochee River that is fished regularly for trout. Game Wardens include Cpl. Jonathan Segars, Cpl. Ryan Locke, GW Adam Kimbrough, GW Joseph Thompson, GW Chase Fleming, GW Cody Tanner,



GW Will Gilstrap, and Sergeant Tim Butler (before transferring to region 3). In addition to their regular duties, this section participates in several collateral duties to include 2 sonar operators, 1 tactical flight officer, 2 FTOs, and 1 CIRT.

During the 2023–2024-year, Game Wardens for the Lanier section received several awards. GW Adam Kimbrough was named DNR Region 2 Boating Officer of the year.

*Cpl. Jonathan Segars was recognized as NASBLA's National Operation Dry Water Officer of the year award for 2023.*



*Cpl. Ryan Locke was named as Georgia's NASBLA Operation Dry Water Officer of the year winner for 2024 and is in the running for the national award.*



### **Banks County**

On September 2, 2023, Game Warden Adam Kimbrough and Corporal Jonathan Segars were patrolling Banks County on opening day of dove season. While checking a dove field they observed a Blue Heron splashing in a nearby pond. Game Wardens retrieved the heron and were able to determine that it had been shot with bird shot. Game Wardens continued to check the hunters on the field and began investigating the shot heron. The landowner eventually admitted to game wardens that he had shot the heron. He was issued a citation for taking of a protected species.



### **Hall County**

On November 24, 2023, Game Warden Joe Thompson received a complaint of a deer that had been killed illegally while hunting without permission in Hall County. Thompson began an investigation into the complaint. After interviewing the suspects, they stated that they had killed the deer at another location. Based on conflicting information and evidence, GW Thompson was able to secure search warrants for cell phones of two individuals. A geo fence search warrant was also obtained. Through the search warrant results GW Thompson was able to place both subjects on the without permission property the day the deer was killed. Both suspects were issued multiple citations, and the deer was confiscated.

## Jackson County

On November 3, 2023, Corporal Jonathan Segars, Game Warden Adam Kimbrough, and Sergeant Tim Butler responded to a hunting without permission complaint in Jackson County. While there, they observed two subjects on an adjoining property on foot hunting at night with a light. Cpl. Segars and Sgt. Butler followed these subjects back to their residence where they contacted them. During the encounter, one subject was arrested for hunting deer at night and possession of methamphetamine. Game Wardens were then able to obtain more information on the person that had been hunting without permission. They then went to a neighbor's residence and were able to obtain a confession from the neighbor to hunting without permission. This subject was then issued multiple citations for hunting violations that had taken place over the previous month.

During the 2023-2024 deer season, Cpl. Ryan Locke began an investigation into three subjects who had been night hunting in Hall and Jackson counties. During the case, Cpl. Locke executed several search warrants on these individuals who were all known convicted felons. The search warrants resulted in 26 firearms being seized, along with marijuana and methamphetamine located during the search warrant execution. Cpl. Locke also seized 49 combined deer racks and mounts. The case resulted in 142 misdemeanor charges and 70 felony charges between the three subjects.



## Metro Work Section

Sergeant Brooks Varnell supervises the Counties of Barrow, Dekalb, Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale, and Walton. Game Wardens Cpl. Stetson Stevens, Cpl. Kevin Goss, GWFC Jason Harrison, and GWFC Taylor Leazer make up the work section. The section is responsible for law enforcement on Fort Yargo State Park, Panola Mountain State Park, Stone Mountain Park, Gaither WMA, and stretches of the Alcovy, Chattahoochee, South, and Yellow Rivers along with the southern ends of Lake Lanier and the northern tip of Lake Jackson.

The make-up of the section ranges from vast metropolitan areas, suburban areas, and rural farmland along with one of the busiest trout streams in the state. The work section issued 899 total citations and warnings enforcing the laws and protecting the citizens of this state. The section worked one hunting incident on private property, five drownings, multiple investigations, and assisted other work sections in the state with wildlife and boating enforcement. Some violations of note were hunting over bait cases (16), hunting without permission cases (30), fishing without permission cases (23), and hunting deer at night cases (3).

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*Left – Racks from without permission case by Cpl. Stetson Stevens. Right - GWFC Jason Harrison with ducks from a hunting over bait case.*



## Region III- Thomson



*Left to Right (front row): Cpl David Fisher, Cpl Westin Rabon, Sgt Matt Garthright, GW Chason Brogdon, GW Thomas Ledford, GW Skyler Redmond, GW Kyle Kervin, Cpl Jeff Billips, Cpl Saxon Campbell, GW Jaron Hollinshead, GW Wes Freeman, Adm.Support Rainee Rowell, AOC Elizabeth Bentley, GWFC Kevin Hurley, Cpl Keith Page, K-9 Kamo. Left to Right (back row): GW Sterling Gibson, Cpl Taylor Bingham, Cpt Sam O'Neal, Sgt Bobby Timmerman, GW Caleb Young, GW Clay Baker, Sgt Ricky Boles, Cpl Jason Bennett, GWFC Erin Paulk, GWFC Lamar Burns, GW Ryan Buice. Not Pictured: Cpl Ben Payne, Cpl Kevin Godbee, GW Cory Bohannon, GW Levi Thompson, Sgt John Harwell, Sgt Travis Sweat*

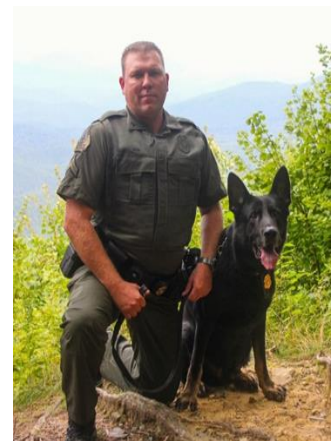
### **Promotions & Personnel Changes**

Region III Welcomed Capt. Sam O'Neal. Doyte Chaffin was promoted to Major, GW Chason Brogdon was assigned to Lincoln Co/Elijah Clark State Park, GW Wes Freeman was assigned to Wilkinson Co. Cpl. Shane Sartor transferred from Wilkes Co R3 to Oconee Co R2. Westin Rabon promoted to Corporal & lateraled to Morgan Co, Taylor Bingham promoted to Corporal & lateraled to Greene Co. Ryan Buice lateraled to Upson Co; Mason Miller transferred to R1. Cpl. Dan Schay promoted to Adm. Sgt. in R2. Niki Spencer, David Webb, Kevin Godbee, Ben Payne & Bobby Timmerman retired. Bryan Gresham resigned from his position. Cpl. Ricky Boles promoted to Sgt. New cadets are Aaron McNew, Elizabeth Howell, & Ashley Compton.

K9 Rio suffered a cardiac event while back tracking a hunter who was found to be hunting without permission in Jasper County on October 19, 2023.



Cpl. Keith Page with GW K9 Kamo fresh out of the K9 Academy. This was Kamo's first I&E and what a success. Since February Keith and Kamo have been training and already located several articles for local and state agencies.



## **Personal Awards**

Sgt. Matt Garthright received the 2023 State Supervisor of the Year Award.

GW Cory Bohannon received the R3 Game Warden of the Year Award & was selected as the State Game Warden of the Year Award, received R3 Boating Safety Officer of the Year Award & was selected as the State Boating Safety Officer of the Year.

GWFC Levi Thompson received the R3 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year Award.

GW Jaron Hollinshead received the 2024 Georgia Level Torch Award.

GWFC Ryan Buice received the Hunter Education Instructor of the Year.

In May 2024 Cpl. Keith Page attended the National K9 Down Memorial Ceremony in Washington D.C. to honor his fallen K9 Partner “Rio”. The Ceremony was held at the National Police K9 Down Memorial located on Judiciary Square in downtown Washington D.C.



