



Manager's Corner By: Karen Kilpatrick

I am very excited that we are beginning to get a monthly newsletter out. It is just one more reflection of the changes that we have gone through in the last year at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery. I would like to use this inaugural newsletter to catch you up on some of the major change we've gone through.

The hatchery's flagship species have been striped bass (since the early 1980's), paddlefish (1990), and pallid sturgeon (1994). Over the last five years there has been a major change in natural resource conservation philosophy and implementation at the field level. To keep up with that change the hatchery had to make some

tough decisions about the direction of flagship species. In the summer of 2009 decisions were made to shift hatchery work to change flagship species to include the Louisiana pearlshell mussel, the alligator gar, and the alligator snapping turtle. The hatchery has experience with all three species but to expand in the mussel arena a new malacologist (mussel biologist) was hired in March of 2010. With his arrival we have been able to move forward with the mussels and are hoping to make great strides in the next 10-20 years with mussel work in Louisiana and surrounding states.

The decision to drop long term species and regroup around three new species

has been a long, arduous process but one that will greatly benefit the resources we serve. We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on the "happenings" at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery and we encourage feedback and interaction from all arenas, so feel free to contact us at any time!



Alligator gar prior to being stocked back into the wild.

Ask Not What Your Hatchery Can Do For You But What You Can Do For Your Hatchery By: Karen Kilpatrick

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery has an active volunteer program. Volunteers help with everything from public use to fish work to database and website management. Totals for the FY 2010 cycle revealed that the hatchery had 2,253 volunteer hours ... that is equivalent to just over 1 full time employee!

The monetary value assigned to that, according to national policy, is \$56,325!!! If you are interested in volunteering at the hatchery, please contact Hatchery Manager Karen Kilpatrick @ 318.352.5324 or karen_kilpatrick@fws.gov.



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NNFH by the Numbers

- The Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery received over 430 visitors to our aquarium during the month of October.
- Volunteers worked a total of 72 hours in October.
- You can take a 360 degree virtual tour of the hatchery at www.fws.gov/natchitoches/tour

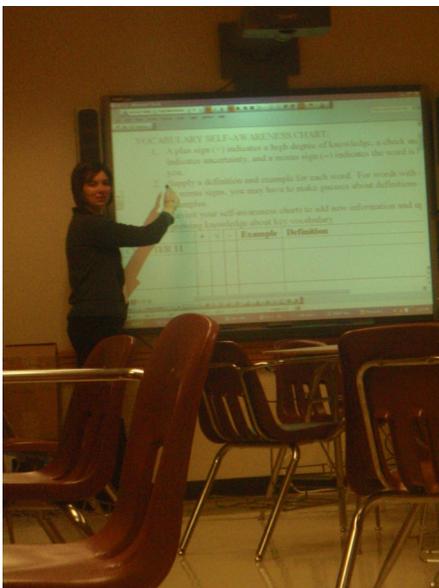
Natives in the Classroom

By: Tony Brady

In a day and age dominated by video games, portable gaming systems, and smartphones that provide the internet anywhere you go, getting young people interested in the outdoor and conservation can be challenging. The Native Fish in the Classroom program is a way to bring conservation education to middle and high school students that may never have or take the opportunity to learn about native fish and conservation. The Native Fish program is a partnership between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and



This little bluegill is ready for class to start.



Looking through the viewing window this is what the fish see during school.

Fisheries, the Louisiana Sea Grant, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the schools that participate. The schools that are selected to participate in the program receive paddlefish eggs in the spring and the students raise them until they are fingerlings. Once the fish reach the fingerling stage they are returned to Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery where the paddlefish will eventually be released into Louisiana waters. Natchitoches Central High School has two class rooms participating in the Native Fish program and the teachers have asked Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery to provide them with sun-

fish to start up their culture systems. Using sunfish in the fall, the students are able to inoculate their culture systems with beneficial bacteria that will help balance the water chemistry prior to the paddlefish eggs arriving in the spring. This early inoculation should improve paddlefish survival in the spring. For more information about the Native Fish in the Classroom you can contact Angela Capello with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries acapello@wlf.louisiana.gov



Mrs. Mathews and Ms. Beaudion sponsor the Native Fish in the Classroom for Natchitoches Central High School.

Destination Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

By: Tony Brady

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery is a popular field trip destination for school groups in northern Louisiana. On October 27th, the Castor School located in Bienville Parish was the first of what will be many school groups to visit the hatchery this school year. The students, numbering about 40 pre-kindergarteners, enjoyed an art project where they colored and made fish head bands as a little gift

from the hatchery. After the art project, the students toured the aquarium where they experienced, in the words of one student, “a really scary big catfish” as well as stream fish from Kisatchie National Forest, an alligator, and other native fish species from Louisiana. The highlight of the aquarium tour for many was the al-

“A really scary big catfish”

bino snapping turtle. Natchitoches NFH hopes that the students from the Castor School will visit the hatchery many more times before they graduate, allowing

them to learn more and more about natural resource conservation with each visit.

Natchitoches NFH provides recreational fishing opportunities for Louisiana.

By: Tony Brady

On the banks of Cane River Lake in historic Natchitoches (Nack-a-TISH), Louisiana sits the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH). Built in 1931, NNFH



Assistant hatchery manager Jan Dean and STEP employee Wesley Maddox seine fish from one of the hatchery ponds.

was charged to produce catfish, largemouth bass, and bream (bluegill and redear sunfish) for local public waters and farm ponds. While the hatchery has added programs over the years to meet changing resource needs. The hatchery still recognizes recreational fishing as a valid program. In October, bluegill and channel catfish ponds were harvested from hatchery ponds and transferred to our partners to be stocked out in 17 different locations around the state of Louisiana. Working with the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries' Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery (BFFH), the US Army Corp of Engineers, and The Natural Resource Conservation Service, NNFH has provided over 1,251,805 fish for future recreational fishing opportunities during the 2010 fiscal year.



