



July 2007

Genoa National Fish Hatchery News and Notes

Genoa National Fish Hatchery Welcomes Jennifer (Jenny) Walker back as its Newest Fish Biologist.

Genoa National Fish Hatchery is proud to announce the return of Jenny Walker to its staff. Jenny is no stranger to Genoa NFH, having worked at the station through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and then the Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) for a total of 21 months.



Jenny is the newest staff member at Genoa NFH.

However, Genoa NFH was not her first position with the US Fish and Wildlife Service; she worked as a STEP employee with the La Crosse Fish Health Center while working on her Master's degree at UW La Crosse studying parasites in fishes. After completion of her SCEP program at Genoa NFH, Jenny accepted the fish biologist position with Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery in the U P of Michigan where she worked until this July. So please join the Genoa NFH staff in welcoming Jenny in her new position at Genoa NFH.

WELCOME HOME JENNY AND CONGRATULATIONS!
- Tony Brady

Student Employment Program a "STEP" up for Local Natural Resource Majors

One of the most frequently asked questions when interviewing for an entry level position is "How much experience do you have?" In order to help natural resource majors with this all important question, the Genoa hatchery has used the summer field season and its increased labor demands as a means to employ 2 local youth in the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). Natural resource majors Jorge Buening and Brandon Keesler, currently enrolled in the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point natural resources program, joined the staff at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery this June to assist with ongoing fish and mussel recovery and restoration efforts. Jorge is currently a senior in the Stevens Point program, and had previously volunteered at the station while going to Viroqua (WI) High School. He caught the conservation bug early in his high school years helping the station net northern pike and walleye on the Mississippi River and tagging fingerling lake sturgeon for tribal restorations in Missouri, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Brandon Keesler has been a part of the station's staff through 2 youth programs. He started at the station as a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) enrollee, and is now part of the STEP program as well. Brandon also recently completed his first year at Stevens Point.

Both employees are actively involved in mussel host fish trials, feeding and care of the hatchery's over 40,000 fingerling lake sturgeon, and the rearing and care of the station's 20+ species of fish and freshwater mussels.



Brandon Keesler and Jorge Buening ready to face the day and its challenges FWS photo

Through the Fish and Wildlife STEP program, we hope to fill a small but crucial role in providing work experiences to these two gentlemen to further their fish and wildlife careers. For more information on the STEP program, please refer to the Region 3 Human Resources STEP Program link at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/HumanResources/step.html>.

- Doug Aloisi

New Aquarium Offers Up Close View of the Big Fish at Genoa National Fish Hatchery.

There are two questions that visitors of a national fish hatchery (NFH) will always ask... Can I bring my fishing pole?, and... Do you have any big fish here? Unfortunately, until this spring, visitors seeking a glance at the big fish were often disappointed. Many of the broodstock are either in large ponds or are released back into the wild.

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A large aquarium was needed in order to provide a year round look at the species cultured on the facility. Development for a display tank began in November of 2006.



1,000 gallon welded aluminum tank with 3/4" tempered glass which is inlaid into a wall inside the station's sturgeon culture building.

The staff of Genoa decided upon constructing a 1,000 gallon welded aluminum tank with 3/4" tempered glass which is inlaid into a wall inside the station's sturgeon culture building. The location allows visitors a view of both the early and later life stages of lake sturgeon. The aquarium project became an excellent example of using the unique talents of the Genoa crew. Everyone helped with the construction in some way, but much of the thanks goes to the maintenance staff of Jeff Lockington and Dan Kumlin for their welding, electrical, and woodworking skills. The tank has only been up for about three months, and already hundreds of local and out of state visitors have enjoyed the live fish display. Children and the young at heart are captivated by the aquatic life found in lakes and rivers, and the aquarium provides an up close view of many of the species of fish and mussels found in the Upper Mississippi River basin.



The tank displays 10 species of fish including bluegill, black crappie, yellow perch, walleye, channel catfish, rainbow trout, brook trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and lake sturgeon.

As of right now, the tank displays 10 species of fish including bluegill, black crappie, yellow perch, walleye, channel catfish, rainbow trout, brook trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and lake sturgeon. A variety of freshwater mussels are able to be seen as well. All of the fish on display were reared on station over the past several years in order to avoid disease concerns which could be incurred if wild fish were brought on station. The hatchery is open to the public 7-3:30 M-F, and all are invited to come see the new addition.

