



# GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Commissioner  
Walter Rabon

Director  
Colonel Mike England



Law Enforcement Division  
FY 2025 Annual Report

# Headquarters



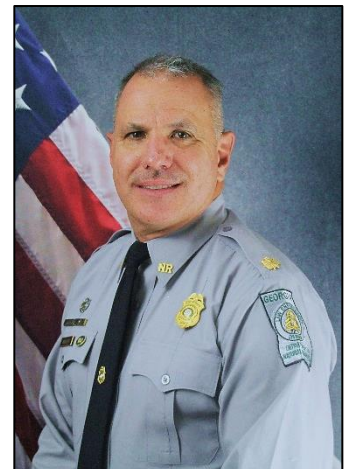
**Colonel Mike England,  
Director**



**Lt. Colonel James McLaughlin,  
Asst. Director**



**Major Doyte Chaffin**



**Major Bob Holley**

# Headquarters Support Staff



**Lt. Adam Loudermilk**



**Lt. Wanda Roberts**



**Lt. Bubba Stanford**



**Marsha Brown**



**Jamie Hawkins**



**Mark McKinnon**



**Ashley Moon**



**Kathy Parkman**



**Taye Pierce**



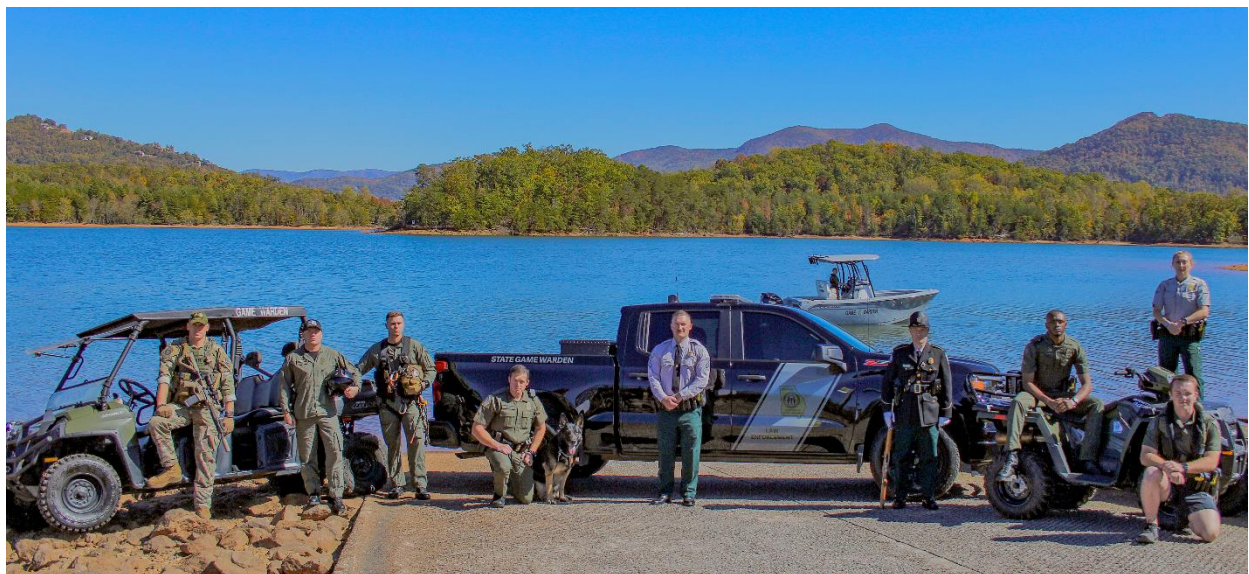
**Dewayna Pullum**



**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**

During FY2025, the Law Enforcement Division acquired new vehicles and equipment, utilizing funding from various sources, to enhance officer safety and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Division.

- a. Chevrolet Z71 pickups with new graphics and lightbars, and with Southern Linc/Harris Radios installed. The radio system provides seamless radio communication statewide for all officers.
- b. OD green field uniforms were issued to all sworn personnel.
- c. Aimpoint Optics were installed on all pistols and rifles for department owned firearms.
- d. Vortex optics, KGM suppressors, and a Cerakote finish were added to all Special Operations Group rifles.
- e. Automated External Defibrillators (AED) were issued to all sworn personnel.
- f. Two new Remote Operated Vessels (ROV) were acquired for search and recovery operations and for evidence searches on bodies of water.
- g. Two Skydio drones were acquired for search and rescue operations and manhunts.
- h. Seven Starlink Satellite Internet Systems, one for each region and one for HQ, were acquired to provide portable, high-speed internet service for field operations, particularly in low cell service areas.
- i. Upgraded CADs have been issued to game wardens statewide.
- j. The Division acquired a Live Scan fingerprint system for new hire background checks and GCIC security & compliance.
- k. Aviation - FLIR integration to one aircraft; new paint scheme on all aircraft; upgrades to SAR program with Vacuum Spine Board and standardized equipment baggage; Axnis communication equipment for rescues; new pilot helmets to replace aging equipment.
- l. Training - Defensive Tactics training equipment; Use of Force scenario training equipment; quick detach systems for training holsters.

## **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. In FY25, the Division has partnered with the **Hunt Regs App** to provide an easy, free, and effective way for citizens to report illegal hunting and fishing activities. It streamlines the reporting process by providing an interactive form where users can submit violations with just a few taps on their mobile devices or computers.

## **OTHER SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

### **JEA Patrols**

The Joint Enforcement Agreement #24 between Georgia DNR and NOAA office of Law Enforcement called for GADNR enforcement personnel to provide a total of 1279 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 242-man hours and 107 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 264-man hours and 114 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 162-man hours and 54 hours of at-sea vessel patrols dedicated to Priority 3. Execution Priority 4 was Marine Mammal Right Whale. There were 198-man hours and 66 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 6 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 90,000 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 9,000 followers, and a YouTube Channel with multiple safety-related videos that has over 1,400 subscribers.

## Previous Game Wardens of the Year

William Powell	1980	Mike Barr	2003
W.D. Hill, Jr.	1981	Harry E. Akins	2004
Michael Bone	1982	Eric Brown	2005
William Vickers	1983	John Murphy	2006
Dan Parrish	1984	Shane Sartor	2007
Ronald Bailey	1985	Mike Binion	2008
Ralph Sheppard	1986	Brian Hobbins	2009
Roger D. Garrison	1987	Cindy Miller	2010
James McDaniel	1988	Timothy Butler	2011
Doug Lewis	1989	Jason Roberson	2012
Terry West	1990	David Webb	2013
W. Howard Hensley, Jr.	1991	Greg Wade	2014
Dennis Aderholt	1992	Casey Jones	2015
Bill Bunch	1993	Eddie Tompkins	2016
Arvid Edwards	1994	Brian Adams	2017
Mitchell H. Yeargin	1995	Cody Jones	2018
Jeff Weaver	1996	Quinn Fogle	2019
Mike Commander	1997	Ryan Locke	2020
Phillip Scott	1998	John Rhodes	2021
Stanley Elrod	1999	Brock Hoyt	2022
Rick Sellars	2000	Tyler Lewis	2023
David Ruddell	2001	Cory Bohannon	2024
Derek Dillard	2002		



## **Region 1 – Acworth**

Region One consist of the northwestern part of Georgia and includes 28 counties that stretch from Lake West Point, through Atlanta and then to the Tennessee state line. The Region 1 Office is located at Red Top Mountain State Park on Lake Allatoona. Captain Casey Jones is the Region Supervisor and was recently appointed to this position in April. Captain Jones is a 25-year veteran of DNR and is from Murray County. Sergeant Daniel Gray is the Administrative Sergeant and was promoted to his position in October. Our Administrative Assistant III is Joyce Holland and Sherry Rollins fills the Administrative Assistant 1 position. March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, the Region office finished a six-month renovation project. Now the Region 1 Office is shared with the Region 1 State Parks staff.

There are three major reservoirs in Region One, Carters Lake, West Point Lake and Allatoona Lake. Region One has six rivers, 13 state parks and historic sites, 24 wildlife management areas, one public fishing Area and the Chattahoochee National Forest which is over 100,000 acres and expands over 6 counties in our region. The region currently has 34 Post Certified Game Wardens. Below is just a small portion of the excellent work our game wardens have done in Region One over the past year!

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, Murray – GW Ryan Thomas, Fort Mt. SP / Murray – GW Hunter Rush, Pickens – GW Hays Pickett, Whitfield – GW David Wright (currently deteched the DNR Investigative Unit), and supervisor Sgt. James Keener. The section covers a vast area of both state owned or controlled properties as well as large expanses of National Forest Lands. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the section include Rich Mt., Cartecay Tract, Cohutta, Coosawattee, Carter’s Lake , Conasauga River, John’s Mt., and McEntire VPA. Wardens also patrol the section’s main body of water, Carter’s Lake, as well as many other smaller impoundments, rivers, and creeks. State Parks and Historic Sites in the section include Fort Mt., Chief Vann House, New Echota, and Resaca Battlefield. Game Warden Hays Pickett is a recent addition to the work section. He graduated from the Game Warden Academy on April 25<sup>th</sup> and successfully completed the field training program. GW Pickett is now assigned to Pickens County. The work section hosted the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association (NAWEOA) Officer Exchange in 2025. NAWEOA selects an officer from Canada to come to the United States and work in the state if their selection.

Sgt. Ben Beetlestone from British Columbia Canada was selected and chose Georgia. Sgt. Beetlestone worked with sections in Region 1, Region 5, and Region 6. He was able to visit LED Headquarters as well.



Multiple investigations have occurred throughout the year in the work section. Cpl. Kalem Burns and GW Ryan Thomas were called to investigate a group of hunters found recovering a deer on another property that led to 19 violations on two suspects including hunting without permission, hunting with no license, tagging violations, and interfering with a Game Wardens Duties.

GW Hunter Rush had an amazing turkey season as he patrolled land in all 6 counties. GW Rush caught a group of poachers for the second year in a row baiting turkey in Murray County. GW Rush charged 4 suspects with 7 charges related to illegally hunting turkeys and confiscated a gobbler.



