



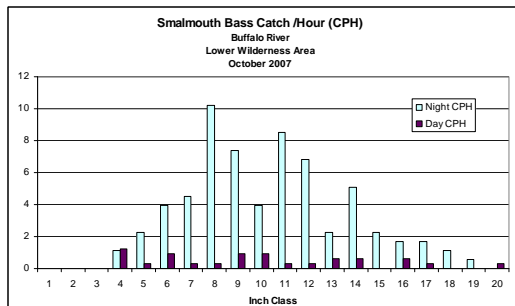
FISHERIES STREAMS AND RIVERS NEWSLETTER

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October, November, December 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.

October is a great time of year to be a stream biologist in Arkansas: the weather is great and I usually spend time in the Ozarks. This year, I started October by sampling the Buffalo River with District II biologist Stan Todd and National Park Service biologist Faron Usrey. In the past, we have always used daytime electrofishing to survey the river, and we felt it was not very effective. Stan built a fiberglass electrofishing boat that could easily be pulled over shoals, whereas the aluminum boats we've used for years could not. Anyway, our catch rates were much higher at night – check out the graph below.



I vow every year not to go to out-of-state meetings during October, but this year I blew it. I did go to a meeting in Denver concerning instream flows. So, what is an instream flow? What it really is, is about leaving enough water in the river to maintain healthy ecosystems which humans, and aquatic animals—like fish depend upon. This sounds complex, and it is. At the meeting I developed a workplan detailing

steps I need to take to address instream flow issues in Arkansas.



Above: Every fall, Stephen O'Neal and I take samples from Bayou Meto as part of the ongoing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) evaluation.

Publishing the results of several studies consumed most of my time this quarter. The good news: Out of four papers submitted—none were rejected. The bad news: All need some revision. Revisions are always expected. Scientific publication is a very rigorous process that takes a lot of time. However, our paddlefish studies need to be published, because they are so intensive and unique. Publishing can be compared to crossing the finish line in a marathon...it takes a lot of discipline and focus. I just completed revision of a paper that looks at trends in the Arkansas River fisheries dating from 1970 to present. With so much “office time” this quarter, I took a couple of Arkansas River fishing trips looking

for blue catfish and “stripers” with Lindsey Lewis of the USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)..



Above: A good Lake Dardanelle fishing trip. Good ol' rod and reel sampling methods.

I also took part in a couple of legislative hearings at the Capitol concerning the environmental impacts of drilling for natural gas in the Fayetteville Shale Formation.



If you look close at the picture above, you'll notice a couple tags placed into an adult alligator that was captured on the Fourche LaFave River by University of Central Arkansas graduate student Tommy Nesbit. I gave him some tags to try out on the species.

In December, I made a presentation at the Wednesday afternoon informal briefing of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. I briefed them on the Rector Brake Habitat Project, which is on the Arkansas River. Several Commissioners voiced concern about the increasing price tag, but they also suggested we need to wait until budget time to figure out if this project is “a go.”

OTHER STUFF:

I reviewed the final report for the Arkansas Tech University Ouachita River Fisheries Study that was done as part of the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) relicensing of Rempel and Carpenter Dams, owned by Entergy.

I began setting up a Farm Bill Workshop at the 2008 spring meeting of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society.

I attended a conference call concerning getting an Aquatic Gap Program going for the state of Arkansas.

I attended the Lower Basin Pallid Sturgeon Workgroup meeting in Vicksburg, Mississippi. We discussed the Mississippi River telemetry study and ongoing genetics issues. The meeting was very productive.

I took a week of vacation in November to go to Dallas and visit my father-in-law's family.

On a personal note, I had several doctors appointments related to the issues I have swallowing food and water, in addition to severe gastric reflux disease. I was diagnosed with Achalasia, and may require surgery in the next few months. Surprisingly, this is good news to me, in that I was worried it could have been cancer.

I reviewed Ben Batten's thesis. Ben is a student at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and I am on his graduate thesis committee.

Our family had a great Christmas season, and I hope everyone had a blessed holiday season!