As the ponds are drained, the fish follow the receding water and are collected in the kettle area seen here. The kettles are then seined to harvest the fish.

Alligator Snapping Turtles Reared and Released From Natchitoches NFH.

By: Jan Dean

Twenty-seven young alligator snapping turtles reared at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery were released October 9th at the Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge north of Monroe, Louisiana. The 2009 year class hatchlings were provided by Dr. John L. Carr of the University of Louisiana at Monroe. They hatched in August and were transferred to Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery on October 13, 2009. The hatchlings were implanted with PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tags, aka microchips, by Dr. Carr and hatchery staff, and the tag retention was monitored at the fish hatchery for a year. PIT tag retention was 89% when reared in smooth fiberglass tanks. This study is part of the overall research and restocking effort for alligator snapping turtles in Louisiana, and these turtles are but one year class of several which

have been reared at Natchitoches. For more information about the alligator snapping turtle program please feel free to contact Jan Dean, Assistant Manager, at jan_dean@fws.gov.

Alligator Snapping Turtle Fact Sheet for Louisiana

Macrolemys temminckii

Habitat:

- Most commonly in freshwater lakes and bayous, but also found in coastal marshes

Range:

- In Louisiana can be located statewide but less commonly in marshes

Threats:

- In the past, commercial turtle harvesting and selling has depleted population size, though has since been legally banned



This young alligator snapping turtle shows why you don't want to mess with him. With his mouth open you can see his "worm" fishing lure used to catch unsuspecting fish in the wild.



NATCHITOCHESE NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY

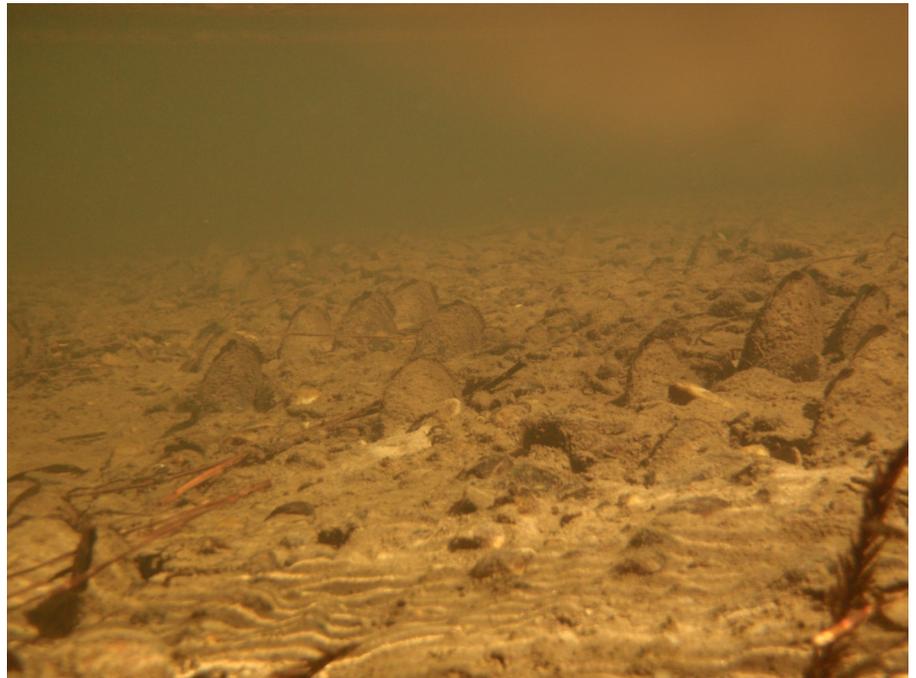
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*Saving the world, one species
at a time.*



Louisiana pearlshell mussels from Black Creek, as seen from a fish's prospective.

[http://www.fws.gov/
natchitoches](http://www.fws.gov/natchitoches)

Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel Research Begins

By: Tony Brady

The Louisiana pearlshell mussel (LPM) is known to live in two Louisiana parishes and is one of the rarest freshwater mussels in the state, causing it to be listed as

a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The LPM like most freshwater mussels reproduce by producing hundreds of thousands of larva called

glochidia that must undergo a metamorphosis while attached to the gills or fins of a fish. The details about when LPM females are producing the glochidia and what fish the glochidia must attach to is unknown. Earlier this year, Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH) hired a malacologist or mussel biologist, to begin studying the life history of the LPM in preparation to develop a propagation program should propagation and culture be required to recover the species. The hatchery's malacologist with assistance from the Kisatchie National Forest, Lafayette Ecological Services

Field Office, and the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Heritage Program began monitoring two populations of LPM on a two week cycle. Sampling includes opening the mussels to examine the gills to see if glochidia are being developed. Once glochidia are discovered, then mussels will be collected and taken to NNFH where the glochidia will be collected from the females and exposed to several different fish species. These fish will be held in an aquarium system designed to collect newly metamorphosed mussels called transformers. When transformers are collected, then the fish species that produced them will be declared a viable host for the LPM. Any resulting transformers will then be used to develop the technology needed to rear these rare mussels in captivity. Information learned from this research will move the LPM one step closer to being removed from the Endangered Species List. For more information contact malacologist Tony Brady at tony_brady@fws.gov



Tagged Louisiana pearlshell mussels from Bayou Clear. The tags help us relocated the mussels on return trips to the stream.