The work section throughout the year attends career days at local schools. GW Travis Shrader and Cpl. Shawn Elmore spoke about the Game Warden job at Westwood Elementary School.



Victim recovered from Jacks River Falls with Cpl. Burns. The work section was involved in numerous search and rescues this year. Three separate search and rescues occurred on Cohutta WMA. One was a lost hunter who was successfully located after three days of searching unharmed. Another search and rescue occurred when a tree fell on two campers killing one and injuring the other requiring DNR aviation extraction. Lastly, a search and rescue occurred after a hiker near Jack River Fall's sustained a broken leg approximately 3 miles from the nearest road and had to be extracted by DNR aviation.

## Allatoona Section.

During the first week of turkey season Cpl. Tyler Lewis utilized his K-9 “Axel” to locate a baited area on private property where a turkey had been killed. The area had a cell camera in place. The Allatoona Lake work section Wardens began checking the area for the next several weeks. After there was no success locating a hunter in the area, a search warrant was obtained for the cell camera. The Wardens were able to identify two male hunters on camera. One male was confirmed to be a convicted felon. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, one of the hunters was issued citations in Hancock County by Wardens Taylor Bingham and Westin Rabon for hunting without license and big game license. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Captain Casey Jones, Sgt. Byron Young, Cpl. Tyler Lewis, Wardens Amy King, Steven Martinez, and Ryan Thomas served an arrest and search on the residence of the convicted felon. The males were charged with hunting without permission, hunting big game over bait, one male was charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. A female on scene was also charged with possession of methamphetamine. During the search of the residence the Wardens found evidence of several gobblers that had been killed in the past.



On October 25<sup>th</sup>, Game Warden Amy King located a baited blind on Georgia Power property at Plant Bowen. The following day Game Wardens King and Steven Martinez located a hunter with a crossbow in the blind. The male was found to be in possession of methamphetamine and had an active arrest warrant. The hunter was charges with hunting without permission, hunting big game over bait, hunting without big game and hunting license. He was also charged with VGSCA (possession of methamphetamine).

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, Game Wardens Cpl. Tyler Lewis and Steven Martinez were patrolling Red Top Mountain State Park. The Wardens located two suspicious persons parked at a playground parking lot. After further investigation, a probable cause search of the vehicle yielded multiple controlled substances and drug paraphernalia. The individual in possession of the drugs was arrested and transported to the Bartow County Jail.

## Atlanta Section

The Atlanta Work Section consists of Game Warden First Class Ryan Shorter, Game Warden First Class Joe Ballard, Corporal Zack Hardy, Game Warden First Class Chandler Traylor, and Corporal Brock Hoyt. The section covers Fulton, Douglas, Carroll, Coweta, Paulding, and Haralson Counties. Over the past year, the section has made solid cases and reached several notable milestones. Sgt. Eric Brown has recently retired after a commendable 27 years of service. GWFC Ballard and GWFC Traylor have advanced to the Game Warden First Class position, GWFC

Shorter and GWFC Traylor have completed NASBLA's Boat Accident Reconstruction, and GWFC Ballard has completed Drone Operator Training. GWFC Traylor has won the 2024 Region 1 NWTF Award and Cpl. Hoyt was recognized for the International Safari Club Award.

The section has been very dedicated to field work, incident response, and public outreach. Over the past year officers have worked nine (9) drownings/body recoveries, 56 information and education events, 220 State Park/Historic Site patrols, and 410 WMA/VPA patrols. The results from state property enforcement patrols have been tremendous. There have been over 100 violator contacts for illegal ATV use and alcohol consumption on state lands, 13 cases of hunting on a closed WMA, a DUI on Sweetwater Creek State Park, two suspects apprehended for growing 19 pounds of marijuana on Tallapoosa VPA, and a pursuit that ended in the arrest of a well-known DNR habitual violator. Other notable activity includes six (6) over the limit hunting cases, 41 illegal trout bait/equipment cases, 57 hunting without permissions, 93 fishing without permissions, and 6 baited dove fields (3 apprehended, 3 flagged). GWFC Joe Ballard also worked a substantial investigation on two Coweta County subjects. The case details included seven search warrants on cellphones and social media profiles. The case will yield over 40 violator contacts for numerous hunting without permissions', hunting over bait, license violations, and failure to record harvests.



**West Point Lake Section** SGT Keith Waddell's Work Section: L to R: SGT Keith Waddell, GW Bo Townsend, GW Mason Miller, CPL Austin Biggers, GW Matthew Bramblett, CPL Russell Epps, and GW Courtney Moore

The West Point Lake section includes the counties of Meriwether, Troup, Heard, Pike, Fayette, Spalding, Henry, and Clayton. Game Wardens assigned to this unit patrol West Point Lake, as well as portions of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. State-owned properties within the area include three Wildlife Management Areas—Joe Kurz WMA, Sprewell Bluff WMA, and West Point

WMA—along with the Little White House Historic Site. Courtney Moore began her career as a Game Warden assigned to Fayette County, joining the section.

Game Wardens in this section remain committed to their mission, recording a total of 1222 cases and warnings. These included 19 Boating Under the Influence (BUI) or BUI Child Endangerment charges, 39 Hunting Without Permission violations, and 80 Hunting Over Bait citations or warnings. Additionally, section members served as POST instructors on 184 occasions, investigated 8 boating incidents, and responded to 5 drownings.

**Spalding County:** Game Warden Bo Townsend executed a search warrant at a residence in Spalding County, including a warrant for the suspect's cellular device. The investigation resulted in nine arrest warrants for various offenses, including two counts of holding game animals without a permit, four counts of keeping wild animals without a permit, unlawful burning of egregious litter, possession of a prescription drug outside its original container, and felony possession of a Schedule II controlled substance. The operation was a collaborative effort involving Game Wardens, the Game Wardens Undercover Unit, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), Spalding County Animal Control, and the Spalding County Sheriff's Office.



**Pike County:** Game Warden Mason Miller received a report of an individual hunting deer out of season, prior to the opening of archery season. Through a thorough investigation, GW Miller gathered sufficient evidence to obtain a search warrant for the suspect's property. The search led to the discovery of a buck that had been illegally harvested. The individual was subsequently charged with hunting deer out of season. When questioned, the suspect stated he was trying to harvest his target buck before his brother had the opportunity to hunt it.

### **Rocky Mountain PFA/Coosa River Section.**

Sgt. Ben Cunningham's work section consists of Polk, Floyd, Chattooga, Walker, and Dade Counties. State and Federal land in the work section consists of Cloudland Canyon State Park, Sloppy Floyd State Park, Arrowhead WMA, Berry College WMA, J.L. Lester WMA, John's Mtn WMA, Otting Tract WMA, Crockford Pigeon Mtn WMA, Paulding Forest WMA, Tallapoosa River WMA, Treat Mtn WMA, Zahnd WMA, Rocky Mtn PFA, and thousands of acres of USFS land.

On November 3, GW Andrew Crider investigated a hunting incident in Chattooga County. The hunter fell from a portable climbing stand but suffered minor injuries to his lower leg. While investigating the hunting incident, it was determined that he was hunting without permission and without the proper licenses. The hunter was charged with the violations. On March 29th GW Andrew Crider investigated two turkeys harvested by non-resident hunters without licenses. With the help of North Carolina Game Wardens, both individuals were charged for taking the turkeys without a license. On April 5<sup>th</sup> GW Andrew Crider had a detail in Floyd County by sending GPS coordinates and property information to Game Wardens working in Floyd County regarding baited turkey blinds. GW Faulknor, GW Roberson, and Cpl. McConkey was able to locate and charge five hunters for hunting turkeys over bait.

On January 26, GW Issac Roberson set up a work section waterfowl detail in Floyd County on the last day of waterfowl season. With the assistance of other game wardens, two subjects were charged with hunting after hours, and one subject was also charged with hunting without a federal duck stamp and hunting without a license.



On April 1, GW Issac Roberson received information from a fisherman at the Lock and Dam Park on the Coosa River about a subject catching and taking a large of fish back to his truck. Roberson was able to locate the truck and the subject. He located several buckets in the truck bed containing white bass. The subject was arrested for being over the creel limit of white bass by thirty-seven fish. On April 29, GW Issac Roberson set up a fishing detail using several other game wardens, along with an undercover unit, to detect subjects catching over the limit of white bass from the Coosa River. Three subjects were arrested for being over the daily creel limit of white bass. The subjects were fifty fish over the limit. A total of one hundred and eleven fish were seized. One subject was additionally charged for non-resident fishing with a resident fishing license.



On April 6, GW Kyle Faulknor responded to an illegal artifact-digging location in Walker County. Three subjects were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing, failure to notify the state archeologist before digging, and excavating/altering/entering the site without written permission. On November 19, GW Roger McConkey responded to a call of a large buck deer being shot from the road in Chattooga County. After the investigation was completed, the suspect was charged with hunting big game from the road, hunting from a vehicle, hunting without permission, hunting without a big game license, hunting without a resident license, violation of reporting and recording requirements for big game animals and birds, and for a child safety restraint violation for allowing a juvenile under the age of eight to ride down the road sitting in the passenger window of the suspect's truck.



On October 31, Cpl. Chad Cox set up a BB Gun Safety Tent at the first Annual Polk County Trick or Treat Event in Cedartown. Hundreds of kids enjoyed shooting at ghost targets and getting a Halloween Treat. On November 3, Cpl. Chad Cox assisted with the Outdoor Beyond Barriers Deer Hunt Event at Carter's Lake. Several of the hunters were able to harvest a deer, and everyone enjoyed the stories told while hunting.

## Region 2 - Gainesville

Region 2 consists of 26 counties supervised by Captain Derek Dillard which runs from the Northeast Georgia Mountains down through Lakes Lanier and Hartwell to below Newton County and over to the Elbert Lincoln County line. The region is made up of five work sections led by Field Sergeants Bart Hendrix, Cody Jones, Jason Roberson, Brooks Varnell and Tim Vickery. The Region Office is operated by Administrative Sergeant Dan Schay, Administrative Assistant 3 Brenda Tanner and Administrative Assistant Tasha Lamb.