## **In the Community**



Sgt. Garthright’s work section feels that it is of the utmost importance to build positive community relations within each county of their work section. The work unit served in over 20 community wide events in the previous year ranging from boating safety programs, hunter education programs, and general law enforcement programs across their 5 counties. Some of the events that the work unit participated in were: National Hunting and Fishing Day at McDuffie PFA, Columbia County Preparedness Day, Clays for Kids and the Jingle Jam 10k.

The Clarks Hill work section had another successful boating season arresting 15 individuals for boating under the influence. The section documented 647 boating safety related enforcement contacts while working boating enforcement on the lake. The section focused on violations that save lives and as a result, contacted 50 operators that were allowing underage children to ride in a moving vessel without wearing a personal flotation device. The section’s enforcement and educational efforts have once again kept Clarks Hill Lake a safe place to boat and recreate, with only one drowning and one minor boating incident.







GW Kervin started interacting with a nonprofit for terminally ill children called “Hunting for the Cure” Jefferson County Chapter. GW’s Kervin, Redmond, Billips, Campbell and Wilcox from Region 4 went on a tower pheasant hunt with these kids to guide and introduce them to wing shooting and the outdoors.

CPL. Billips set up his annual Kids Fishing event in Glascock County. This year was the 19th year this has occurred. Joint efforts from the work section ensured that over 200 students had a blast at the event. Prizes were given out daily along with tightlines and an abundance of smiles.



GW Mason Miller, GW Sterling Gibson, & Sgt. Wil Smith attended the Safety Day at the Morgan Co. Elementary School.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, GW’s Wes Freeman, Jaron Hollinshead, and Clayton Baker taught several students from the Baldwin County Board of Education about boating safety and water safety. Selected students were given shirts for volunteering to place their life jackets on correctly. The students and teachers were given an opportunity to learn about the dangers of water and how to keep themselves safe during the summer months. GW Wes Freeman is shown in the picture above with winners of the life jacket contest.



On December 1, 2023, GW Clayton Baker and GW Jaron Hollinshead participated in an Outdoor Dreams Foundation youth hunt in Putnam County. GW Baker was presented with the opportunity to hunt with the youth in this picture. These youth have faced numerous trials in the past year battling cancer and were given the opportunity to hang out with their local GWs. The youth were able to hunt and kill a wild boar, eat dinner, and presented donated gifts for facing the battles they have been involved in.



## Hunting & Fishing Activity



On May 19<sup>th</sup>, GW Westin Rabon and Sgt. Sweat responded to a complaint in Jasper Co. reference a gator in a farm pond. Upon arrival they found out that the landowner had killed the gator. After a brief investigation and retrieving the gator from the bottom of the pond it was determined that it had escaped from a local wild animal permit holder nearby. GWs conducted an inspection of the facility and determined the pen it escaped from. The permit holder did not know it had been missing for 5 days. Multiple charges were made on the permit holder.

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, Sgt. Travis Sweat responded to a call from a Spalding Co. deputy on a traffic stop for assistance. Sgt. Sweat arrived to find three male Hispanic suspects with a cooler full of bass. After an investigation it was determined the fish came from the Flint River at Hwy 18 and all fish had open spear wounds. A search of the vehicle revealed three spear guns as well as scuba gear. The three non-residents were charged and released.



On October 28, 2023, GW Skyler Redmond received a complaint of hunting without permission in Burke Co. Throughout the investigation GW Redmond obtained a search warrant for the suspects residence. When the search warrant was executed GW Redmond confiscated 3 buck heads from a freezer, an alligator head, six firearms, and over 400 rounds of ammunition. The suspect was charged with hunting without permission, 3 counts of recording and reporting requirements for game birds and animals, possession of

alligator parts, convicted felon in possession of a firearm. GW Redmond was assisted by Cpl. Billips, GW Jack Thain, and K-9 Case.

GW Kervin patrolled areas of interest for waterfowl bait at night in Jefferson County. On the last morning of season, CPL. Billips and GW. Kervin were near a baited pond when shots were fired. After the individuals left their blind bags across the pond to hide shotgun shells, GW Kervin drug the pond for bait and found the hidden bags full of lead shot. This led to 9 individuals being charged with, hunting waterfowl over bait and with lead shot.





GW Sterling Gibson caught an individual taking waterfowl out of season on Lake Oconee.

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Sgt. Ricky Boles and GW Jaron Hollinshead set up an illegal cast netting detail on the Oconee River. Sgt. Boles set up across the Lake Sinclair Dam where he was able to utilize binoculars and identify violators cast netting for game fish. Sgt. Boles was in direct communication with GW Hollinshead, and the two were able to apprehend and charge 4 separate individuals for cast netting game fish on the Oconee River. Sgt. Boles and GW Hollinshead in all charged the individuals with possession of game fish over the limit, Fishing by illegal methods for game fish, and several license violations. Hickory and American Shad are presented in the picture above. The individuals also possessed Striped Bass and catfish.



On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Cpl. Jason Bennett heard gunshots coming from a private swamp in south Twiggs County. Cpl. Jason Bennett dispatched GW Hollinshead to the area where the two



were able to identify 3 adults and 4 youth duck hunting in the nearby swamp. After investigating the area, it was found that the swamp had been baited for ducks. A search of the area also revealed hidden ducks in the bushes, accumulating to over the limit for certain species of duck. The duck hunters were charged for hunting over bait, over the bag limit, hunting waterfowl with lead shot and multiple license violations. Cpl. Bennett's leadership was exemplified throughout the investigation aiding GW Hollinshead in his first hunting over bait case.



## Region IV- Metter



*Left to right: front row: GW Bobby Sanders, K-9 Creed, Cpl. KP Boatright, GW Dalton Ridgill, GW Jack Thain, SGT. Morty Wood, Cpl. Rodney Horne, GW Evan Nobles, GW Dylan Brady, Cpl. Robert Stillwell, Cpl. Cameron Dyal, Sgt. Chris Moore, Cpl. Clint Jarriel, GW Benayah Hawkins, GW Mathew Ubbink, Sgt. Kevin Joyce, GW Jonathan Jeffries, Sgt. Shaymus McNeely, Cpl. Jordan Crawford, GW Allison Dean, Cpl. Mike Wilcox, Capt. Bob Lynn. (Not Pictured- GW Connor Moon, GW Dylan Bennett, and Cpl. Luke Rabun)*

Region IV “The Metter Region” covers 27 counties in the Coastal Plains of Georgia and consists of mainly farmland, stands of planted pine trees and hardwood bottoms that feed the slow-moving large rivers of southeast Georgia. Region IV Game Wardens patrol over 121,000 acres of public land that includes twenty-five state properties that are operated by the Department of Natural Resources, multiple VPA properties and public dove fields on Department of Corrections properties in Tattnall County. Region IV Game Wardens also patrol many miles of public waters that make up the mighty Altamaha and Savannah Rivers and their tributaries.

