



## FISHERIES STREAMS AND RIVERS NEWSLETTER

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### July, August, September 2007

*The Stream Fisheries Program provides high-quality fisheries information for management purposes and applies the results of research to improve fish populations, habitat, and fishing.*

Publishing the results of our paddlefish studies consumed most of my time this quarter. The good news: three papers were submitted and not one was rejected. The bad news: all need some revision. Revisions are always expected. Publication is a very rigorous process that takes a lot of time. However, our paddlefish studies need to be published because they were so intensive and unique. Publishing is kind of like crossing the finish line to a marathon. It takes a lot of discipline and focus.

The last week of July was the Crooked Creek electrofishing sampling week. The weather is always hot but we survived. The smallmouth bass population still looks good. I'm always amazed how much the habitat changes. Each year the floods rearrange the gravel bars.



Crooked Creek sampling is hard on the back.

We finally had a breakthrough on the Rector Brake project. It appears now that the landowner (Bottom Line, Inc) wants us to proceed with our dredging project and may even become a cost-share partner. I have orders to obtain a 404 permit and develop a more detailed project scope of work.

I assisted Kelly Irwin with hellbender surveys on the Eleven Point River. We had several mechanical problems, but Kelly still managed to catch a couple of benders. This was my first experience diving with a hookah, which is an air compressor/breathing apparatus. I didn't catch any, but I did a good job of taking lots of pictures for Kelly.



Ozark Hellbender collected on Eleven Point River.

Probably the highlight of the hellbender sampling was we discovered a pair of male cottonmouths that were doing a territorial

“dance.” They really get colored-up during breeding season. I got video of this display, but my camera’s resolution was poor. I was diving about 5-ft. from where these guys were fighting.



Cottonmouths “dancing.”

I have been assisting Tommy Inebnit and Dr. Reid Adams from UCA with studies concerning alligator gar. We caught about a dozen juveniles in a Perry County stream last month. They are having really great success, and this study should be one of the best ever performed for alligator gar. This study suggests we may need to consider a seasonal closure for this species, in that it used small tributaries to spawn, where they are highly vulnerable to capture.



Dustin Opine with a juvenile alligator gar.

Lee Holt and I worked with biologists from Tennessee (TWRA) and Mississippi (MSU) to track pallid sturgeon in the lower Mississippi River. We searched the river from Tiptonville, Tennessee to Memphis looking for pallid sturgeon that left the middle Mississippi River. We didn’t find any, so it appears those fish went seriously south.



Lee with the VR2 receiver.

Lee Holt, Jeff Farwick, Sam Henry, and Sam Barkley worked on catching 25 shovelnose sturgeons from the White River for genetic analysis.

#### Notes:

- I attended the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission meeting in July. The ANRC is considering setting instream flows for Arkansas streams again.
- I attended the Arkansas-Oklahoma Compact Commission meeting, which discussed that severe drought in Oklahoma lead to a violation of the compact, where Arkansas did not receive the minimum flow agreed to because of excessive evaporation in reservoirs. The Illinois River nutrient problem was also discussed.
- I attended my grandpa’s funeral in Minnesota.
- I worked on commercial paddlefish regulation changes.
- I helped submit an award for Larry Rider to the Southeastern.