*Region 2 Game Wardens: left rear to right front: Cpl. Jared Wood/K-9 Judge, Cpl. Stetson Stevens, GWFC Noah Osborne, Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Ethan Franklin, Cpl. Ryan Locke, GWFC Adam Kimbrough, GWFC Matt Kiracofe, GWFC Joseph Cowart, GWFC Jackson Erwin, Cpl. Matt Johnson, Sgt. Bart Hendrix, Sgt. Jason Roberson, Sgt. Cody Jones, GWFC Mark Stephens, GWFC Taylor Leazer, GWFC Jeffery Turner, Cpl. Brandon Pierce, GWFC TR Dooley, GWFC Jason Harrison, GWFC Phillip Nelson, GWFC Chase Fleming, Cpl. Jonathan Segars, Capt. Derek Dillard, Cpl. Kevin Goss, Sgt. Brooks Varnell/K-9 Taz, Sgt. Tim Vickery. Office Staff: left to right: Brenda Tanner, Tasha Lamb.*

### Northeast Mountain Section

The Northeast Mountain Section of Region 2 is comprised of White, Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, and Franklin Counties. The work section has been full of turnover during the past year. Corporal Anne Wiley and Corporal Joe Hill each retired. Corporal Jonathan Segars transferred into the section, Sgt. Cody Jones transferred out of the section, Sgt. Jason Roberson promoted into the section, and Game Warden Chase Fleming transferred into the section. The section has continued to be very busy and has worked numerous search and rescue missions at Tallulah Gorge State Park. Game Warden First Class Matt Kiracofe serves the department as a Tactical Flight Officer. Along with the entire DNR Aviation team, he has been instrumental in successfully rescuing five injured parties and recovering two deceased individuals from the Gorge floor.



*Sgt. Jason Roberson's work unit: left to right: GWFC Spencer Palmer, GWFC Chase Fleming, GWFC Jackson Erwin, Cpl. Jonathan Segars, GWFC T.R. Dooley, Sgt. Jason Roberson. (GWFC Matt Kiracofe not pictured)*

## **Stephens County**

Game Warden First Class TR Dooley assisted Stephens County with the response to Winter Storm Cora. During his response to the storm, Game Warden Dooley discovered an elderly man who had fallen outside and had been lying on the ground for several hours. When he located the man, it had gotten dark, and the temperature was dropping below freezing for the night. Game Warden Dooley was able to get the large man up off the ground and into his truck with the heater running. He called an ambulance, and the man was transported to the hospital to receive medical care. Game Warden Dooley was nominated for the NAWEA lifesaving award because of his actions during this incident.

## **Rabun County**

In September, Game Wardens Jeffery Turner and Spencer Palmer were able to identify a suspect who was illegally digging Ginseng on U.S. Forest Service property, earlier that day. The suspect was charged with harvesting Ginseng without permission, and the Ginseng was seized.



The Northwest Mountain Section of Region 2 consists of Fannin, Dawson, Lumpkin, Towns, and Union Counties. This work section is responsible for Lake Blue Ridge, Lake Nottely, and Lake Chatuge. It contains 4 State Parks/Historic Sites, 7 WMAs, and approximately 325,000 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest. In addition to the daily Game Warden responsibilities, they also serve the department with several POST instructors, (2 Defensive Tactics instructors, 2 Taser instructors, a Use of Force instructor, an EVOC instructor, an ATV EVOC instructor, and a Water Survival instructor. This section also is comprised of 2 Field Training Officers, a radio tech, a K9 officer, 2 SOG team members, a recruiter, and 2 Honor Guard members.



*Sgt. Cody Jones's work unit: left to right: Sgt. Cody Jones, GW 2 Will Gilstrap, Cpl. Matt Johnson, GWFC 2 Jeffery Turner, GWFC 2 Savannah Miller, Cpl. Jared Wood, K9 Judge.*

*In late September, these Game Wardens responded and spent 340 hours assisting with the Hurricane Helene efforts.*

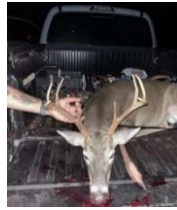
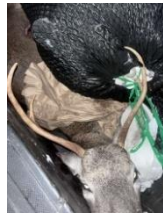


This January, Cpl. Matt Johnson started working an investigation that included executing 4 search warrants, seizing 7 buck deer, identifying 17 deer killed during the '24-'25 deer season, documenting 63 wildlife violations, and issuing 39 arrest warrants. Those violations consisted of multiple counts of Hunting without a License, Hunting without Big Game License, Harvest Record, taking over the season limit, and Theft by taking wildlife.



On April 7<sup>th</sup>, Game Warden Will Gilstrap took out 23 arrest warrants for 2 suspects. The investigation stemmed from a night hunting stop in November in Hall County. The violations included multiple counts of Hunting from a Public Road, Hunting from a Motor Vehicle, Hunting

Deer at Night, Theft by Taking Wildlife, Hunting Without a License, Hunting Without a Big Game License, and Failure to Record Harvest on the 2 suspects.



*Sgt. Bart Hendrix work section: left to right: Sgt. Bart Hendrix, Cpl. Ryan Locke, Cpl. Kevin Goss, GW Jackson Jones, GWFC Adam Kimbrough.*

There were some significant changes in the work section over the past year. Corporal Jonathan Segars, Game Warden Chase Fleming, and Game Warden Will Gilstrap transferred to be at or closer to their home counties. Currently, Game Warden Jackson Jones, Game Warden Adam Kimbrough, Corporal Kevin Goss, Corporal Ryan Locke, and Sergeant Bart Hendrix patrol Lake Lanier, Banks, Forsyth, Hall, and Jackson counties.

Game Warden Jackson Jones completed the Georgia POST Academy and the GA DNR Game Warden Academy. He received the Wildlife Identification Award during the academy for his academic performance during the two-week long wildlife program. He is currently assigned to Hall County and worked in the field training program with CPL Kevin Goss. During this reporting period, GW Jones hit the ground running apprehending four persons for boating under the influence. He has shown an eagerness to learn and will continue to thrive in this fast-paced environment. He has been a welcomed addition to the work section.

Game Warden Adam Kimbrough was selected as the 2025 Georgia Torch Award recipient and the Southeast Regional Torch Award recipient for the NAWEOA. Whether he is on the water stopping boats or in the field checking fishing or hunting licenses, GW Kimbrough continues to be a leader in the section. GW Kimbrough has spent his entire career working in the Lanier section and is currently assigned to Banks County.

Corporal Kevin Goss has spent most his career around Lake Lanier. This past year he transferred back to the Lanier section in February. It has been a great help having a veteran and experienced officer assigned to the area. CPL Goss volunteered and took on the role as Field Training Officer for GW Jackson Jones. He also completed the instructor training for the NASBLA Inland Boat Operator's Course. CPL Goss is currently assigned to Jackson County.

Corporal Ryan Locke has spent his entire career on Lake Lanier. Having only served the Division for nine years now, he brings a wealth of knowledge to section when it comes to detecting hunting violations, investigations of all matters, and boating under the influence detection. He continues to share his knowledge and expertise with all those he works with daily.

Most of the activity in this section continues to be boating enforcement as the officers assigned here raked in over 1600 hours of boating safety enforcement checking approximately 1000 vessels resulting in 66 cases for boating under the influence during this reporting period. This section continues to lead the state with boating under the influence cases. These officers have become efficient at the detection and apprehension of impaired boat operators. They were able to share their collective knowledge with cadets and veteran officers this past season. The Lanier Section hosted officers from across the state to participate in boating safety patrols on Lanier. This proved to be beneficial to the cadets and allowed them a chance to experience the busiest lake in the state.

These counties also provide a tremendous amount hunting activity as well. This past year there was an increase in night deer hunting complaints in the area. The officers worked over 500 hours of night deer hunting patrols. Their efforts resulted in 18 individuals being charged with hunting deer at night. Each member of the work section apprehended an individual or group of hunters in the act of night deer hunting. The most noteworthy cases involved one group of poachers being sought for two years, another group has been the subject of investigations for three years, and another investigation, led by CPL Jonathan Segars, resulted in a high-profile national case being closed with over 300 violations.

### **Lake 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 Richard B. Russell. Also included in the section are Hart County WMA, 5 tracts comprising Elbert County WMA, Broad River WMA in Madison County and Lower Broad River WMA in Elbert County, as well as Corps of Engineers property around both lakes. Members of this work section include Corporal Ethan Franklin (Lake Hartwell Boating Safety), Corporal Brandon Pierce (Hart), GWFC2 Phillip Nelson (Oglethorpe), GWFC2 Mark Stephens (Clarke/Oconee), GWFC2 Joseph Cowart (Madison), GWFC2 Noah Osborne (Elbert), and Sgt. Tim Vickery. Corporal Shane Sartor retired July 1, 2025.



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

## Elbert County

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, the Elbert County Sheriff's Office called GWFC2 Noah Osborne in reference to a vehicle that had been pulled over due to a report of that vehicle shining a light in a field. The suspect driving the vehicle admitted to shining a light across a field and had a loaded rifle in the back seat. The suspect was a known convicted felon, and GWFC2 Osborne had prior complaints against him. The suspect was arrested that night for several violations. After further questioning and a weeks-long investigation, the suspect admitted to killing other deer throughout the season without hunting licenses, not recording the deer harvest, and hunting without permission. The subject was ultimately charged by GWFC2 Osborne with hunting deer at night, hunting from a vehicle, hunting from a public road, hunting without a license, hunting without a big game license, failure to record deer harvest, and possession of firearm by a convicted felon, as well as charges through the county of vehicle light violations and operating an unregistered vehicle. One deer was confiscated as a result of the investigation.



## Hart County

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, GWFC2 Pierce, with the assistance of GWFC2 Noah Osborne, ended a two-week investigation that started on October 16, 2024. A total of eight violations were documented during the investigation, and two buck racks were seized as evidence from the suspect. The violations consisted of hunting without permission, hunting without wearing fluorescent orange, and failure to record deer harvest.

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, several members of the work section participated in a joint enforcement detail with the South Carolina DNR where both agencies worked out of Hartwell Marina checking both sides of Lake Hartwell by vessel for violations during waterfowl season. The detail resulted in several cases and warnings being documented by both South Carolina and Georgia DNR for waterfowl license and vessel violations.



