

# Hatchery Highlights

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Warm Springs NFH News and Updates



Summer 2009

### FISHERIES AND REFUGES WORK TOGETHER TO COMPLETE POND PROJECT



In late August, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery needed some assistance and two refuges answered the call! A pond rehabilitation project was underway and the staff at Warm Springs quickly realized they needed heavy equipment and additional manpower. Richard Johnson, Eufaula NWR, and Wayne Smith, Piedmont NWR, spent an entire week at Warm Springs helping out.



Two adjacent ponds at the hatchery were being combined into one large pond. The project meant that tons of dirt would need to be moved and graded to enlarge the pond as well as expand and reinforce the banks. The pond will become the main supply for the holding house. Previous to this rehab, the two single ponds both supplied the holding house. However, leaking pipes and minimal water pressure and volume had the hatchery looking for a solution. The water for the holding house is used to culture alligator gar and is also extensively used during harvesting and marking of Phase I and II striped bass.



The project needed several pieces of heavy equipment to complete the job. Chad Shirey, electrician, is qualified to run all of that equipment, but the hatchery does not own the right equipment for this project. The hatchery borrowed two dozers, one excavator, and a dump truck from refuges. Along with the equipment, Piedmont and Eufaula NWR's were also able to send two highly qualified and skilled employees. These refuge employees provided invaluable help and insight to bring the project to completion. Warm Springs is extremely happy with the outcome as well as knowing that fisheries and refuges can work together for projects like this.

### HATCHERY WELCOMES TWO GRADUATE STUDENTS FROM COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY



Two graduate students from Columbus State University recently joined the hatchery team to work on freshwater mussel research. Andy Hartzog and Jeremy Haulk are working on the development of propagation techniques and protocols, as well as gathering information on life history, habitat assessment and population status of the threatened *Elliptoideus sloatianus* (purple bankclimber). Columbus State and Warm Springs Hatchery have worked closely in the past with freshwater mussel conservation efforts in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River basin.



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## NEW OUTREACH TEAM AT WARM SPRINGS

The old saying goes “*It takes a village to raise a child...*” and implementing a successful Outreach Program is no exception. With increasing workloads and decreasing time, staff came together after quickly realizing that the only way to work on outreach was to pool resources. Each section of Warm Springs was doing a pretty good job of conducting small activities and events. But when it came to big events or conflicting schedules, a team approach was developed. Rosla Plant, from the Fisheries Center, Nicole Rankin, from the Technology Center, and Jaci Zelko, from the Hatchery organized an Outreach Team. It was decided that having one “team” will allow increased communication and more efficient efforts in all areas of outreach and environmental education. The team is a way to share ideas, make requests for help, and reach consensus on conservation messages that all of Warm Springs Programs can agree on and fully support.



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## CARLOS ECHEVARRIA RECEIVES REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S AWARD



The Regional Director's Awards Ceremony was held in Atlanta on May 4. Carlos Echevarria was recognized with the Regional Director's Honor Award because of his tireless efforts in restoring and recovering aquatic species. The knowledge and leadership Carlos brings to the Center have been critical in addressing restoration and recovery efforts for aquatic species such as striped bass, alligator gar, robust redhorse sucker, lake sturgeon, and shortnose sturgeon. Additionally, Carlos has been pivotal in addressing freshwater mussel recovery of the ACF river system impacted by drought conditions. Carlos' understanding of the urgency and timely action has made him a valuable asset in these recovery efforts. Carlos' professional credibility and his ability to develop strong partnerships have served to enhance overall efforts in the restoration and recovery of species such as the robust redhorse sucker and the lake sturgeon. Working with both of these species at the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery has shown great success for reintroduction and recovery actions. A special talent that Carlos brings to the job is his knowledge in developing and constructing systems to address water quality problems. Carlos has designed numerous systems to accommodate various technology needs at the hatchery and also at the Fish Technology Center.

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## B-i-T FACILITATOR TRAINING & JUNIOR RANGER CAMP



Jaci Zelko, along with Nicole Rankin (FTC), Rosla Plant (RFC), and Frida Powers (Friends Group) along with staff from Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park and Roosevelt's Little White House Historic Site offered three-day Junior Ranger Camps on July 7-9 and July 21-23, 2009. Children from across the Southeast came to Warm Springs and Pine Mountain, GA to participate in this statewide program. The Junior Rangers experienced historical, scientific, and recreational education at the three locations. The Junior Rangers learned about fish identification, aquatic food webs, and stream and pond habitats while at the hatchery. All participants received patches and certificates during a ceremony held at the FDR State Park on the last day. Jaci also conducted a Biologist in Training Facilitator training for some leaders of Junior Ranger Camp on June 25, 2009. Nicole Rankin and Sam McDuffie, FDR State Park Interpretive Ranger, attended the training and learned to promote stewardship and teach different methods of acquiring, organizing and assessing biological information. The BiT program was exclusively used while the Junior Rangers were at the hatchery during the camp.



