

*Research Projects: In our quest for the best available information and sound science, the Mississippi Field Office conducts field projects and research relating to the needs of endangered and threatened species and our trust species. We fund research projects through grants and often assist with field projects conducted by our partners (universities, museums and other natural resource agencies).*

## **Shrimping on the Mississippi River**

By Malika Shettar, Youth Ambassador, Mississippi Field Office, Jackson, MS

**Teaser: Baiting freshwater shrimp for research with FWS biologist Paul Hartfield and doctoral student Tyler Olivier on the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, MS**

On the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, Mississippi, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) biologist Paul Hartfield, University of Louisiana doctoral student Tyler Olivier, and I went huntin' for one of the world's greatest delicacies – SHRIMP!



Beyond tasting great, shrimp are also known to make one of the greatest migrations of all creatures. However, what Mr. Paul and Tyler are concerned about how these little fellas are doing after injurious Gulf oil spill a few years back. Once a month, Mr. Paul and Tyler come to the river and sample the freshwater shrimp population. They bait some traps and leave some floating free. The different types of traps are essential to create a diverse profile of these river shrimp.





The baited traps attract a few of the adult gravid females. Gravid means “carrying eggs” and these eggs look like yellow pellets.

One of the highlights of the shrimping trip was not related to shrimp at all. It was when a silver carp, one of Mississippi’s flying fish, jumped out of the water and nearly landed in our boat! Too bad it missed; we could have had a nice fish dinner.

I learned from this shrimping research trip not only about getting up early during 2011 summer break – which, believe me, we had to do often – but also that any kind of research, especially in the field, requires incredible amounts of hard work.



Although I've done research before, it has always been behind a lab bench. Going to the field was a new experience for me and it was great. I also loved the chance to get my hands dirty – in more ways than one, like at lunch time – I discovered that when “brown-bagging it” with two male biologists on the river, any requests for hand sanitizer and napkins will just draw blank stares. Maybe the leeches could help with the lunch hygiene.