*Officer Sean Proner with SCDNR and GWFC Brandon Pierce citing waterfowl hunters on Lake Hartwell.*

## Oglethorpe County

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, GWFC2 Joseph Cowart received a complaint of individuals hunting without permission on a property in Oglethorpe County. A hunter on the property in question was hunting with his daughter in a box stand overlooking a food plot. While in the stand, the complainant observed an individual with an orange vest sitting at the bottom of his food plot

looking in the direction of the complainant and his daughter. Upon arrival, Game Warden Cowart observed an individual in an orange vest at the lower end of the food plot. After seeing the patrol vehicle, the suspect stood up and began running through the woods in the direction of the neighboring property where he had come from. After exiting his vehicle, Cowart gave chase and ordered the individual to stop running, at which time he observed another individual who was hunting with the suspect running in an opposite direction. Both individuals stopped running and complied with all further demands. Both individuals were charged with hunting without permission and one individual was charged with hunting without fluorescent orange.



*Sgt. Brooks Varnell work section: left to right:  
GWFC Jason Harrison, Cpl. Stetson Stevens, Cpl.  
Blake Chafin, Sgt. Brooks Varnell. (Not pictured:  
Taylor Leazer)*

## Region 3 - Thomson



*Back: Cadet Joni Lumley, Sgt Ricky Boles, GW Cory Bohannon, GW Hunter Carson, Cpl David Fisher, GW Erin Paulk, Sgt Tim Butler, Cpl Lamar Burns, Cpl Taylor Bingham, Cpl Levi Thompson, GW Sterling Gibson. Front: GW Austin Smith, GW Kyle Kervin, Sgt Jeff Billips, Sgt Mike Wilcox, Cpl Westin Rabon, Cpl Keith Page, Sgt Travis Sweat, GW Elizabeth Brooks, Cpl Saxon Campbell, GW Ashley Compton, Sgt Matt Garthright. Not pictured: GW Kevin Hurley, GW Ryan Buice, Cpl Jason Bennett, GW Clay Baker, GW Wes Freeman, GW Chason Brogdon, GW Thomas Ledford, Cpl Quintin Reed, Cpl Skyler Redmond*



*Capt. Sam O'Neal, Rainee Purvis, Elizabeth Bentley, Sgt Mike Wilcox*

### **Promotions and Personnel Changes**

Region III welcomed Sgt. Mike Wilcox to Administrative Sergeant. Cpl. Jeff Billips was promoted to Sergeant. GW Levi Thompson was promoted to Corporal in Columbia Co. Cpl. David Fisher transferred to Peach Co. Cpl. Saxon Campbell laterally transferred to Columbia Co. GWFC 2 Quintin Reed promoted to Corporal in Richmond Co. GWFC 1 Skyler Redmond promoted to Corporal in Burke Co. GWFC2 Lamar Burns promoted to Corporal in Bibb Co. GW2 Kyle Kervin promoted to GWFC 1. Four cadets graduated from the Game Warden Academy: Elizabeth Brooks assigned to Charlie Elliot/Jasper Co, Austin Smith assigned to Baldwin/Lake Sinclair, Hunter Carson assigned to Taliaferro, and Ashley Compton assigned to Morgan Co B/S. Cpl. Ben Payne, Sgt. John Harwell and Sgt. Bobby Timmerman retired.

## Awards

Cpl. Levi Thompson received the Region III Hunter Education Game Warden Instructor of the Year Award. GW Thomas Ledford received the Region III Boating Safety Officer of the Year Award and was also selected as the state Torch Award recipient. Cpl. Jason Bennett was selected as the state Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Award recipient.

Region III was home to the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual SEAFWA Conference, hosted by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in Augusta. GWs from the region assisted in providing support, transportation, and security during the conference. GW Cory Bohannon was the Georgia representative.

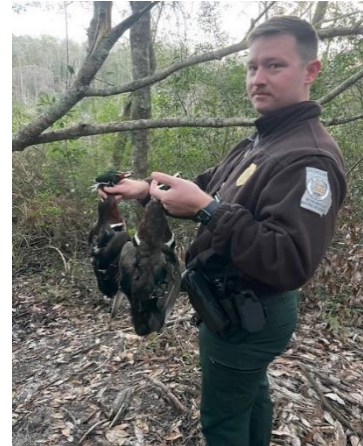


## Hunting and Fishing Activity



The aftermath of Hurricane Helene brought to town numerous cleanup crews from across the Country. One of those crews gained the attention of GW Cory Bohannon and Sgt. Matt Garthright on October 31, 2024, after they responded to a complaint of subjects dumping deer at the back of a hotel. Upon arrival, GWs observed numerous deer parts and blood in the hotel parking lot. There were also six deer carcasses dumped between a shed and a fence at the rear of the hotel. GWs interviewed five individuals from Mississippi that were in town to work storm cleanup. GWs worked on the investigation and arrested all five individuals for Hunting Deer at Night, Hunting from a Public Road, and Hunting from a Motor Vehicle.

Cpl. Keith Page and GW Kevin Hurley were watching a baited duck swamp in Crawford Co. to identify how many hunters were hunting the swamp. While trying to identify the number of hunters, the hunter's duck dog, named Cowboy, began retrieving downed ducks and brought them to GW Hurley one at a time. Two hunters were cited for hunting waterfowl over bait. Good boy, Cowboy!



On January 25, 2025, GW Sterling Gibson was on waterfowl patrol in Hancock Co. He heard several shots coming from across the county line in Washington Co. GW Gibson was able to locate the hunters and determine the pond they were hunting was baited with corn. Three hunters were cited for hunting over bait and taking over the limit of wood ducks.

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, a Wildlife Technician contacted Cpl. Jason Bennett and stated a collared bear had been shot on Oaky Woods WMA. After further investigation with assistance from UGA, it was determined that the bear had at least two cubs with her. Cpl. Bennett called Cpl. Keith Page and K9 Camo to come to assist. Camo located 3 spent shotgun hulls that were buckshot. Camo also located two more blood pools that appeared to be kill sites. Bennett took hair and blood samples from all kill sites and had UGA send off for testing. The results indicated that there were 3 different bears killed, and one bear was a foster cub relocated from north Georgia. Utilizing nearby security footage, Cpl. Bennett was able to identify all the vehicles that were on the WMA at the time the bear was killed. After conducting several interviews with different individuals, the suspect who killed the bears confessed and Bennett was able to identify the weapon used. The hunter was charged with killing a bear out of season and hunting with illegal ammo during small game dates on a WMA. All fines and restitution fines involved in this case will total over \$30,000. The investigation took almost two months to complete.





While on patrol in Twiggs Co. for duck hunting activity, GW Wes Freeman encountered a group of duck hunters on a private pond. Upon inspection, he discovered that the group had taken 28 ducks over the legal bag limit. Individuals were charged with taking over the bag limit and hunting without a license. A total of 7 citations were issued. The ducks were donated to a local veteran support group.

On Dec. 3rd, 2024, Sgt. Ricky Boles was notified by a landowner about an individual that had possibly killed three bucks in Putnam Co. GW Clay Baker and Sgt. Boles gathered information concerning the individual's deer harvest from a local processor and taxidermist. GWs noticed multiple discrepancies with the individual's harvest logs. On Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, GW Baker and Sgt. Boles went and interviewed the individual about the bucks that he had harvested during the year. While interviewing the individual, he stated that he had only killed two bucks this year and that he had another buck at the taxidermist that was roadkill. After interviewing with the individual, GWs went back to gather more evidence about the three bucks that had been killed. On Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> Sgt. Boles received a call from the individual stating that he wanted to talk about the bucks that he had harvested this year. The individual admitted to killing two eight pointer bucks in archery season and a fourteen pointer buck in early Dec. The individual was charged with taking over the limit of antlered deer and multiple harvest log violations. The 165-inch fourteen pointer buck was seized as evidence.



While patrolling in Glascock Co. on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (Opening day of turkey season), Sgt. Jeff Billips heard a shot early in the morning. Sgt. Billips located the hunter that fired the shot. The hunter harvested a mature Tom. Upon further investigation the area was baited with sunflower seeds. Sgt. Billips issued a citation for hunting big game over bait and confiscated the mature Tom.



On March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Cpl. David Fisher, Cpl. Keith Page and GW Ryan Buice were patrolling Upson Co. for turkey hunting activity where baited

areas had been previously located. GWs located five subjects hunting the baited areas. Two of the subjects had killed a gobbler. GWs utilized K-9 (Kamo) to locate a kill site, shotgun shell and wadding and determined that the subjects were hunting adjacent property without permission from the landowner. Citations were issued for hunting big game over bait (turkey), unlawful enticement of game and hunting without landowner permission. The illegally harvested turkey was seized as evidence.

Cpl. Saxon Campbell and GW Thomas Ledford investigated an illegal Indian artifact digging complaint in Columbia Co. just off the Savannah River. The subjects were accessing the site by boat. GWs monitored the illegal site through use of a cell camera and on the third night; two subjects were seen entering the site under the cover of darkness. GWs utilized night vision goggles to navigate the river and idled several miles downriver to not alert the diggers of their approach. Both diggers were arrested for digging artifacts without landowner permission.



### **In the Community**



Cpl. Levi Thompson is highly focused on promoting safety. This past year, he developed boating safety signs and implemented their use on Clarks Hill Lake. The signs were set in place to provide the boating public with information regarding the required safety equipment. Cpl. Thompson and his work section installed these signs at thirty boat ramps around Clarks Hill Lake.

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene entered the eastern portion of the region as a Category 1 Hurricane, leaving behind historical destruction of power grids and tree damage. GWs in this area suffered personal damage to their homes and many had to relocate to areas outside of the impact area. The power grid was completely knocked out. GWs assisted at food distribution sites and with debris removal. On the morning of the storm, GWs responded to a 911 call on Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area where two individuals were seriously injured when trees fell on their vehicles. It took over three hours to gain access to the injured party.



