



FISHERIES STREAMS AND RIVERS NEWSLETTER

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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.

Statewide Stocked Catfish Exploitation Study Continues...

A statewide study is being conducted to assess the exploitation rate of catchable-sized channel catfish stocked in Arkansas waters. This study is important in that the Fisheries Division spends a large percentage of its annual budget stocking catfish. However, the stockings have never been evaluated to determine quantitatively if anglers are actually catching significant numbers of the fish stocked. The study has two objectives: (1) determine exploitation in Corps of Engineers (COE) reservoirs, AGFC lakes and streams, and (2) determine exploitation of catchables (~11 inches total length) vs. yearlings (~7 inches) in COE reservoirs. For the purposes of this study three categories of waterbodies are being studied: large Corps-owned reservoirs, AGFC lakes (125-6,000 acres) and streams. Six bodies of water from each category were selected for study. The number of fish tagged in each fishery will be a standard 500 fish per fishery for COE reservoirs and 400 for all other waters. The fish will be tagged with reward tags containing a toll-free phone number (local regional office) for the anglers to call. Anglers reporting a tag will be asked several questions. Due to state fiscal policies, tags must be mailed in for anglers to receive a reward payment. A follow-up mail survey will be performed to ask additional questions concerning angler satisfaction, demographics and attitudes towards harvest regulations.



Note the crutches

This March, a total of 2,050 catchable-sized channel catfish were stocked in the Caddo River, Little Missouri River, Lake Hogue, Lake Overcup, and Lake Hinkle. So far, there have been a lot of tag returns from Lakes Overcup and Hogue. Most of the tag returns have come from anglers targeting crappie, and many of them were fishing yo-yo's with minnows.



In January, I worked with Mississippi State University and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to catch the endangered pallid sturgeon as part of a telemetry study. I wrote a contract to fund this study an additional year. In the picture (below) is a large pallid sturgeon I caught at Choctaw Island on the Mississippi River.



January and February are typically the months to go to fisheries meetings. I attended the following: Southern Division American Fisheries Society (SDAFS), in New Orleans; I finished my term as Chair of the SDAFS Warmwater Streams Committee; attended an alligator gar aging workshop; a meeting of the Mississippi Interstate Resource Association (MICRA) Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee; meetings about Mississippi River dike notchings; an AGFC Fisheries staff meeting; and a meeting with the Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

Paddlefish



When sampling for pallid sturgeon by trawling on the Mississippi River, we captured numerous young paddlefish and sturgeon. This always raises the question, “Why are they easy to trawl

there, but when you trawl the Arkansas River you never catch one?”

In January, I assisted with the Pool 13 special commercial fishing season. Commercial fishing harvest was down this year. Most of the female paddlefish were not gravid, which is presumably related to two years of high flow on the Arkansas River. This year we did try something new---in order to determine the relationship between the two measurements, we collected length data with the fish flat on a board and with a tape over the top.



Other Stuff

In February, I broke my leg playing basketball, so that has been a challenge.

I toured Rector Brake with the COE, the city of Maumelle, and Cliff Christopher, as part of their Section 1135 study.

For the catfish study, I placed signs at several access areas, trained office managers to help with the catfish study database, and helped Arkansas Tech student, Chris Verba, catch catfish for his master’s project.

Please make time to enjoy fishing this spring!