## Personnel

### Metter Office Staff



Administrative Assistant 3 April Thrift  
Admin Support 1 Christina Colquitt



## **Field Staff**

Sergeant Shaymus McNeely's section: Corporal Mike Wilcox, Corporal Jordan Crawford, GWFC Jack Thain with K-9 Case, GW Matthew Ubbink, and GW Jonathan Jeffries

Sergeant Chris Moore's section: Corporal Cameron Dyal, Corporal Clint Jarriel, GWFC Bobby Sanders with K-9 Creed, GW Dylan Bennett

Sergeant Patrick Gibb's section: Corporal Rodney Horne, Corporal Robert Stillwell, GW Connor Moon, GW Evan Nobles, GW Benayah Hawkins, GW Allison Dean

Sergeant Morty Wood's section: Corporal Luke Rabun, Corporal K.P. Boatright, GW Dylan Brady, GW Dalton Ridgdill

## **Personnel Changes**

### **Promotions**

Corporal Patrick Gibbs was promoted to Field Sergeant  
GWFC K.P. Boatright was promoted to Corporal  
GWFC Luke Rabun was promoted to Corporal

## **Region IV welcomed new Wardens from the 38th Game Warden Academy to the Region**

- Allison Dean- Telfair County
- Jonathan Jeffries- Emanuel County
- Dalton Ridgdill- Irwin County
- Matthew Ubbink- Bulloch County

### **Retirements**

- GWFC Randell Meeks retired from Treutlen County

### **Transfers Out**

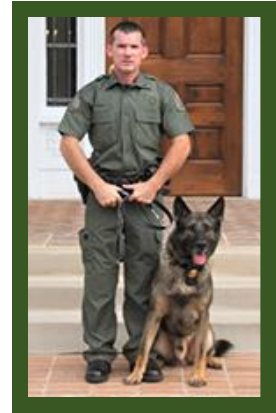
- Sergeant Clint Martin Transferred to Region V to fill vacancy left by Capt. Al Greer

## **Region Personnel Awards**

- Corporal Mike Wilcox nominated for GW of the Year
- GW Benayah Hawkins nominated for Waterfowl Award
- GW Dylan Bennett nominated for TORCH Award
- GW Dylan Bennett nominated for Investigative Game Warden of the Year
- Corporal Luke Rabun nominated for National Wild Turkey Federation Award
- Corporal Cameron Dyal nominated for Boating Safety Game Warden of the Year

### **Georgia DNR K-9 Case “EOW March 16, 2024”**

DNR Law Enforcement Division created its K-9 program in January of 2000. This program has had an enormous amount of success in the past 24 years. Game Warden Jack Thain and his partner “CASE” were a vital part of this unit for many years. However, in March of 2024 Case developed some serious health issues which ultimately took his life on March 16, 2024. DNR is a family, and we would like to recognize K-9 Case for his lifelong dedication to the protection of his handler Jack Thain and to his efforts of protecting Georgia’s wildlife.



### **Responding to the needs of the people we serve**



In August 2024, Sergeant Chris Moore and Game Warden Dylan Bennett responded to Evans County during Hurricane Debbie. Record rain fall in this area caused the Canoochee River to rise to a record high 18.1 ft. Game Wardens assisted residents in the evacuation of their flooded homes.

### **Night Deer Hunting**

With a large majority of the region being rural, night hunting remains a top complaint. Region IV contacted 39 groups that resulted in over 224 documented violations. Feral hogs and coyotes have open seasons and can be hunted at night. The use of weapon mounted thermal/night vision optics have increased with more affordable units coming available to the public. These devices are used for legal hunting of hogs and coyotes, and for illegal hunting of deer at night. Violations of hunting without permission, hunting without licenses, hunting from a vehicle and hunting from a public road can still be issued to hog and coyote hunters.

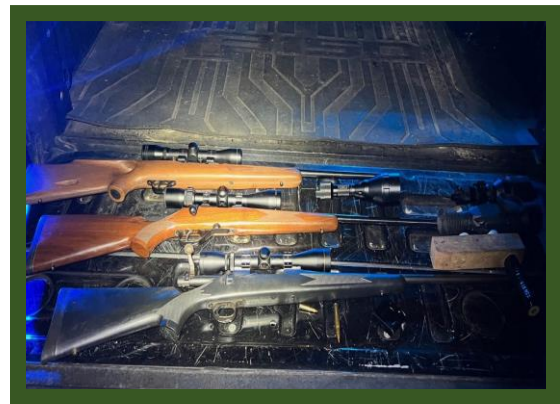
On November 5, 2023, Corporal Robert Stillwell was working a complaint of night deer hunting in Telfair County. Around 1:15 AM, he heard a rifle shot near his location and began riding to try and locate the hunters. Minutes later, he located three subjects in a pickup truck with two freshly killed bucks in the back. The subjects admitted to shooting the deer with a rifle after using a truck mounted go-light to locate them in an ag field. All three subjects were charged with hunting deer at night, hunting big game from a public road, and hunting from a vehicle.





On November 4, 2023, GW Bobby Sanders along with K9 Game Warden “Creed” responded to an in-progress hunting without permission complaint in Toombs County. Upon arrival to the incident location, K9 Creed was deployed. He immediately located a possible kill site. After a brief track, it was determined the deer was killed and drug off the complainant’s property to the neighboring property. K9 Creed was also able to locate a single rifle casing from the area where the deer had been taken. A brief investigation ensued which resulted in six separate charges and the deer was seized as evidence.

On November 11, 2023, GW Dylan Brady conducted surveillance on fields in Bacon County for night deer hunting activity. He observed a truck stop in the roadway and sit, without shining a visible light into the fields in that area. GW Brady conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle and found that there were several guns in the vehicle, a handheld spotlight, and a handheld night vision device. After a short investigation the vehicle occupant was charged for hunting deer at night, hunting big game from the road, and hunting from a vehicle.



## Waterfowl

Georgia waterfowl hunting remains a main attraction in the southern part of the state. Region IV has thousands of acres of flooded creek bottoms, rivers, farm ponds, lakes, and swamps. Beavers can add to the acres of new duck holes by damming up creeks. With the popularity of the activity and the wide range of habitat, hunters often rely on shooting roosts after hours or hunting over bait to gain an unfair advantage.



At daybreak on December 24, 2023, Sergeant Patrick Gibbs was listening for waterfowl hunting activity when he heard a high number of shots coming from a creek in Toombs County. Gibbs located 6 hunters in the creek and found corn in the water where the hunters were standing. 10 violations were addressed including hunting ducks over bait, hunting with an unplugged shotgun, hunting with lead shot, hunting without a federal duck stamp, and hunting without a license.



On December 10th, Game Warden Bobby Sanders was on routine patrol in south Toombs County. He checked Broomsedge Rod and Gun sportsman club for waterfowl hunting activity. He was able to make contact with two very excited youth hunters who had a great morning of hunting. What a great moment for the future of hunting.



### **Turkey Season/Dove Season**

Turkey hunting in the spring and dove shoots in the fall signal the beginning and end to the hot summers of South Georgia. Each season has its own unique challenges, but both keep Wardens busy looking for illegal bait. Turkey season has many changes happening to try to increase the population of the wild turkey. The season was shortened, and several new restrictions on harvesting gobblers were put in place.



On opening day of turkey season 2024, Captain Bob Lynn and Game Warden Benayah Hawkins came across 7-year-old, Rider Gibson who had just harvested his first turkey in Telfair County. The Game Wardens took pictures with the young turkey hunter and his dad and showed them how to report the turkey harvest in the GoOutdoors App.

On the evening September 3, 2023, CPL Luke Rabun located a dove shoot taking place in Coffee County. While checking the hunters for compliance, he determined that the field had been illegally baited. 32 doves were confiscated from the poachers, and they were all cited for the infractions.





Corporal Patrick Gibbs and Game Warden Dylan Bennett were on routine patrol in the northern part of Montgomery County. The officers heard several shots north of their location, which they believed to be a dove shoot. They traveled in the direction of the shots and successfully located seven individuals shooting doves in a clear-cut area. After checking several of the hunters it was determined the hunting area was baited crack corn. All hunters were cited for hunting migratory birds over bait and the doves were seized as evidence.

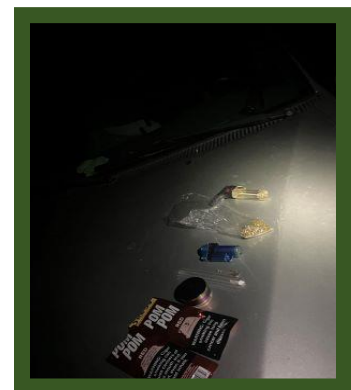
### **Boat Safety/Recreational Fishing**

Wardens patrol many miles of rivers in the region, from the small black water rivers like the Alapaha and the Ochoopee to the larger rivers like the Altamaha and the Savannah. While enforcing creel limits is an important task performed by wardens, boat safety is by far the most vital. Preventing drownings by ensuring boaters have the necessary safety equipment on their boats. Wardens also patrol waterways to enforce boating under the influence laws as well.