On June 11, 2025, Sgt. Ricky Boles, Cpl. Taylor Bingham, Cpl. Westin Rabon, GW Sterling Gibson, and GW Clay Baker

participated in the Morgan Co Sheriff's Office Junior Deputy Camp. DNR had a full day dedicated to teaching the fifth-grade students at the Morgan County Elementary School about the job duties of a Game Warden, how to safely hunt, firearm safety, archery, and boating rules. Lt. Sam Miller with DNR Aviation also came out to teach the kids about DNR Aviation's mission. Deer, turkey, and small game hunting was also discussed during the event to inform the students of opportunities that the great

outdoors of Georgia provides.

In May of 2025 Sgt. Jeff Billips, Cpl. Skyler Redmond and GW Kyle Kervin participated in the Hunting for a Cure Clay Shoot at Pinetucky Gun Club. GWs assisted kids in learning to shoot shotguns at moving targets and safe handling of firearms.



## Region 4 – Metter



Left to right: front row: Cpl. Jack Thain, Sgt. Morty Wood, Sgt. Patrick Gibbs, Cpl. K.P. Boatright, GW James Nobles, GW Cody Woody, GW Ben Hawkins, GW Bobby Sanders. Second Row: Capt. Bob Lynn, GW Evan Nobles, Cpl. Luke Rabun, GW Dylan Brady, GW Dylan Bennett, Cpl. Cameron Dyal, GW Allison Dean, GW Matt Ubbink, Sgt. Shaymus McNeely. Back Row: GW Dalton Ridgill, GW Connor Moon, Sgt. Chris Moore, Cpl. Jordan Crawford, Cpl. Rodney Horne, Sgt. Kevin Joyce

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. The 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 the public dove fields on Department of Corrections properties in Tattnall County. Region IV Game Wardens also patrol the many miles of public waters that make up the mighty Altamaha and Savannah Rivers and their tributaries.

## Personnel

### Metter Office Staff



**The Metter office personnel:** Administrative Assistant 3, April Thrift, and Admin Support 1, Christina Colquitt

## **Field Staff**

Sergeant Shaymus McNeely's section: Corporal Jordan Crawford, Corporal Jack Thain with K-9 Smoke, and GW Matthew Ubbink.

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

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 Ridgill

## **Personnel Changes**

### **Promotions**

GWFC Jack Thain was promoted to Corporal

### **Region IV welcomed new Wardens from the 39th Game Warden Academy to the Region**

- James Nobles-Montgomery County

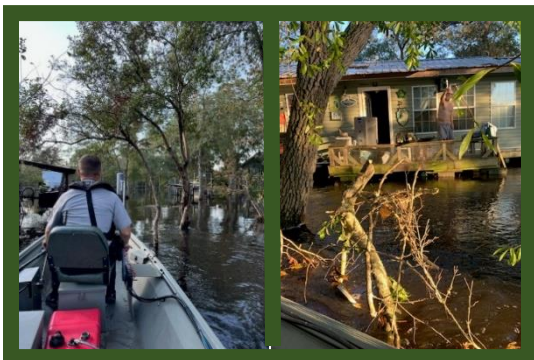
### **Transfers Out**

- Game Warden Jonathan Jeffries transferred to Region 5
- Game Warden Cody Woody transferred to Region 5

### **Region Personnel Awards**

- GW Benayah Hawkins State Boating Safety Game Warden of the Year
- GW Benayah Hawkins Region 4 Torch Award Game Warden of the Year
- GW Evan Nobles the Region 4 Investigative Game Warden of the Year
- GW Dylan Bennett was Region 4 Game Warden of the Year
- Corporal Cameron Dyal nominated for Rocky Wainright Waterfowl Award
- Corporal Jordan Crawford was Region 4 NWTf Game Warden of the Year

### **Responding to the needs of the people during Hurricane Helene**



On September 26, 2025, Hurricane Helene brought devastating damage to many communities located within the area that Region VI serves. Sgt. Patrick Gibbs and GW Dylan Bennett is pictured here responding to the needs of families affected by flood waters along the Ochoopee River in Tattnall County.

## Community Involvement



Game Wardens in our region do a good job fostering relationships with people we serve. GW Dylan Bennett is picture here after completing and I&E program with a group of young students from the Appling County Primary School. The second photo is Cpl. Cameron Dyal participating in the annual “Shop with a Cop” program at Walmart in Baxley, Ga. This police/public encounter has been successful in building relationships with local youth.

## Assisting Local Law Enforcement



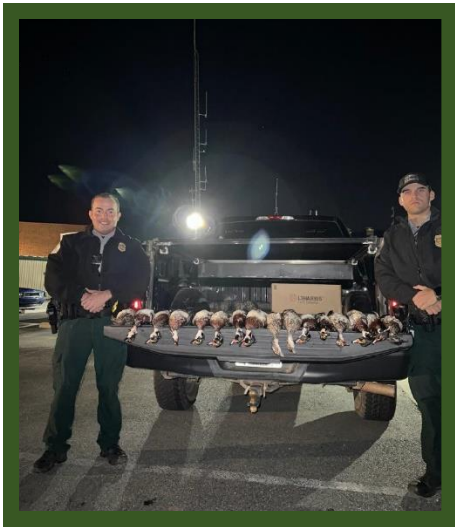
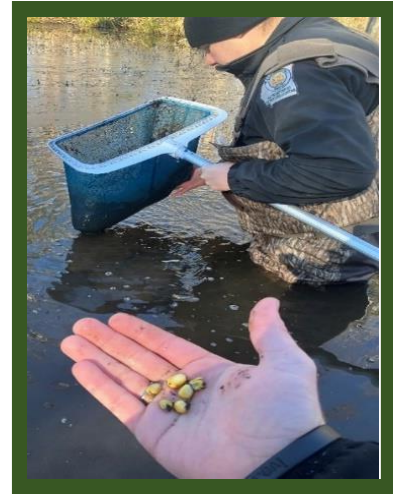
Sgt. McNeely, Cpl. Crawford, Cpl. Thain and K-9 Smoke assisted local law enforcement with an active shooter in Screven County. One suspect was arrested at the scene of the incident. On the next day GW Ubbink and Cpl. Thain along with K-9 Smoke returned to the scene and searched for evidence. The K-9 team was successful in locating several items including multiple guns, one of which was the murder weapon.

## Waterfowl Hunting



On January 5, 2025, GW Matthew Ubbink, and GWFC Jack Thain received a call about a baited duck shoot in Emanuel County. Wardens went to the complaint location, found the hunters, and checked their ducks and licenses. GWFC Thain used K-9 Smoke to track the hunter’s route to the pond. Upon reaching the pond, cracked corn was found on the bank and in the water. All seven subjects were charged for hunting ducks over bait and wardens confiscated 20 wood ducks.

On January 25, 2025, Cpl. Luke Rabun, GWFC Dylan Brady, and GW Dalton Ridgill were on a general patrol seeking out possible waterfowl hunting activity. While in an area on the Coffee/Irwin County line they encountered a group of waterfowl hunters. While checking the hunters for license compliance and bag limits, they also checked the pond for any illegal attractants. After a thorough investigation of the area the game wardens found the pond to be baited with corn. All hunters received citations for hunting waterfowl over bait.



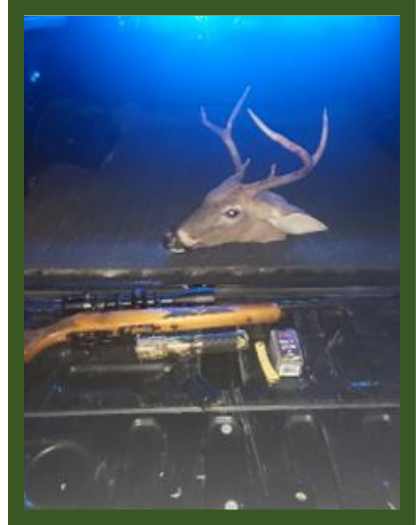
On November 29th, 2024, GW Dylan Bennett and Cpl. Cameron Dyal, received a phone call about a possible after-hours waterfowl hunt off Red Oak Rd. in Appling County. Dyal arrived at the complaint area first and searched for the hunters. He noticed some fresh tracks going into an agriculture field that led to a small beaver swamp. Utilizing his night vision, Dyal was successful in locating the hunters. After a brief investigation, two subjects were charged with, hunting waterfowl after hours and over the bag limit. The officers seized 16 wood ducks and turned them over to charitable institution.

### Hunting Violations



On October 18, 2025, GW Matthew Ubbink, responded to a hunting without permission call in Emanuel County. The complainant/landowner was able to provide GW Ubbink with vital information surrounding the incident including a license plate associated with the vehicle observed by the complainant leaving the scene. GW Ubbink used the plates to identify the owner of the vehicle and contacted him by phone. After a brief conversation it was determine that the vehicle was being driven by the owner's son. GW Ubbink interviewed the driver, and he confessed to driving the truck while his friend shot the deer from the road. Both subjects were charged with hunting big game from a public road and hunting big game from a motor vehicle.

On October 30, 2024, Game Warden Ben Hawkins was conducting a night deer hunting patrol on the east side of Laurens County when he observed a vehicle shine a spotlight out of the driver side window. Hawkins immediately conducted a traffic stop and identified the driver of the vehicle who was in possession of a loaded rifle and a spotlight. After further investigation it was also discovered that the individual possessed (in the bed of the truck) the head from a six-point whitetail deer that he had killed earlier in the night. The individual was charged with hunting deer at night, hunting big game from a public road, and hunting from a motor vehicle.



On October 15th, 2024, Game Warden First Class Evan Nobles was notified of an illegally killed bear in Bleckley County. Corporal Stillwell and GWFC Nobles searched the property and located the dead bear that had been moved and dumped. After searching further, the initial kill site was located which was baited with corn. The landowner of the property was interviewed, and 2 suspects were identified. The suspects were interviewed and charged for taking a bear out of season, baiting bears, hunting without a big game license, and concealment of illegally taken wildlife.



On March 31, 2025, Cpl. Luke Rabun received a complaint about non-resident hunter taking over the daily limit of turkeys. Cpl. Rabun investigated the matter and found that the hunter illegally harvested two turkeys in one day in Coffee County. The hunter did not possess the required licenses, and the hunter's spouse tagged one of the turkeys using his own tags. Violations were addressed for hunting license violations, reporting and recording requirements, concealment of illegally taken wildlife, and taking over the daily bag limit.

