



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers

*Leadership in Conserving, Enhancing, and Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems*



# Columbia Fishery Resources Office

Columbia, Missouri



Series of photos depicting Columbia Fishery Resources Office activities: (Top Row, Lt. to Rt.): Wyatt Doyle showing teachers a shovelnose sturgeon; Larval pallid sturgeon size comparison; Joanne Grady holding a tagged pallid sturgeon; (Middle Row, Lt. to Rt.): Project Leader, Jim Milligan, holding a paddlefish; Threatened Niangua darter; Biologists using electro fishing gear to assess fish in a National Wildlife Refuge lake; (Bottom Row, Lt. to Rt.): Biologists assessing fish populations using a hoop net; Biologist holding a large flathead catfish; Missouri River sandbar habitat.

# Columbia Fishery Resources Office

The Columbia Fishery Resources Office (FRO) was established in 1991. The office is located in Columbia, Missouri and is responsible for fishery management assistance to other Fish and Wildlife Service refuges and offices, Missouri River Natural Resources Committee, Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee, and other federal and state agencies. The office mission is “To conserve, enhance, and protect aquatic ecosystems in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Iowa, and border waters of Kansas and Nebraska in partnership with state and federal agencies, resource managers, and concerned citizens.”

Columbia FRO in partnership with Carterville FRO has assisted the 28 states of the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association with a basin-wide paddlefish stock assessment database since 1997. Twenty-three states are using this data to develop multi-jurisdictional paddlefish management plans with the Fish and Wildlife Service’s assistance.

Columbia FRO chairs the “Middle Basin Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Workgroup” made up of state, federal, and university biologists working to restore endangered pallid sturgeon populations in the lower Missouri and middle Mississippi Rivers. Biologists assessed pallid sturgeon populations from 1996 through 2000. This assessment indicated that the number of pallid sturgeon had declined and that hybridization with the common shovelnose sturgeon had increased from a previous study. Columbia FRO staff continues to monitor pallid sturgeon in the lower Missouri River working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state fish and game agencies to establish a long-term monitoring program for this critically endangered species. Columbia FRO works cooperatively with the Neosho NFH to tag and stock pallid sturgeon.



-USFWS

**Columbia Fishery Resources Office biologist, Wyatt Doyle, holds an endangered pallid sturgeon captured during a winter assessment on the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge on the Missouri River. Biological data is collected and fish are immediately returned to the water.**



-USFWS

## Columbia Fishery Resources Office Staff

**Left to Right: Andy Starostka, Wyatt Doyle, Jim Milligan, Joanne Grady, Louise Mauldin**

A high priority of this office is to monitor restored aquatic habitat on the lower Missouri River. Fish populations are assessed at natural and man-made habitat restoration sites on several units of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. The goal of this project is to determine “what works” and to use this information to guide future habitat restoration projects in order to provide spawning and nursery areas for native fish such as paddlefish and sturgeon.



-photo by Jim Whitley

**Aerial photo of pallid sturgeon, piping plover, and least tern habitat on the Missouri River in Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge.**

The newest challenge of the Columbia FRO is the invasion of exotic Asian carp species in the lower Missouri River. These invasive fish may threaten native fish and shellfish. The Columbia FRO is working with partners to develop a control plan for Asian carp and other invasive species.

For detailed information about Columbia Fishery Resources Office, contact the office at: **(573) 234-2132** or visit their website at:

<http://midwest.fws.gov/columbiafisheries/>