

FY 2014

TXFWCO Activity Report: September



Flooding Damage at Phantom Spring

Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Monthly Report

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Activities

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Brazos River Fish Passage

On 3-5 September 2014, Mike Montagne and Duane Lucia of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, conducted potential fish passage site visits on the Brazos River near Post Texas. The potential projects would benefit the newly listed smalleye shiner, *Notropis buccula*, and the sharpnose shiner, *Notropis oxyrhynchus*, by reducing habitat fragmentation of their critical habitat on the Brazos River.



One of many unimproved crossings on the Brazos River.

Pecos Pupfish Monitoring

On 8-9 September 2014, Cole Webster (TXFWCO) and Kenny Saunders (TPWD) conducted monitoring of Pecos pupfish, *Cyprinodon pecosensis*, on Salt Creek near Orla Texas. They also checked on the new refugia for Pecos pupfish at Rillito Spring. They found the whole spring run and Cienega were full of pupfish of all sizes.



The new Pecos pupfish refugia is working well at Rillito Spring.

Paddlefish Reintroduction Project

On 22-26 September 2014, Mike Montagne and Diego Araujo, with help from TPWD in Marshal TX, conducted American paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) radio telemetry monitoring at Caddo Lake and the Big Cypress Bayou. The towers continue to collect data at each of the three locations. Approximately 46 miles of Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake were searched by boat and twenty one of the forty seven paddlefish were contacted. Nineteen paddlefish were detected just below the spillway of Lake O' the Pines. With the help and equipment of TPWD we were able to electrofish survey the area below the spillway and recaptured one of the tagged paddlefish and two more were seen but not captured.



Figure 1A radio tagged paddlefish was captured below the spillway of Lake "o the Pines.

On 23 September 2014, over 2000 12” tagged paddlefish from Tishomingo NFH were stocked in Big Cypress Bayou at Caddo Lake State Park. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department transported the paddlefish in their new special circular paddlefish hauling tanks. All fish arrived in good shape and were released into the bayou before a large group of interested parties and onlookers.



USFWS and TPWD release 2000 12” paddlfish into the Big Cypress Bayou.

Clear Creek Gambusia Collection

On 30 September, the TXFWCO, TPWD, the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center, and Inks Dam NFH collected approximate 250 Clear Creek gambusia, *Gambusia hederochir*, from Wilkinson Spring, near Menard, TX, and transported them to Inks Dam NFH. Inks Dam NFH is the only refugia for the endemic endangered species.



Biologist attempt to identify Clear Creek gambusia. They appear very similar to the invasive *Gambusia affinis*.

Phantom Cave Ciénegas Damaged

Heavy September rains in West Texas caused considerable damage to the ciénegas at Phantom Spring Cave. On 12 September 2014, the Balmorhea area received heavy rains. The rain water flooded into the Phantom area and started to pour into the mouth of the cave, bringing with it a lot of debris. The pool at the mouth of the cave was undercut and is in danger of collapsing. Water damaged the electrical systems and back up generator. The pumps were no longer functioning. Luckily Bill Tucker, the diver and maintenance person for the Bureau of Reclamation for Phantom Cave, was able to restore power and repair most of the systems. Then water began to flow out of the cave mouth due to the rains in the Davis Mountains and have somehow stopped the pumps. Water levels remain high and repairs cannot be attempted until they recede.



Flooding at Phantom Spring has damaged the ciénegas.

October Schedule of Activities:

9 October 2014: TXFWCO team building day

14-17 October 2014: Paddlefish radio tracking

20 October 2014: Stewart Jacks station visit

21 October 2014: Ottine Dam engineering site visit

25 October 2014: Fishing Derby hosted by TXFWCO and SMARC

27-29 October 2014: Fish collection at Camps Maxie, Bowie, and Maybry for
contaminants tests