### State Properties

On December 2, 2024, Cpl. Luke Rabun responded to a burglary at Flat Tub WMA Campground where several items, including a rifle, were stolen. On December 10, he observed a vehicle matching the suspect's and conducted a traffic stop, recovering some stolen property. The suspect was charged with multiple felonies, including burglary, firearm theft, possession of a controlled substance, and several other related offenses.



### Fishing Violations



In June of 2025, GW Dylan Bennett and GW Bobby Sanders were checking fishermen along the Altamaha River in Toombs County. The game wardens encountered two individuals utilizing a cast net in state waters. After a brief investigation it was determined they were targeting game fish both subjects were cited for the violations and the fish were turned over to a charitable institution.

## Region 5 – Albany



*L to R: Quinn Fogle, Tony Cox, Drew Beverly, Greg Wade, K-9 Cuff, Raul Malagon, Tyler McKay, Dean Gibson, Eric White, Johnathan Jefferies, Tab Jones, Scott Carroll, Jim Atchley, Drew Weathersby, Steve Thomas, Hunter Bowman, Zack Miller, Jeremy Bolen, Thomas Sibley, Eric Isom, K-9 BO, Jesse Harrison, Tanner Rundle, Alex Chambers, Seth May, Clint Martin*

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-seven POST certified Game Wardens, with twenty-five assigned field duties, and Captain Al Greer and Sergeant Quinn Fogle assigned administrative responsibilities. We will also be welcoming three new game wardens to the region once they complete the academy, Joshua Bankston, Gabriel Hill, and Terry Mann.

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

### **The Lake Blackshear Works Section**

Sergeant Clint Martin’s work section consists of six counties and all but one of the counties borders either the Flint River or Lake Blackshear in Region 5. The counties in the work section are Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Sumter, Schley, and Lee. Within the six counties there are 4 state owned properties Flint River WMA, Montezuma Bluffs WMA, Cordele Fish Hatchery, and Georgia Veterans State Park.

The current work section consists of Sgt. Clint Martin, Cpl. Jesse Harrison, Game Warden Tanner Rundle and



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

Game Warden Alex Chambers. Corporal Jesse Harrison is assigned to Crisp County, Game Warden Tanner Rundle is assigned to Sumter County and Game Warden Alex Chambers is assigned to Macon County. In February Cpl. Blake Chafin lateraled to Gwinnett 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 697 hours working citizen complaints and investigations this year. The section issued 491 total citations and warnings enforcing the laws, while protecting the citizens and wildlife of this state. The section worked two boating incidents and one drowning on the Flint River. Some violations of note were 45 hunting over bait cases, 22 hunting without permission cases, 11 hunting deer at night cases, 8 hunting out of season cases and 5 boating under the influence cases.



Cpl. Jesse Harrison investigated a hunting deer out of season complaint in Macon County. After securing search warrants a total of 3 subjects were charged in the investigation with a total of 33 charges which ranged from hunting out of season, hunting deer at night, hunting without permission and hunting with a silencer. The fines resulted in a total of \$15,750 and one of the subject's hunting privileges have been suspended for 5 years. The seized Ruger 450 Legend rifle, suppressor and 2 Pulsar thermal scopes were all turned over to the Department.

### **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,



*L to R Cpl. Steve Thomas, Cpl. Thomas Sibley, Sgt. Tony Cox, GW Seth May and GW Jillian Lartigue*

Ochlocknee River, Spring Creek, and Tired Creek Reservoir. There are multiple state properties within the work section consisting of Seminole State Park, Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Silver Lake WMA/PFA, Lake Seminole WMA, Mayhaw WMA, Elmodel WMA, and portions of Chickasawhatchee WMA. The work section consists of Sgt. Tony Cox, Cpl. Steve Thomas, Cpl. Thomas Sibley, GW Seth May, and GW Jillian Lartigue. GW Lartigue is the newest member of the work section. During the year, GW Lartigue completed basic mandate, the Game Warden Academy, and started on field training.

This year, Game Wardens made 4 BUI arrest along with 1 count of child endangerment. They also investigated 4 boating incidents, and 1 drowning. Game Wardens recorded a total of 415 violator contacts. Out of those contacts, 2 individuals were charged with hunting without permission and one hunting under the influence. 35 individuals were located hunting on closed WMAs and charged for the violation. A total of 5 baited duck ponds were located by the work section, which resulted in 22 individuals charged with hunting ducks over bait. Also, during this year, GWs in the work section located 3 baited dove fields, which resulted in 21 individuals charged with hunting over bait. During the year, Game Wardens worked multiple investigations that resulted in violators being charged. Cpl. Sibley and GW Lartigue worked an artifact case in Miller County that resulted in one individual being charged with digging artifacts without permission. Cpl. Thomas worked a hunting investigation in Early County. As a result of the investigation, one individual was charged with hunting from a public road, hunting from a motor vehicle, hunting without a license, hunting without a big game license, hunting without permission, and hunting without a harvest record.

### **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*

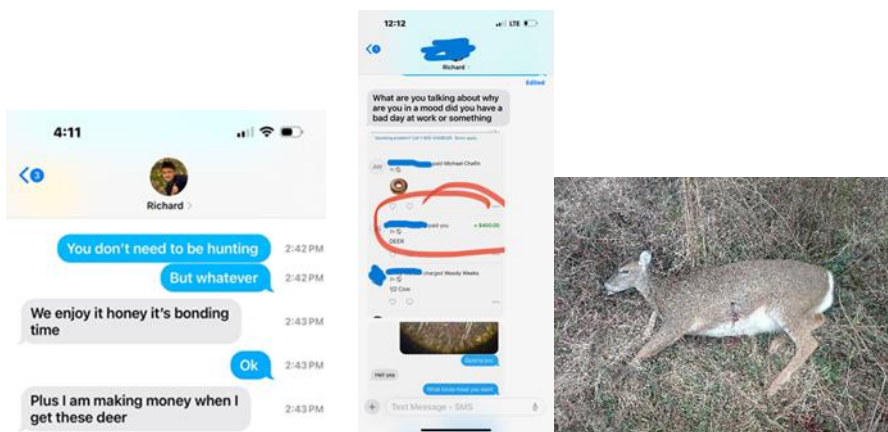
The Albany work section incorporates Dougherty, Worth, Mitchell, Colquitt, Brooks, and Thomas Counties, encompassing approximately 3000 square miles. The major waterways within these counties include Lake Worth, Kinchafoonee Creek, Muckalee Creek, Ochlocknee River, Flint River, and Little River. This 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 (Colquitt), Corporal Drew

Beverly (Mitchell), Game Warden Tab Jones (Dougherty), Game Warden Raul Malagon (Brooks), and Game Warden Tyler McKay (Worth).

Throughout the year, Game Wardens in the Albany section issued 1,135 citations and warnings. Some violations of note are: 4 felony drug arrests, 18 arrests for Boating/Hunting/Driving Under the Influence/Operating While Suspended (these numbers do not include Child Endangerment BUI), 4 subjects charged with Hunting Deer at Night, and 22 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, which generated 400 incident reports and 1290 CAD incidents. The section also investigated 2 boating incidents.

Cpl. Eric White conducted a night deer hunting investigation in Colquitt County, in which a local EMT was observed shooting a deer on Woodhaven Plantation. Upon further investigation, it was determined the EMT had taken multiple deer at night and without permission. It was also discovered the EMT had taken over the legal limit for antlered deer and had been selling the meat for profit to other EMTs and locals in the community. At the conclusion of the investigation, the EMT was charged with 27 various poaching violations and an additional 4 subjects and 16 violations were documented in the case, resulting in the EMT pleading guilty to 8 of the 27 charges in exchange for 10-years' probation, a 10-year suspension of hunting privileges, a \$7,563.00 fine, and \$2,858.00 in restitution to be paid to the State of Georgia.



Cpl. Drew Beverly, Cpl. Eric White, and Game Warden Jillian Lartigue conducted a surveillance detail on Chickasawhatchee WMA after receiving complaints of unknown subject(s) target practicing at the campground area and damaging/shooting WMA signs. The wardens observed a suspect vehicle enter the area and begin firing shots down a firebreak. The subject (previously charged by local law enforcement for discharging a firearm from a roadway) was arrested and charged with target practicing in an unauthorized area.



Cpl. Eric White and Game Warden Tyler McKay investigated an illegal dumping incident which occurred at the Radium Springs Landing area of the Flint River. The incident involved approximately 40 scrap tires which had been dumped in the river at the base of the landing, hindering boat traffic in the area. The wardens reviewed traffic and security camera footage to identify potential suspects which rendered a suspect vehicle, tag #, and footage of the vehicle entering the landing towing a trailer with tire and exiting towing an empty trailer. Upon further investigation, it was determined a 17-year-old subject, and 14-year-old juvenile were responsible for dumping the tire. The 17-year-old subject was charged for 1<sup>st</sup> offense unlawful dumping of egregious litter over 500 lbs. and billed by the City of Albany for services rendered for cleanup and disposal of the dumped tires.



### **Columbus Work Section**



*L to R: Cpl. Dean Gibson, Sgt Jeremy Bolen, GW Hunter Bowman, and Cpl.*

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. Two additional Game Wardens have joined the work section this year. Jonathan Jeffries transferred from Region 4 and is assigned to Marion County. Zack Miller graduated the Game Warden Academy and is assigned to Taylor County.

Throughout the year, Game Wardens in the work section issued 833 citations and warnings. Some violations of note were hunting over bait cases (64), boating under the influence (20), child endangerment cases (4), hunting/fishing without permission (32), and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon (2). Section Game Wardens investigated 2 boating incidents, 2 hunting incidents and 3 drownings were reported.

Cpl. Gibson worked a lengthy investigation that began back in September of 2024. Dean had a “gut” feeling that a neighbor that lived near him was killing over the limit of bucks and hunting at night. After many hours spent in the woods on foot patrol, Cpl. Gibson was able to confront the subject hunting at night. At this point in his investigation Cpl. Gibson seized his phone as evidence and obtained a search warrant. At the conclusion of the investigation, the suspect was arrested on warrants taken out by Cpl. Gibson. The charges were for hunting deer at night (17 counts), theft by taking wildlife (16 counts), reporting/recording requirements for game animals (9 counts), taking over the limit of antlered deer (7 counts), and hunting out of season (2 counts).