On June 23, 2024, Corporal Robert Stillwell was patrolling for fishing activity along the Ocmulgee River in Dodge County. He checked two fishermen in the river who had kept 125 bream. Both subjects were charged with taking over the daily limit.

On July 9, 2023, CPL Luke Rabun observed a man fishing at the Flat Tub WMA boat landing on the Ocmulgee River in Coffee County. CPL Rabun found that the man did not have a valid fishing license and had been ticketed in the past for the same offense. During his investigation, CPL Rabun found that the man also had drugs in his possession. Charges were made for fishing without a license and felony charges were made for the illegal drugs.



## Region V - Albany



L to R: Greg Wade, K-9 “Cuff,” Dean Gibson, Drew Weathersby, Eric White, Scott Carroll, Cody Woody, Jim Atchley, Raul Malagon, Hunter Bowman, Tyler McKay, Rick Sellars, Drew Beverly, Tab Jones, Jennifer Hill, Quinn Fogle, Tanner Rundle, Alex Chambers, Clint Martin, Jesse Harrison, Blake Chafin, Thomas Sibley, Tony Cox, Steve Thomas, Seth May, Eric Isom and K-9 “BO”

The Region V Law Enforcement Division is comprised of thirty-one counties in the southwest portion of the state with the headquarters located in Albany. Within the region there are seven large reservoirs, two major rivers, a multitude of smaller streams, eighteen wildlife management areas, two Public Fishing Areas, nine State Parks, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, and Ft. Moore Military Base.

Currently, the region has twenty-six POST certified Game Wardens, with twenty-four assigned field duties, and Captain Rick Sellars and Sergeant Quinn Fogle assigned administrative responsibilities. This year, the region did welcome AOC Jennifer Hill to fill our vacant AOC 3 position.



**The Region's 31 counties are divided into 5 work units:**

**Lake Blackshear Work Section**

Sergeant Clint Martin's work section encompasses six counties in the northeastern part of Region 5. These counties are Dooly, Crisp, Macon, Sumter, Schley, and Lee. The section is responsible for the Flint River from the north Macon County line to the south Lee County line and includes Lake Blackshear. Within the six counties, the work section is responsible for law enforcement on Flint River WMA, Montezuma Bluffs WMA, Cordele Fish Hatchery, and Georgia Veterans State Park.

There were some changes in the work section this year. In December, Captain Al Greer was promoted to Region 1 Supervisor and Sgt. Martin transferred from Region 4 back to Region 5. Game Warden Alex Chambers returned to the work section and is assigned to Macon County. Corporal Jesse Harrison is assigned to Crisp County, Corporal Blake Chafin is assigned to Dooly County, and Game Warden Tanner Rundle is assigned to Sumter County.



*L to R: Cpl. Blake Chafin, Sgt. Clint Martin, Tanner Rundle, Cpl. Jesse Harrison, and Alex Chambers*



*Cpl. Blake Chafin Scooping a pond in Dooly County*

The make-up of the section has both rural and urban aspects contained within it. With the population intertwined with rural farmland and large timber tracts, the work section spent over 478 hours working citizen



*Alex Chambers with Confiscated Doves*

complaints this year. The section issued 337 total citations and warnings enforcing the laws, while protecting the citizens and wildlife of this state. The section worked one

hunting incident on state owned land, three boating incidents on state waterways and one drowning on private waters. Some violations of note were 29 hunting over bait cases, 2 hunting alligators

out of season, 14 hunting without permission cases, 3 hunting deer at night cases and a possession of a firearm by a convicted felon case.

### **Lake Seminole Work Section**

Sgt Cox's Work Section includes Decatur, Seminole, Baker, Grady, Early, and Miller Counties. Game Wardens in this work unit patrol Lake Seminole, Flint River, Chattahoochee River, Ochlocknee River, Spring Creek, and Tired Creek Reservoir. The work section consists of Sgt.



*Cpl. Steve Thomas, Cpl. Thomas Sibley, Sgt. Tony Cox, GW Seth May and GW Boatright*

Tony Cox, Cpl. Steve Thomas, Cpl. Thomas Sibley, GW Seth May, and GW KP Boatright until December 2023. This year, Game Wardens made 7 BUI arrest along with 2 counts of child endangerment. They also investigated 3 boating incidents, and 3 drownings. Game Wardens recorded a total of 484 violator contacts. Out of those contacts, 6 individuals were charged with hunting without permission and one convicted felon was charged with



*GW Seth May with Confiscated Wood Ducks*

possession of a firearm. A total of 7 baited duck ponds were located by the work section, which resulted in 33 individuals charged with hunting ducks over bait. Also, during this year, GWs in the work section worked together to investigate a complaint of a deer processor in Florida that was bringing carcasses into Georgia to dispose of them. As a result of the investigation, an individual was charged with 80 counts of illegal importation of a cervid carcasses or parts from outside the state of Georgia.

During the year, Cpl. Steve Thomas worked two different Facebook investigations. As a result of the investigations, a total of 18 charges were made consisting of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, hunting without a license, hunting without a big game license, hunting without permission, failure to record, taking over the season limit of antlered deer, possession of illegally taken wildlife, illegal importation of cervid carcass from out of the state, taking of protected species, violation of DNR Board approved rules, and hunting out of season.



*Cpl. Steve Thomas with over the limit Crappie*



## Albany Work Section



*GW Tyler McKay, GW Raul Malagon, Cpl. Drew Beverly, Sgt Greg Wade, K-9 "Cuff," GW Tab Jones, and Cpl. Eric White*

The Albany work section incorporates Dougherty, Worth, Mitchell, Colquitt, Brooks, and Thomas Counties, encompassing approximately 3000 square miles. The major waterways within these counties include Lake Worth, Kinchafoonee Creek, Muckalee Creek, Ochlocknee River, Flint River, and Little River. This work section contains 4 Wildlife Management Areas (Chickasawhatchee, Albany Nursery, Doerun Pitcher Plant Bog, River Creek) and 1 State Park (Reed Bingham). This section is currently patrolled by six Game Wardens: Sergeant Greg Wade (K9 Cuff), Corporal Eric White, Corporal Drew Beverly, Game Warden Tab Jones, Game Warden Raul Malagon and Game Warden Tyler McKay. Game Wardens Jones, Malagon and McKay are graduates of the 38<sup>th</sup> Game Warden Academy and successfully completed FTO. During FTO, they assisted with an array of activities and gained valuable knowledge that will lead them towards a successful career within the Law Enforcement Division.

Throughout the year, Game Wardens in the Albany section issued 594 citations and warnings. Some violations of note are: 6 arrests for Boating/Hunting/Driving Under the Influence (these numbers do not include Child Endangerment BUI), 6 subjects charged with Hunting Deer at Night, and 51 subjects being charged with Hunting/ Fishing/Taking Artifacts Without Permission. Wardens responded to and investigated numerous citizen complaints of hunting, fishing, boating, or environmental violations. The section also investigated 1 boating incident, 1 hunting incident, and 3 drownings.