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## STUDENTS ATTEND FRESHWATER MUSSEL IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP



Andy Hartzog and Jeremy Haulk, are two graduate students from Columbus State University working on freshwater mussel research at Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery. They recently attended the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers Freshwater Mussel Identification Workshop held the first week in August at the Joseph Jones Ecological Research Center in Newton, GA. The workshop consisted of classroom and field components. Both Jeremy and Andy gained valuable knowledge on mussel identification as well as networking with other mussel biologists. They both had a great time swimming the rivers and creeks and using the backpack shockers.



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## KIDS' FISH FOR FUN DAY IS A SUCCESS!!

Kids Fishing Day is an annual event held at the hatchery that allows children from ages 3-12 to come and fish for catfish. This year's event was held on June 6, 2009. The USFWS and Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery (Friends Group) joined forces to show local families the enjoyment of fishing. Over 200 children participated and approximately 750 catfish were caught during this event. As an exciting addition, the Tech Center provided four touch tanks with alligators, crayfish, turtles, salamanders, frogs, and snapping turtles for children to touch and observe. This exciting day allows children and their parents to get in touch with the native fish and wildlife in Georgia.

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## GULF STRIPED BASS CULTURE



Warm Springs NFH cooperates with regional and national efforts to restore Gulf strain striped bass populations throughout the southeast. WSNFH participated in regional efforts to meet tasks as identified in several plans this year. Those tasks include annual broodstock collections, evaluating effectiveness of stocked hatchery reared fish, sample collections for genetic evaluations, care and propagation of wild and or hatchery-reared broodfish. The culture, management, harvest, inventory, marking and distribution of striped bass to meet stocking goals at locations designated by the Striped Bass committee for the purpose of restoring striped bass populations is also a goal of the National Fish Hatchery.

For 2009, approximately 810,000 fry were received from Marion Fish Hatchery in Marion, Alabama and xx fry from the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center. These fry were stocked into 10 ponds for rearing. After 29 - 35 days, the fish were harvested as Phase I fingerlings. All fish stocked received a chemical mark of Oxytetracycline. This bone mark allows for post-stocking evaluation to be undertaken by our state partners.

Over 371,000 fish (143 lbs) were stocked in nine locations:

Goat Rock Lake	Lake Seminole
Lake Oliver	Walter F. George Lake
Bartlett's Ferry Lake	Lake Worth
Lake Talquin	George W. Andrews Lake
West Point Reservoir	

An additional 35,000 fish were held back and re-stocked into 6 ponds at the hatchery for Phase II production. These fish will be harvested and stocked into rivers in the late fall.

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## ALLIGATOR GAR GROWING UP AND MOVING OUT



The hatchery once again had a successful alligator gar culture season. Even though the program is rapidly expanding, the staff continues to make improvements and adjustments in the culture techniques and protocols needed to raise this species. Gator gar were raised for two programs: restoration of gar in Alabama and the restoration and enhancement of gar in the Mississippi river basin. Our staff assisted with the spawning of adults at Pvt. John Allen NFH in Tupelo and Marion Fish Hatchery in Alabama. Progeny from the Mississippi broodstock pairings and the

Alabama broodstock pairings were received in early May. The fry were raised in circular and oval tanks. As they grew larger, the fingerlings were transferred to large tanks and raceways. Each strain of fish was kept separate during the entire culture period. All gar were trained on floating pellets, and it was observed that predation was drastically reduced by increasing the frequency of feeding during the day and providing food overnight.

A total of 3,600 Mississippi fry were received and over 1,950 fish of those were stocked into the Hatchie River, TN on June 30<sup>th</sup> after only 48 days of culture. Exactly 143 Alabama fish were stocked into Claiborne Lake, AL after an initial number of 1,600 fry were received and cultured for 98 days.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery  
5308 Spring Street  
Warm Springs, GA 31830  
706-655-3382 Fax 706-655-9034  
<http://www.fws.gov/warmsprings/FishHatchery>