Cpl. Gibson, Cpl. Isom, K-9 Bo, and GW Jeffries worked a complaint of hunting turkeys from the road/vehicle in Marion County. After an investigation, evidence was recovered from the scene and a suspect was identified. The individual was charged with killing two turkeys from a motor vehicle, hunting from a public road, hunting without permission, and taking over the daily bag limit.

Cpl. Isom received the Region 5 Boating Safety Officer of the Year Award and the Region 5 Game Warden of the Year Award.

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

This work section covers the rural area 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. 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



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

WMA's, 700 acres of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (Bradley Unit), 3 state parks and the 46,000-acre Lake Walter F. George.

The officers patrolling this area include Sergeant Jim Atchley, Corporal Scott Carroll, Game Wardens Drew Weathersby and Cody Woody. The work unit added a new officer during the year, and we welcome Game Warden Terry Mann, who is assigned to Calhoun County and is attending the POST Academy currently. Corporal Steve Robinson retired this year.

Game Warden Weathersby earned the NWTF Turkey Award for his hard work this year. He responded to 5 landowner complaints, checked 23 hunters and documented 27 violations; 10 of these violations were for hunting without permission and 2 were for hunting big game from a public road.

Corporal Scott Carroll serves as a Field Training Officer and continues the 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 and has been involved with collateral duties for many years. Scott continues to seek ways to share experience and knowledge with new officers. His dedication and hard work earned the region's Rocky Wainwright Waterfowl Award for 2025 for the second year in a row. Scott documented 50 waterfowl related violations this year and worked a hunting related drowning on Lake George.

## **Region 6 – Brunswick**

### **Clinch/Echols County**

On the morning of 10/12/2024, Sergeant Jason Shipes, Corporal Sam Williams, Corporal Mark Pool, Game Warden Erin Potts, and Game Warden Micah Ballard were conducting a Wildlife Investigation regarding the killing of an undersized bear in Fargo, Georgia, at the check station. Game Wardens concluded the bear weighed 72lbs, with the minimum size allowed by law being 75lbs. Game Wardens seized the undersized bear and issued 1 citation for killing an undersized bear. Another group of bear hunters from Echols County reported to the check station with a 290lb Boar Black Bear. Game Wardens located several pieces of corn inside the bear's mouth. SGT. Shipes, CPL. Pool and GW Ballard followed the hunters to the location where the bear was harvested. Game Wardens located corn and peanut butter within the kill site. Game Wardens seized the bear and issued 1 citation for Hunting Big Game over bait. The meat from the bears was donated to a local family.



### **Pierce County**

On the morning of 12/29/2024, Game Warden Micah Ballard was patrolling for Waterfowl hunting activity. GW Ballard located a Duck shoot in Pierce County around a private pond. Upon arrival in the area, GW Ballard located several ATVs/UTVs, with one containing an open bag of whole corn kernels. Further investigation revealed that the pond was baited with corn. Several citations were issued, including 5 citations for hunting over bait, 1 citation for hunting without a license, and 1 citation for hunting with an unplugged shotgun.

### **Charlton County**

On July 25, 2024, Game Warden Erin Potts was patrolling for boating and fishing activity in the area of Burnt Fort Boat Landing in Charlton County on the Satilla River. GW Potts witnessed a vessel containing 2 individuals operating above idle speed under the Highway 252 Bridge. The 2 individuals admitted to fishing, but stated they were not successful. Upon completion of a boating safety inspection, GW Potts located a .22 caliber rifle and a harvested Alligator stowed inside

storage compartments within the vessel. At this time, GW Potts ordered the two men to exit the vessel, and they refused. While GW Potts was waiting for additional officers to arrive, the men dumped the Alligator carcass into the river. Numerous citations were issued, including possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, obstruction/hindering of a law enforcement officer, hunting out of season, fishing without a license, and operating a vessel within 100' of an object or shore above idle speed.

### **Cook County**

In July 2024, Game Warden Aaron Powell received a complaint in reference to a pay box at Reed Bingham State Park being broken into and damaged. The Park staff advised that the lid to the pay box had been pried open and the lock on the internal money box had been cut off, and the money box had been removed. Over the next few weeks, with assistance from the DNR LED Investigative Unit, a suspect was identified. GW Powell attempted numerous times to locate the suspect and speak with him but was unsuccessful. After repeated trips to family members' houses and tracking down acquaintances and interviewing them, the suspect randomly called GW Powell to ask, "why he was bothering all his family and friends" but refused to talk about the incident. After further investigation, more evidence was gathered that confirmed the suspect was involved in the incident at the park and arrest warrants were secured for Interference with Government Property, Theft by Taking and Criminal Trespass. The suspect was arrested several weeks later during a traffic stop and it was also learned that not only did the suspect have active warrants in Georgia, but he had also been involved in similar incidents in Arkansas.



### **Lanier County**

In January 2025, Corporal Daniel North received a complaint of hunting without permission and after hours waterfowl hunting. The complainant was able to provide a vehicle description, tag number and location on the hunting club where the suspects were located. During a secondary phone call, Corporal North was able to hear the gunshots in the background while talking to the complainant who was on scene. Due to Corporal North being in the next county over, he had an extended response time and the suspects left the area after finishing their hunt. Once on scene,

Corporal North was able to track where the suspect vehicle had been as well where the suspects entered/exited the pond. With the vehicle tag information that the complainant provided, Corporal North was able to track down the suspects. While interviewing the suspects they admitted to shooting the ducks after hours and leaving the dead ducks in the pond. Each suspect was charged the Hunting Without Permission and Hunting Ducks After Hours.

### **Pierce County**

On the evening of January 1, 2025, Sgt Chase Altman was patrolling an area in Pierce County on a hunting complaint. Just after legal shooting hours for waterfowl had ended, Sgt Altman heard numerous shots coming from an area along a creek. Once on scene Sgt Altman found 5 trucks parked along the wood line next to the creek. The shots continued for another 30 minutes or so after legal shooting hours had ended. After waiting for the hunters to come back to the trucks, Sgt Altman identified 8 individuals that were hunting ducks after hours. One of the hunters was a juvenile and was given verbal warnings for the violation. The other 7 hunters were charged with hunting waterfowl after hours, hunting waterfowl w/o a hunting license, hunting waterfowl w/o a Ga waterfowl license, and hunting waterfowl w/o a federal duck stamp. There was a total of 11 citations written.

### **Glynn County**

On 10/18/2024, Corporal Jay Bright was working an active night hunting complaint in Glynn County when he witnessed two armed individuals walking and shining LED lights. The suspects crossed a powerline and shined in both directions before walking into the wood line on a hunting club road. He watched the suspects shine a clear cut and eventually heard a shot from a high-powered rifle. The suspects started walking back in Corporal Bright's direction before taking the road they walked in on. When the suspects got close, Corporal Bright announced his presence, illuminated the suspects with his flashlight, and told them to set their firearms down and put their hands up. Bright noticed one suspect was armed with a shotgun, the other with a rifle. The suspect with the rifle, who Corporal Bright recognized despite him wearing a mask, took off running. The Glynn County Sheriff's Office responded to Bright's location and began a K9 track for the fleeing suspect. Approximately 20 minutes later the suspect was located hiding in some palmettos a short distance away but did not have the firearm anymore. Bright reached out to DNR Sergeant Wade and K9 Cuff. They responded to the scene and began an article search for the firearm. K9 Cuff found the gun submerged in a ditch close to where the suspect was located. K9 Cuff also located the suspects hat, face mask, two LED flashlights and the sling that was on the rifle. Charges included night hunting deer, hunting without permission, obstruction, and criminal trespass.

### **Sansavilla WMA Artifacts**

On 07/19/2025 at approximately 1830 Game Warden Errol Hall was contacted by CPL John Evans requesting back up on Sansavilla WMA. CPL Evans found a vehicle in an area that had started to have higher than normal traffic. He believed that they were collecting artifacts from the WMA. In

the back seat of the truck CPL Evans noticed a bag of artifact pottery was visible. He was able to locate the individuals and assume a position on the hill above them. From where he was, he could hear them talking, digging, and scooping. GW Hall arrived on scene at 1918. He followed the path from the vehicle into the woods and set up on top of the hill overlooking the ravine the individuals were digging into. CPL Evans recognized one of the individuals from previous encounters of her digging for artifacts on WMAs. As the Game Wardens spoke with them, they noticed a bucket full of mud and what looked to be artifact pottery pieces. Upon checking the multiple backpacks being carried by the three individuals, tools to help collect artifacts were discovered. While checking one of the bags, multiple pill bottles were discovered with more tools. One of the bottles had a plastic bag with meth in it. Numerous citations were issued to the three individuals.

### **Chatham County**

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, while on water patrol in Chatham County, Game Warden Justin Jackson responded to an in-progress complaint of duck hunters hunting from a moving vessel. Upon arrival Game Warden Jackson observed hunters shooting at birds from a vessel under power. After a vessel stop and investigation a total of 15 violations were documented. Violations included hunting waterfowl from a vessel under power, hunting with an unplugged shotgun and various license violations.



### **Glynn County Air Show**

Game Wardens Errol Hall, Matt Thompson, Matt Tsiklistas, Cpl. John Evans, Cpl. Colte Shaske, Cpl. Jay Bright, Sgt. Tim Morris, Captain Chris Hodge, Captain Jaye Bridwell, Lt. Colonel James McGlaughlin worked an air show event at the Brunswick Airport assisting Glynn County Police Department and Glynn County Sheriff's Office with crowd control and security in the event.





### **McIntosh County**

Early in May, Game Wardens along the coast began working the state saltwater's for illegal shrimping activity. Game Wardens Lucas Barnard, Corporal Zach Griffis, and Sergeant David Brady apprehended a commercial trawler in McIntosh County 1.5 miles inside the closed state waters and seized almost 3000 pounds of illegally caught shrimp. The captain and crew were charged with Using Power Drawn Nets in Closed Waters off Sapelo Island and the catch was sold at fair market value to a local shrimp dock.