Cpl. Eric White founded (2) night hunting complaints in Worth County where 6 subjects were charged for Hunting Deer at Night, as well as 28 additional violations. Cpl. White also identified an artifact dig site in Lee County and determined the suspects were taking artifacts without landowner's permission. Cpl. White concluded this investigation with the apprehension of 2 suspects, who were actively digging, and secured 7 arrest warrants including possession of schedule one narcotics (felony). Following an environmental complaint, Cpl. White completed an interview with the potential suspect who admitted to (5) dumpsites. Cpl. White secured 3 felony arrest warrants for unlawful dumping (commercial gain). At the time the warrants were served, the suspect was found to be in possession of schedule 1 narcotics. In addition, Cpl. White was nominated as the Region V Investigative Officer of the Year (2024) and was awarded the State Investigative Officer of the Year Award at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Law Enforcement Division Award Banquet.

Cpl. Beverly conducted a complete and thorough investigation of a theft incident that occurred at River Creek WMA. During the investigation, Cpl. Beverly identified evidence of a Burglary that also occurred upon River Creek WMA, which was unknown at the time the theft was reported. This investigation concluded with the apprehension of 1 suspect who had committed 15 violations including multiple counts of Theft by Taking and Burglary (Felony). Cpl. Beverly was nominated as the Region 5 Game Warden of the Year (2024) and was recognized at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Law Enforcement Division Award Banquet. Cpl. Beverly is currently attending PMP at Columbus State University and serves on the Recruiting Committee.

### **Columbus Work Section**

Sergeant Bolen's section consists of Harris, Muscogee, Talbot, Taylor, Chattahoochee, and Marion Counties. The Game Wardens in this work unit patrol Lake Harding, Lake Oliver, Goat Rock, along with several miles of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. Several state-owned properties are



also located within the work section including 7 Wildlife Management Areas, 1 Public Fishing Area, and 2 State Parks. Game Wardens assigned to this work unit are Cpl. Eric Isom, Cpl. Dean Gibson, and Game Warden First Class Hunter Bowman. The work section experienced some changes during the past year. Game Warden

*Cpl. Dean Gibson, Sgt. Jeremy Bolen, GW Hunter Bowman, Cpl. Eric Isom, and K-9 "BO"*

First Class Greg Castelli left the department and Game Warden First Class Ryan Buice transferred to Region 3.

Throughout the year, Game Wardens in the work section issued 591 citations and warnings. Some violations of note were hunting over bait cases (28), boating under the influence (19), child endangerment cases (5), hunting/fishing without permission (22), taking over the bag limit (5), and hunting from a public road (2). Section Game Wardens investigated 2 boating incidents and 6 drownings were reported.

K-9 Bo was busy this year as well. He received 84 violator contact assists while out working with his handler, Cpl. Eric Isom. The K-9 team was called out numerous times during this past year from everything to tracking fleeing suspects to locating evidence. Cpl. Isom and K-9 Bo are routinely training together which is evident by the success they have when they arrive on scene for a deployment.

Game Wardens in the work unit are involved with numerous collateral duties. Sgt. Jeremy Bolen is a Firearms Instructor. Cpl. Eric Isom is a K-9 handler, POST Instructor, FTO, and Boating EVOC Instructor. Cpl. Dean Gibson is a POST Instructor, Honor Guard member, FTO, and serves on the CIRT unit. GWFC Bowman serves as a Sonar operator for the division.

### **Lake Walter F. George Work Section**

This work section covers the rural areas along the western border of Region V, including Stewart, Randolph, Terrell, Webster, Quitman, Calhoun and Clay Counties. Outdoor recreation, timber production and farming are the primary land uses in this portion of the region. Only five game wardens have the pleasure of patrolling the seven counties along the Georgia / Alabama border. Within this work section, game wardens patrol over 30,800 acres of state WMA lands on 4 WMA's, 700 acres of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (Bradley Unit), 3 state parks and the 46,000-acre Lake Walter F. George.



*Cpl. Steve Robinson, Sgt. Jim Atchley, Cpl. Scott Carroll, Drew Weathersby not pictured  
GW Cody Woody*

The officers patrolling this area include Sergeant Jim Atchley, Corporal Scott Carroll, Corporal Steve Robinson, and Game Warden Drew Weathersby. The work unit added a new officer during the year, and we welcome Game Warden Cody Woody, who is assigned to Calhoun County. These officers have documented 6 BUI's, 1 boating incident and worked 1 hunting incident involving a fatality in Calhoun County.

Game Warden Weathersby has dramatically increased his skills and continues to grow in the profession! Weathersby completed an extensive investigation with the assistance of the IU unit that lead to the arrest of three individuals, 196 indictments, and seizing 27 illegal animals. The charges ranged from hunting without permission, hunting at night, taking over the limit and hunting out of season. This investigation was a significant envoy in assisting Game Warden Weathersby to secure the nomination as the Region's 2024 Torch Award recipient. Corporal Scott Carroll also secured the region's 2024 Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Award.

Both Robinson and Carroll are Field Training Officers and they have done an outstanding job preparing new officers for their careers. In addition to his normal patrol duties, Corporal Carroll serves as a POST Instructor for ATV, ALERRT, Environmental Law and teaches during the academy. He has also served as a firearms instructor, CTTF, and Honor Guard member. Corporal Robinson has served as a POST Instructor for ATV, Wildlife law and a CIRT Investigator. Both officers have been involved with collateral duties for many years and seek ways to share experience and knowledge with new officers.



## Region VI- Brunswick



Region VI is comprised of 19 counties divided into 5 work sections. Each section stays very busy from working hunting and fishing to the Commercial Fishing industry. Below is a small portion of the good work Region VI Game Warden's do.

### **Brantley, Pierce, Wayne, Long**

Seven groups of night hunters were apprehended throughout the year in the section which had over 23 different night hunting complaints. While investigating one of these complaints Cpl John Evans conducted a night hunting detail at Oak Island Estates in Wayne County, catching a night hunter who killed at least 5 deer and shot a house and A/C unit. After a weeklong investigation, including staking out at night and early morning with assistance from other work sections, interviewing

homeowners in the subdivision and reviewing home camera systems, the subject was finally apprehended and charged with over 16 different violations.



On November 18, 2023, Cpl John Evans was patrolling for duck hunting activity and encountered a baited duck shoot with six hunters. 15 wood ducks and an 8-point deer were confiscated and donated to a needy family.



### **Chatham, Bryan, Liberty**

On 11/3/2023 Game Warden Douglas Chambers was checking for illegal night hunting activity at the University of Georgia Skidaway Institute of Oceanography campus, in Chatham County. Chambers observed a vehicle using a spotlight to shine into a field next to the campus and the woods near the campus. Chambers located the two males from the truck, walking in the woods, with a flashlight searching for a deer they shot at, from their vehicle, while it was sitting



in the roadway. Chambers located their .22 caliber rifle which they hid in the woods when Chambers approached them. Both males were issued citations for hunting from a vehicle, hunting deer at night, and hunting big game from a public road.



On January 24th, 2024, at 1714 Corporal Barry Britt received a report of commercial oyster cages being placed in salt waters of the state in an unauthorized location. Upon investigation, it was confirmed that commercial oyster cages were being kept at a private dock in an unauthorized location which is in violation of the shellfish mariculture permit law. Approximately 1.5 bushels of oysters were confiscated and turned over to Coastal Resources Division for testing. All cages were removed from the unauthorized location and violations were documented.



### **Camden, Glynn, McIntosh**

On 5/2/2024, while working a trawling complaint offshore Sapelo Island, Game Warden Lucas Barnard and Corporal Jay Bright spotted a shrimp trawler that was actively dragging in closed waters. The trawler was approximately 2.46 miles off Sapelo Island. GW Barnard and Cpl. Bright stopped the trawler and made them bring their nets up. GW Barnard and Cpl. Bright followed the trawler into Doboy Sound, where Game Wardens boarded the trawler. 553 pounds of shrimp were seized from the trawler and all crew members were issued citations for using power drawn nets in closed waters.





