

Our officers are much more than gamekeepers



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Our officers have a special role as front line ambassadors for FWC, bringing both the positive messages of conservation and correcting those who are not obeying our fish and wildlife regulations.



The FWC is mourning the loss of a fine law enforcement officer, Capt. Del Teagan, who died in a traffic accident while on duty April 13.

This tragedy makes us pause and reflect on the important job FWC officers carry out every day, and the dangers they confront with great courage and dedication.

Like all police officers, the ones who carry FWC badges sometimes encounter a variety of unstable – and potentially lethal – situations that require them to respond swiftly, professionally and courageously but cautiously before they have a chance to evaluate all the facts.

FWC officers say almost all the people they encounter every day are good people who abide by the rules and respect Florida's natural resources. They are people who simply enjoy venturing into nature and want to protect it for future generations. But, as within any large set of people, there is a subset that makes it necessary to have police officers sworn to

enforce laws and protect people and property.

The days have long passed since the time when nature could bind its own wounds. Today, conservation requires human commitment not to take more than nature can spare, and that requires dedicated men and women to carry out the FWC's law enforcement motto: "to patrol, protect, preserve."

There was a time when this agency's officers' duties were to serve as the state's gamekeepers, but today, their responsibilities stretch far beyond that. They have many endangered and threatened species to protect, and they fill a vital role in search-and-rescue efforts on the water and in wilderness areas. They team up with other agencies' officers to track down lawbreakers on the surface and from the air. When necessary, they provide protection from homeland security threats at ports and other facilities that would be vulnerable to attacks from vessels or off-road staging areas.

FWC officers sometimes are the first to move into devastated areas to rescue people and protect property behind hurricanes and other disasters.

Our officers have another special role. They are often our front line ambassadors for FWC, bringing both the positive messages of conservation and correcting those who are not obeying our fish and wildlife regulations. It is truly a unique circumstance that requires special people skills.

They are unique among law enforcement officers, and the loss of a single one of them leaves all of us at the FWC with heavy hearts and a renewed appreciation for the contributions of these fine men and women. **FW**



TIM DONOVAN