## Glynn County

In July of 2024, Game Warden Matt Tsiklistas was working in Glynn County and followed up with very limited information about an alligator that had been killed illegally. After looking into the information, Tsiklistas was able to identify the violator, location of kill and the illegally killed alligator on a hunting club in Glynn County.



Later in that same month, Game Warden Lucas Barnard worked a case that was generated from a citizen about a man who had shot and killed three alligators illegally. Game Warden Barnard conducted a thorough investigation and charged the suspect with Hunting Alligators out of Season, Hunting Alligators with Illegal Weapons, Violation of Board Rules and Regulations, Hunting on a Closed WMA, and Hunting without a license.



## **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. 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.



### **FY2025 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

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



In FY2025, the 39<sup>th</sup> Game Warden Academy class graduated and officially began their careers as Georgia's newest game wardens. The 15-week Academy covers 24 courses (594 hours) exclusive to game warden duties including Hunting, Fishing, and Boating Laws, Wilderness First Responder, ATV, Active Shooter (ALERT), Wildlife, Mantracking, Boat Operation, Hunter Education, Media Relations, Night Hunting Enforcement, and Officer Water Survival. The two graduating classes added 11 new officers across the state who are now actively working in all six regions.

Georgia game wardens are some of the most highly trained and versatile officers in the nation. In addition to 20 hours of mandated P.O.S.T. Training each year, which includes courses in Use of Force, De-escalation, Cultural Awareness/Community Policing, Human Trafficking & Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Gang Awareness, and Firearms Qualification, game wardens across the state completed over 95 different in-service training courses totaling more than 14,100 training hours for FY2025. Some of the training courses were CPR refresher/AED, Woodland Operations, PEER Support, Response to the Active Shooter, Autism & De-Escalation, Ethics & Professionalism, NASBLA Inland Boating Instructor, and Critical Incident Management.

### Training Academy Staff



*l-r: Joe Talaber, Sgt. Beth Gilbert, Debra Hollar, Capt. Mitch Oliver*

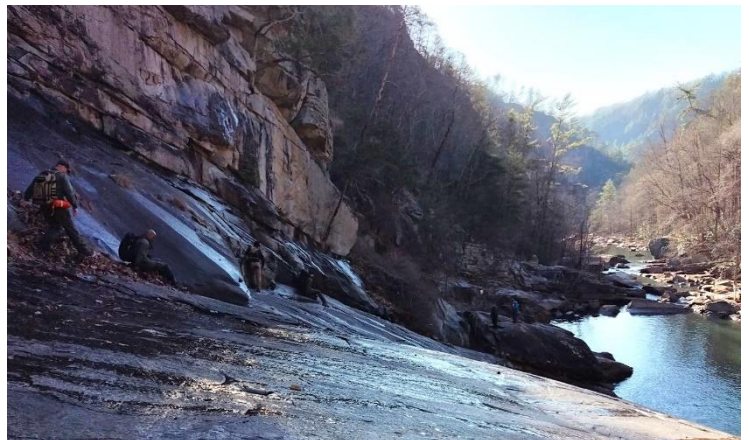
## Special Operations Group (SOG)

The DNR Law Enforcement Division staffs a Special Operations Group (SOG) to enhance the Division's response capabilities during critical incidents or special details. SOG team missions and objectives include support of the Division's regional operations and the agency's core mission, interagency assistance, domestic security, dignitary protection, search and rescue, and any incidents requiring high-risk law enforcement response.

SOG was busy with multiple training events throughout the year. SOG members attended SWAT School, ATV, and firearms training at GPSTC.



In February 2025, members of SOG trained with the City of Covington SWAT at the Tallulah Gorge State Park. The training consisted of a simulated rescue in extremely rugged and challenging terrain. Each team descended the 1,062 stairs to the Gorge floor. They crossed the Tallulah River twice as they traveled downstream, recovered their simulated victim, and worked as a team to get their victim out of the steep and rugged Gorge. Of course, the two teams had to create the additional challenge of making it a race to the top. SOG won that challenge.



## 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 625 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 Miller and LT Buller 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 2025. 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. In the last 12 month period, the DNR aviation unit recorded the most short haul rescue extractions in the unit's history at 13 for the period. Rescue extractions were conducted from Fannin county, over to Rabun and Habersham counties. 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 assisted in disaster recovery from multiple hurricanes throughout the last year as well. 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**

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. Westin Rabon, Cpl. Lamar Burns

Region 4 – Cpl. KP Boatright, Cpl. Luke Rabun

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

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

### **Honor Guard Details:**

- August 23, 2024 – Funeral detail for Paulding County Deputy Brandon Cuninghame in Dallas, Georgia. Cpl. Brock Hoyt and Cpl. Tyler Lewis represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- August 24, 2024 – Presentation of Colors for the DNR LED Awards Banquet at Indian Springs State Park. Sgt. Dan Schay, Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Brock Hoyt and Cpl. Dean Gibson participated in the detail.
- August 29, 2024 – Funeral detail for Carroll County Deputy Taylor Bristow in Carrollton, Georgia. Cpl. Philip Stout and Cpl. Russell Epps represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- September 9, 2024 – Presentation of Colors for the POAG Conference on St. Simmonds Island, Georgia. Sgt. Tim Morris, Cpl. K.P. Boatright, Cpl. Daniel North and Cpl. Zack Griffis participated in the detail.
- October 26, 2024 – Funeral detail for DNR Chaplain Charles Houston in Brunswick, Georgia. Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. K.P. Boatright, Cpl. Lamar Burns and Cpl. Zack Griffis participated in the event and were Pallbearers.
- December 1, 2024 – Tree planting ceremony at Fort King George State Park in McIntosh County Georgia in memory of DNR Chaplain Charles Houston. Sgt. Tim Morris and Cpl. Zack Griffis participated in the event.
- December 4, 2024 – Funeral detail for retired DNR Commissioner Joe Tanner at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center and the State Capitol Plaza. Sgt. Dan Schay, Sgt. Cody Jones, Sgt. Tim Morris, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Westin Rabon, Cpl. Dean Gibson, Cpl. Stetson Stevens, Cpl. Zack Griffis and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the event.
- January 9, 2025 – Presentation of Colors for the Dallas Safari Club International in Atlanta, Georgia. Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Brock Hoyt, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. Stetson Stevens and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the event.
- February 28, 2025 – Presentation of Colors for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Appalachian Trail event by the USPS at Amicalola Falls State Park. Sgt. Dan Schay, Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Stetson Stevens and GWFC Jeffery Turner participated in the event.

- April 25, 2025 – Presentation of Colors for the DNR GWA Graduation Ceremony at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, Georgia. Sgt. Cody Jones, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. Dan Gibson, Cpl. Westin Rabon, Cpl. K.P. Boatright and Cpl. Zack Griffis participated in the event.
- May 5, 2025 – Funeral detail for Columbia County Deputy Brandon Sikes in Evans, Georgia. Sgt. Dan Schay, Cpl. Westin Rabon, Cpl. Lamar Burns, Cpl. K.P. Boatright represented the Department of Natural Resources.
- May 13, 2025 – Presentation of Colors for the IHEA Conference on Jekyll Island, Georgia. Sgt. Tim Morris, Cpl. Daniel North, Cpl. K.P. Boatright and Cpl. Lamar Burns participated in the event.



## 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:**

Wright, David  
Potts ,Erin  
Weathersby, Drew  
May, Seth  
Bowman Hunter  
Brady, Dylan  
Traylor, Chandler  
Smith, Amy  
Leazer, Taylor  
Palmer, Spencer  
Kiracofe, Matthew  
Dooley, TR  
Buice, Ryan  
Bohannon, Cory  
Kervin, Kyle  
Reed, Quintin  
Rollins, Sherry  
Lamb, Tasha  
Jones, Casey  
Redmond, Skyler  
Griffis, Zach  
Roberson, Jason  
Thain, Jack  
Townsend Bo  
White, Conner  
Pickett, Hays  
Compton, Ashley  
Carson, Hunter  
Brooks, Elizabeth  
Ubbink, Tyler  
Jackson, Justin  
Rundle, Tanner  
Roberson, Isaac  
Hawkins, Benayah  
Miller, Mason  
Ballard, Joe  
Bramblett, Matthew  
Fleming, Chase  
Erwin, Jackson  
Gibson, Sterling  
Ledford, Thomas  
Bennett, Dylan  
Pullum, Dewayna  
Rush, Hunter  
Cox, Chad

**Retirements:**

Wiley, Anne  
Brown, Eric  
Sartor, Shane  
Sellars, Rick  
Robinson, Steve  
White, Bobby  
Hill, Joe

<b>Activity Summary</b>	<b>FY2025</b>
Hunter Ed Hours	1,479
I&E Hours	8,331
Boating Safety Hours	1,099
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>10,909</b>
Land & Water SAR Hours	8,461
Hunting Incidents	25
Boating Incidents	127
Drownings	66
BUIs	243
Hunting License Checks	27,115
Fishing License Checks	36,063
Total License Checks	63,178
Boat Checks	18,173
Boating Contacts	6,952
Hunting Contacts	7,370
Fishing Contacts	5,287
Environmental Contacts	476
<b>Total Contacts</b>	<b>20,085</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



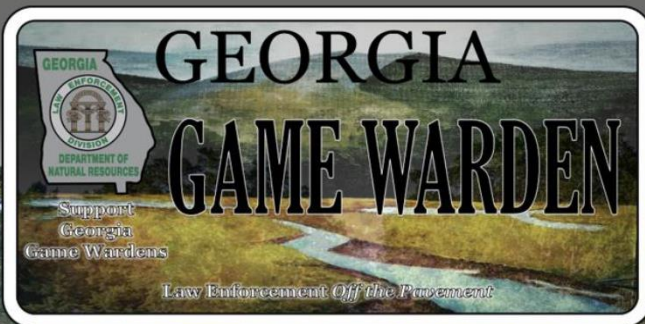
*“Support Georgia Game Wardens  
with the purchase of a specialty  
license plate for your vehicle. I did.”*



**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!**