September 2023, Corporal Jay Bright and Game Warden Errol Hall both received complaints of corn being put out on Ceylon WMA in two separate locations. Bright and Hall put up trail cameras on the baited sites in hopes to be notified when the subject returned. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, Corporal Bright received a picture via his trail camera of a subject going to the baited stand. When Corporal Bright approached the subject, he noticed there was a 50-pound bag of corn on the ground under the individuals tree stand as well as corn spread on the ground from a feeder. After talking with the subject, Bright determined that the subject's brother was hunting in the other baited stand located by Hall. Both subjects were cited for hunting big game over bait and placing bait on a wildlife management area.

### **Berrien, Cook, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes**

During the 2023/2024 deer season, Game Warden Aaron Powell received information about a trophy deer that had been killed illegally in Cook County. The landowners found the dead deer in a peanut field after hearing that the poachers had been asking for help in locating the illegally killed deer due to its size. Game Warden Powell received information from concerned citizens about the comments they had seen on social media regarding the incident which helped him identify the possible suspects. Over the next few weeks, Game Warden Powell executed multiple search warrants and conducted multiple interviews regarding the illegally killed deer. At the conclusion of the investigation, three subjects were charged with Hunting Deer at Night, Hunting from a Public Road and Hunting from a Vehicle.



In December of 2023, Corporal Johnny Robinette was working morning duck hunting activity in Berrien County. After hearing gunshots coming from a nearby pond, Corporal Robinette was able to locate the area that was being hunted. The subjects hunting the pond had hidden their vehicles to avoid being located and the pond was also found to be baited with corn. Each subject was charged with Hunting Ducks over Bait. Several weeks later, Corporal Robinette was working morning duck hunting during the week in the same area. Once again, he heard gunshots coming from the area of the baited pond that was previously located. The subjects again tried hiding their vehicles in a different location to avoid being apprehended and the pond was found to still be baited. Each subject hunting the pond was charged for Hunting Ducks over Bait for a second time. Corporal Johnny Robinette was selected as the Region VI Rocky Wainright Waterfowl Officer of the Year



### **Ware, Charlton, Clinch, Atkinson**

On September 28, 2023, Corporal Sam Williams, Corporal Mark Pool and Game Warden Erin Potts obtained information of a possible illegally killed bear. Game Wardens responded to the area and located a subject skinning a bear. While speaking with him, they were able to determine where the bear was killed. Officers responded to the kill site and located peanut butter smeared on several trees and fresh blood. The subject was charged for hunting bear over bait. The bear was seized and donated to a local family.



On September 04, 2023, Corporal Mark Pool, Cpl. Sam Williams, and Game Warden Erin Potts located several active shoots in Ware County. Two fields were found to be baited resulting in 22 hunters being charged for hunting over bait. Game Wardens seized over 100 doves that were donated to a family in need.



Game Warden Erin Potts received information related to a subject hunting after his privileges were suspended for two years beginning December 2023. GW Potts responded to the area and located the subject in a stand on the back side of a field. As GW Potts approached the subject, he quickly removed his orange vest and exited the stand. The subject ran on foot through the woods. Sgt. Jason Shipes, Cpl. Sam Williams, and DOC K-9 responded to assist in the search for the subject. The subject's firearm was located under a downed tree, and he was located over half a mile away from his stand. The hunter was arrested, charged with hunting after suspension of privileges, and obstruction.

## **Investigative Unit**

The Investigative Unit (IU) is comprised of three full-time investigators, two detached investigators and one Intelligence Analyst. They are responsible for covert and overt investigations, the Intelligence Unit, the Critical Incident Reconstruction Team, the SONAR Unit, the Marine Theft Unit, and the Drone Unit. They also provide investigation assistance to the Special Permit Unit. The primary function of the Unit is to provide field game wardens with investigative support and information sharing on a statewide level. The Unit regularly utilizes cell phone mapping (ZetX), social media search warrants (PENLINK), Cell phone downloads (CELBRITE) and Google Geo-fence search warrants. This technology is requested and used daily not only by Georgia Game Wardens but also by state and Federal prosecutors, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and countless police and sheriff's departments. Through this assistance, the Investigative Unit and the Department have strengthened working relationships with other law enforcement agencies throughout the Nation - benefiting Georgia law enforcement and more importantly, the citizens we serve.

### **Covert Investigations**

The Investigative Unit is responsible for undercover investigations which are used when traditional enforcement methods would be problematic or unsuccessful. Last year, the Investigative Unit conducted and managed 651 investigations and calls for assistance from the field and from other agencies (both in and out-of-state). These investigations were comprised of intelligence gathering, buy/bust and both short and long-term investigations. The focus of many of these investigations included the sale or possession of wildlife and wild animals. These violations are difficult to address without the aid of undercover officers.

### **Critical Incident Reconstruction Team (CIRT)**

Georgia has 15 CIRT investigators assigned throughout the state. CIRT investigates fatality and serious injury boating, hunting, and state-owned land incidents. Each investigator receives specialized training in investigating and presenting these cases. Last year, CIRT was activated to investigate seven fatality boating and hunting incidents.

### **SONAR Unit**

The SONAR unit consists of 32 Game Wardens that are responsible for finding/recovering victims of fatality boating incidents and drowning victims, as well as evidence recovery. SONAR operators are trained in the use of side scan, down scan, sector scan sonars as well as remote operated vessels (ROV). The SONAR unit averages 40 deployments a year.

### **Marine Theft Unit (MTU)**

The primary function of the MTU is to assist law enforcement officers in the field. The MTU conducts computer database and offline searches, hidden hull identification number location



assistance and assists with locating and recovering stolen vessels. The MTU also serves as the point of contact for customers, local law enforcement and court systems related to the stolen vessels. Last year the MTU received 275 abandoned vessel/stolen boat requests from the public and field. MTU recovered eight stolen vessels in 2023.

### **DRONE Unit**

Georgia has three certified DRONE operators and two DRONES. The Drone Unit assists CIRT in the reconstruction of vessel incidents, SONAR in the recovery of drowning victims and field game wardens with search and rescues missions.

## **Special Permits Unit**

The Special Permits Unit has had a busy but extremely productive year during FY 2024. During this period Lt. Mark Patterson retired creating the vacancy now filled by Lt. Bubba Stanford. The other member of the SPU team is Mrs. Jamie Hawkins, who has been in her current role for over 11 years. What follows is a brief description of the activities of Special Permits during this past fiscal year.

The Georgia DNR Law Enforcement Division, Special Permits Unit issued and maintained 2,645 permits and collected approximately \$70,805.00 in generated fees, for the following:

- Anchoring Permits – Long Term
- Aquaculture Registration
- Alligator Farm License
- Commercial Fox Hunting Preserve License (Fox Pen)
- Commercial Turtle Farm Permit
- Dog Deer Permit
- Falconry
- Fee Exempt Wild Animal License
- Fee Exempt Wildlife Exhibition License
- Film Production Wildlife Permit
- Import /Exports Permit
- Nuisance Wildlife Control Government Agency Permit
- Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permit
- Scientific Collecting Permit
- Wild Animal Regulated Fish License
- Wild Animal License
- Wild Animal Reptile Registration
- Wildlife Exhibition License
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit

## K-9 Unit



The Division continues to use K-9s to enhance patrol efforts by Game Wardens and to provide assistance to other agencies for man tracking and article searches. The Unit added two new dogs during 2024. Cpl. Keith Page with K-9 Kamo went through the K-9 Academy from February to May, and GWFC Jack Thain with K-9 Smoke went through the K-9 Academy from June to September. All of the GA DNR K-9s have had absolutely no training when they are imported in from Europe. The dogs are completely trained from the ground up during the academy in man tracking, evidence recovery, detection, obedience, and apprehension, and are certified officers when they graduate.