- Nick Starzl

Mussel Restoration Begins in Iowa's Driftless Area

Iowa, like most of the country has seen drastic declines in their native freshwater mussel populations over the past century. With the exception of a few larger rivers such as the Iowa the Wapsipinicon Rivers, most of Iowa's viable mussel beds can be found in tributary streams throughout Iowa including the Driftless Area. Much of this

Driftless Area is used for agriculture, leaving the health of these tributary streams and all the aquatic life in them at the mercy of the land use practices of those doing the farming. One example of good land use can be seen in Jackson County, Iowa where Bob and Judy Kremer are making improvements to their portion of Farmer's Creek by doing bank stabilization projects and rotating livestock to different pastures. Farmer's Creek suffered a manure spill approximately 10 years ago, that killed over 133 thousand fish and the entire native mussel community.



Volunteers from multiple agencies tag mussel before they are transplanted into Farmer's Creek. Photo by Scott Gritters

Genoa National Fish Hatchery first became involved with Farmer's Creek in 2003 by providing smallmouth bass to repopulate the impacted streams. These smallmouth bass have now grown up and are reproducing to self sustaining levels. Smallmouth bass are excellent host fish for the fatmucket mussel, one of the four species lost during the manure spill. With the incredible numbers of smallmouth being seen in Farmer's Creek, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources decided to restore mussels, starting with fatmuckets, to portions of the stream owned by Bob and Judy. On 13 July, Genoa NFH provided 850

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cultured subadult fatmuckets for phase one of the planned mussel restoration of Farmer's Creek. Genoa NFH along with Iowa DNR, Jackson County Conservation Board, and the Natural Resources Conservation Services of Jackson and Jones Counties, IA joined together to mark, measure, and release the fatmuckets into two sites on Farmer's Creek.



Mussels are placed by hand into Farmer's Creek. Photo by Scott Gritters

These mussels will be surveyed for survival next summer, and in five years for reproduction. In that time it is hoped that additional year classes of cultured mussels will be marked and placed in the creek. Lessons learned on Farmer's Creek will soon be applied to other Driftless Area streams that are in need of mussel restoration.

- Tony Brady

Region 3 SCUBA divers examine the hull of the M/V Spence F. Baird

The US Fish and Wildlife Service purchased the M/V Spencer F. Baird in 2006 to replace the aging M/V Togue to be the primary stocking vessel for Region 3's lake trout program. In its short life, the Baird has withstood the forces of Hurricane Katrina, a trip up the eastern seaboard to the

Great Lakes and one intense field season. Though this first year of duty, insufficiencies were revealed in the paint covering the Baird's exterior. Peeling paint at the waterline caused concern and left the crew of the Baird interested in the condition of the paint below the water.



Tony Brady and Roger Gordon all suited up and ready to dive to check out the M/V Spencer F. Baird.

The question, of how to examine the hull of this 95 foot vessel, was raised in meeting with the Baird crew and the Regional Office. It was decided that SCUBA divers should be used to video tape the hull of the Baird. Divers from Genoa National Fish Hatchery were contacted about conducting the dive for the Regional Office. The Genoa NFH staff got use of an underwater camera from the La Crosse Fisheries Resource Office and drove to Cheboygan, Michigan where the Baird was stationed. After meeting with the Captain Mike Perry to discuss his concerns and potential hazards the divers could encounter, the Genoa NFH staff suited up and slipped off beneath the cool waters of Lake Huron. Divers examined the hull for about an hour then surfaced to show the Baird Crew the condition of the hull. A second trip beneath the Baird was ordered to capture additional footage of areas that concerned Captain Perry. Copies of the tape

were burned to CD and sent to the Regional Office and to the Captain Perry. This work will help the Regional Office and Baird crew decide how to proceed in repainting the Baird.

- Tony Brady

Genoa NFH Becomes Regular Supporter of United Special Sportsman Alliance's Annual Kids day

The United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) provides unique outdoor opportunities to children that are diagnosed with cancer, Down's syndrome, terminal illnesses, and other challenges. These unique opportunities include fishing trips with professional B.A.S.S. anglers, hunting trips to some of the best ranches in Texas and around the country. Brigid O'Donoghue, the founder of USSA, hosts an annual gathering of "Brigid's Kids" and their families at her home in rural Black River Falls Wisconsin. The Black River site is an outstanding location for fishing, boating and swimming, because of the many lakes and ponds used to fill and drain cranberry bogs that are prevalent in the area.



The touching stories of struggles and survival that these kids go through are enough to melt any heart.

This is the second year that Genoa National Fish Hatchery has been

invited to present an aquarium of fish and give presentations to the nearly 200 people in attendance. As the kids spent the day learning about fish and mussels, fishing, shooting bows and rifles, riding horses and swimming, it was easy to see that they valued this chance to enjoy the many outdoor opportunities available. It was a pleasure and honor to be invited back and to be able to share in their joy, and participate in this noteworthy event.

-Tony Brady

For additional information about any accomplishment report please contact Genoa National Fish Hatchery at 608-689-2605