GWFC Thain and K-9 Smoke



Cpl. Page and K-9 Kamo

### FY2024 K-9/Handler Teams

**Sgt. Brooks Varnell and K-9 Taz**

**Sgt. Greg Wade and K-9 Cuff**

**Cpl. Eric Isom and K-9 Bo**

**Cpl. Keith Page and K-9 Kamo**

**Cpl. Tyler Lewis and K-9 Axel**

**GWFC Jack Thain and K-9 Smoke**

**GWFC Bobby Sanders and K-9 Creed**

**GWFC Jared Wood and K-9 Judge**

## Training Unit

### 38<sup>th</sup> Game Warden Academy



The 38<sup>th</sup> Game Warden Academy began on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, Georgia. Twenty cadets, who recently completed the 11-week Georgia POST Mandate course, and 1 cadet with prior POST certification began training. Five cadets voluntarily withdrew during the 15-week DNR course, and one cadet was removed from the academy due to an injury but will return with the 39<sup>th</sup> class in January 2025. The remaining fifteen cadets successfully completed training and graduated from the DNR Academy on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The recent graduates are

currently in the field working on completing their field training requirements.

### In-Service Training

Summer of 2023 saw the remainder of field staff transition from carrying the X2 to the Taser 7. At the same time, new firearms and optics were purchased. Firearms instructors attended training and then developed a 2-day firearms optic transition course that was delivered to all Game Wardens across the state during annual qualification in September. The Special Operations Group (SOG) had multiday training in the fall and spring focused on ATVs and mantracking. Between November and February, 101 Game Wardens were trained in the use of gas masks in response to CS gas exposure which completes that training for the whole Division.

Winter and spring remained busy. All Game Wardens attended regional Narcan refreshers. New field training documentation software was developed, and all field training officers and supervisors were oriented to the program, while 14 new field training officers (FTOs) were certified. The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) continued their professional development in court preparation. Twenty-one Game Wardens attended Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) training. In March, all Game Wardens attended 2-day in-service training comprised of a day of firearms and a day of defensive tactics. Members of the sonar team were educated in the use of a new remote operated vehicle (ROV) that is utilized in recovery efforts. All corporals and sergeants attended Succession Training which is a new initiative intended to build leadership skills in supervisors and supervisors to be. Lastly, two new K9s were added to the ranks. One has completed the 3-month academy, and one is currently in training.

### Training Academy Staff



*L-R: Captain Mitch Oliver, Debra Hollar, Joe Talaber*



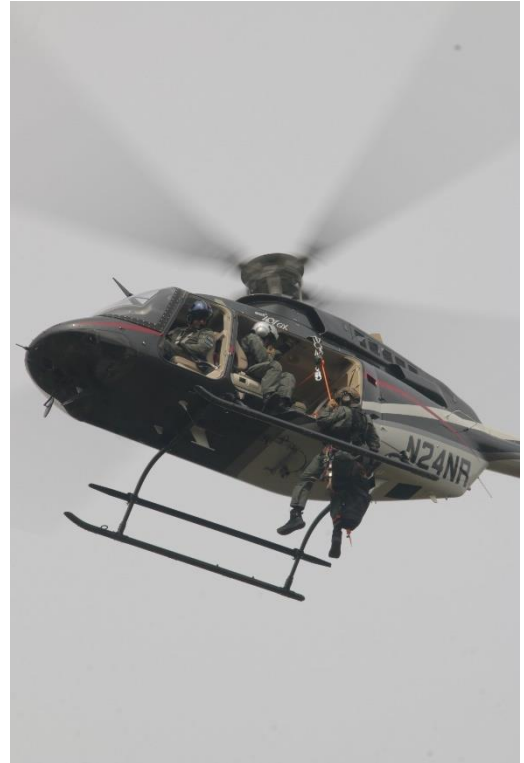
## Special Operations Group (SOG)

The LED Special Operations Group (SOG) was busy with multiple training events throughout the year. SOG members attended SWAT School, ATV, and firearms training at GPSTC. The group has also worked several days and nights patrolling the Atlanta Police Department's new training facility, as it undergoes construction. It has become a source of contention and a place with protests and riots. SOG's role at the facility was to clear wooded areas, preserve the perimeter fence, and maintain security utilizing ATVs, night vision goggles, and thermal vision. Additionally, SOG members trained with K-9 Officers in a tracking role player suspects through the mountains.



## Aviation Unit

The LED Aviation Support Unit provides service to all DNR Divisions and other state agencies utilizing three Bell 407GX/GXi helicopters. The Aviation Unit flew approximately 500 hours in support of the Division's Game Wardens as they conducted their core mission of protecting the states waterways and woodland areas. This consisted of flying support throughout the hunting season from early fall through early spring. Game Wardens were flown on county surveys looking for baited food plots, duck ponds and illegal shrimping along the Georgia coast. Flight support was also provided for Operation Dry Water, night deer poaching/spotlighting patrols, and searches for missing persons and drowning victims across the state. The Wildlife Resource Division (WRD) received aviation support during surveys of Bald Eagles, Kestrel, Sandhill Cranes, Red Knots, and waterfowl. Capt. Jaye Bridwell flew these same flights along the Georgia coast in addition to surveys for sea turtles, dolphins, and the tagging of manatee. Night missions for illegal shrimping activity were also conducted along the coastline, as well as night law enforcement missions in north Georgia, utilizing the helicopter mounted FLIR system. In addition to the WRD surveys, LT's Buller and Miller flew multiple missions assisting the Game Management Section and the Wildlife Conservation Section with prescribed burns on the State WMA's during the late winter months of January through March 2024. Additionally, the Aviation Unit remained on standby for inclement weather and disaster response. This year, the Aviation Unit responded to and conducted rescue extractions of multiple victims at the Tallulah Gorge State Park and remained active in training several new Game Warden tactical flight officers. Economic development flights continued in several areas throughout the state in support of the Governor's Office and the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The unit welcomed a new Pilot this year (LT Miller) who completed POST Certification, and Bell Training Academy. The Aviation Unit also assisted other State and Federal law enforcement agencies utilizing the three Bell 407 Helicopters in support of various missions throughout the state.



## Honor Guard

### Honor Guard Members 2023-2024

LED HQ – Maj. Bob Holley

Honor Guard Commander – Capt. Derek Dillard

Deputy Commander – Sgt. Dan Schay

Region 1 – Cpl. Russell Epps, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Philip Stout

Region 2 – Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Stetson Stevens, GWFC Jeffery Turner

Region 3 – Cpl. Ben Payne, Cpl. Westin Rabon, GWFC Lamar Burns

Region 4 – Cpl. KP Boatright, GWFC Luke Rabun

Region 5 – Cpl. Scott Carroll, Cpl. Dean Gibson,

Region 6 – Sgt. Tim Morris, Cpl. Daniel North, GWFC Zack Griffis

Honor Guard Details:

- August 19, 2023 – Presentation of Colors for the DNR LED Awards Banquet at Indian Springs State Park. Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Daniel North and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the detail.
- October 25, 2023 – Funeral detail for retired Game Warden Sgt. Woody Woodson in Madison, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Westin Rabon and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the visitation and funeral where they folded and presented the US flag to his family.
- November 29, 2023 – Funeral detail for Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter in Plains, Georgia. Cpl. Scott Carroll, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. Westin Rabon and GWFC Luke Rabon participated in the funeral with the GSP Honor Guard.
- January 5, 2024 – Memorial Service for Spalding County Deputy Sgt. Marc “Mac” McIntyre in Griffin, Georgia. Cpl. Brock Hoyt and Cpl. Russell Epps represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- February 9, 2024 – Funeral detail for GSP Trooper Jimmy Cenescar in Atlanta, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Philip Stout, Cpl. Stetson Stevens, Cpl. Westin Rabon, GWFC Jeffery Turner and GWFC Zack Griffis represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- February 27, 2024 – Funeral detail for GSP Trooper Chase Redner in Canton, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Ben Payne, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. Westin Rabon, GWFC Jeffery Turner, GWFC Lamar Burns and GWFC Luke Rabun represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- March 6, 2024 – Funeral visitation for retired Game Warden Lt. W.L. “Dub” Lovell Sr. in Clarkesville, Georgia. Cpl. Philip Stout and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the visitation detail.
- March 7, 2024 – Funeral detail for retired Game Warden Lt. W.L. ‘Dub’ Lovell Sr. in Clarkesville, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Stetson Stevens and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the detail and presented the State flag to his family.
- March 27, 2024 – Presentation of Colors for the Southeast Hunter Ed./Federal Aid Administrators meeting in Thomasville, Georgia. Sgt. Tim Morris, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Daniel North and GWFC Luke Rabun participated in the detail.
- April 6, 2024 – Memorial Service for retired Game Warden Sgt. Terry Sharpe in Rochelle, Georgia. Cpl. Daniel North and Cpl. KP Boatright presented the State flag to his family.
- April 10, 2024 – Funeral detail for DNR board member Kevin “Catfish” Jackson in Savannah, Georgia and graveside service in Athens, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Scott Carroll, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Russell Epps, Cpl. Westin Rabon, GWFC Jeffery Turner and GWFC Lamar Burns folded and presented the State flag to his family.



- April 24-25, 2024 - Annual Honor Guard training at Indian Springs State Park and GPSTC in Forsyth, Georgia.
- April 26, 2024 – Presentation of Colors for the DNR GWA Graduation Ceremony at GPSTC in Forsyth, Georgia. Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Westin Rabon and GWFC Zack Griffis presented the Colors and Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. Ben Payne, Cpl. Russell Epps also participated in the ceremony.
- May 7, 2024 – Memorial Service at FLETC in Brunswick, Georgia. Sgt. Tim Morris represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- June 27, 2024 – Visitation and funeral detail for retired WRD Hatchery Superintendent of McDuffie PFA JoAnn Henderson in Thomson, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay and GWFC Lamar Burns participated in the detail.

## Chaplains

The 14 members of the DNR Law Enforcement Division Chaplain Corps currently serve four of the state’s seven Regions. The DNR Chaplains are non-sworn volunteers who support the mission of DNR in providing a source of strength to sworn and non-sworn members of the Agency, their families, and the community. The program supports employees in the handling of crisis situations, comforts victims and their families when incidents occur, and provides counseling and other ministerial functions that may be needed.



### DNR Chaplains

#### Region I

Rev. Brandon Brooks  
Rev. Danny Cochran  
Rev. Tac Coley  
Dr. Rudy Ross

#### Region II

Rev. Michael Burgamy

#### Region III

Dr. Marc Crandlemire  
Rev. John Haney  
Dr. Rick Lanford  
Rev. Joel Vinson, Sr.

#### Region IV

Rev. Chip Strickland  
Rev. Stacy Phillips

#### Region V

Rev. Daryl Brown

#### Region VI

Rev. Charles Houston, Jr.  
Rev. Gregory Loskoski

## Promotions:

Cpl. Kevin Goss  
 Cpl. Ethan Franklin  
 Cpl. Luke Rabun  
 Cpl. Drew Beverly  
 Cpl. Blake Chafin  
 GW 2 Clay Baker  
 GW 2 Joe Ballard  
 GW 2 Dylan Bennett  
 GW 2 Matthew Bramblett  
 GW 2 Jackson Erwin  
 GW 2 Chase Fleming  
 GW 2 Sterling Gibson  
 GW 2 Ben Hawkins  
 GW 2 Jaron Hollinshead  
 GW 2 Justin Jackson  
 GW 2 Thomas Ledford  
 GW 2 Mason Miller  
 GW 2 Isaac Roberson  
 GW 2 Tanner Rundle  
 GW 2 James Ubbink  
 Col. Mike England  
 Lt. Colonel James McLaughlin  
 GWFC 1 Hunter Rush  
 Capt. Al Greer  
 GW 2 Joe Thompson  
 Sgt. Tim Morris  
 Lt. Bubba Stanford  
 GWFC 1 Adam Kimbrough  
 GWFC 1 Skyler Redmond  
 GWFC 1 Connor Moon  
 GWFC 1 Lucas Barnard  
 GWFC 1 Errol Hall  
 GWFC 1 Matthew Thompson  
 GWFC 2 Kyle Faulknor  
 GWFC 2 Andrew Crider  
 GWFC 2 Savannah Miller  
 GWFC 2 Jard Wood  
 GWFC 2 Erin Paulk  
 GWFC 2 Levi Thompson  
 GWFC 2 Evan Nobles  
 GWFC 2 Greg Castelli  
 GWFC 2 Aaron Powell  
 GWFC 2 Quintin Reed  
 Sgt. Ricky Boles  
 Sgt. Patrick Gibbs  
 Lt. Adam Loudermilk  
 Maj. Doyte Chaffin  
 Cpl. KP Boatright  
 Cpl. Doug Chambers  
 Sgt. Dan Schay  
 Capt. Sam O'Neal  
 Lt. Eddie Tompkins  
 Cpl. Taylor Bingham  
 Cpl. Westin Rabon  
 Sgt. David Jones

## Retirements:

Lt. Jamie Allen  
 GWFC Randell Meeks  
 Sgt. Mark Carson  
 Lt. Judd Smith  
 Lt. Mark Patterson  
 GWFC 2 Niki Spencer  
 Maj. Stephen Adams  
 Lt. Brian Adams  
 Cpl. Tim Hutto

Activity Summary	FY2024
Hunter Ed Hours	1,560
I&E Hours	5,310
Boating Safety Hours	1,165
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>8,035</b>
Land & Water SAR Hours	4,865
Hunting Incidents	30
Boating Incidents	120
Drownings	58
BUIs	357
Hunting License Checks	27,436
Fishing License Checks	34,909
Total License Checks	62,345
Boat Checks	21,606
Boating Contacts	7,939
Hunting Contacts	6,770
Fishing Contacts	4,809
Environmental Contacts	458
<b>Total Contacts</b>	<b>19,976</b>





# GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION



**JAMES HIRAM WALLER**  
**JAMES EDWARD MORTON**  
**ASA EDWIN THORNTON**  
**CHARLES C. MERCER**  
**ROCKY D. WAINWRIGHT**

**ROBERT CLAYTON SIZEMORE**  
**LONNIE F. BOGGUS**  
**WILLIAM EARL HOBBS**  
**WILLIAM LEE BRYANT**  
**STANLEY CURTIS ELROD**



IN MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS  
WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE  
PROTECTING THE PEOPLE AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES OF GEORGIA





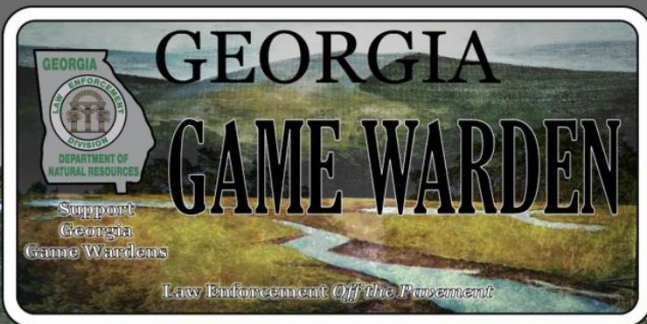
*“Support Georgia Game Wardens  
with the purchase of a specialty  
license plate for your vehicle. I did.”*



**Michael Waddell  
Bone Collector  
The Outdoor Channel**



*Visit [www.gadnrle.org](http://www.gadnrle.org) for more information*



**Get your Georgia DNR  
Law Enforcement license  
plate today!**



**Support those who protect our natural resources!**