



# *Uvalde National Fish Hatchery*

## Monthly Activity Report

### *September 2014*



#### Staff

**Project Leader • Grant Webber**

**Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo**

**Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra**

**Fish Biologist • Rick Echols**

**Administrative Technician • Vacant**

**Pathways Student • Rueben Mendoza**

**Volunteer • Ian Westmeyer**

**Volunteer • Catherine Baxter**

The Burkett Well monitoring agreement between the Edwards Aquifer Authority and the Fish and Wildlife Service (Uvalde NFH) has been finalized. Monitoring activities have not yet begun.

#### Workforce Management

Rueben Mendoza continued his work at Uvalde NFH as a member of the Pathways Program. He continues to perform at a high level and as a result, has been given much more latitude and autonomy in carrying out his tasks.

Ian Westmeyer returned to his home school program but has continued to volunteer with us during September. For the month, he logged 58 hours. His responsibilities for the month included cleaning algae from rice plants, assisting in Texas Wild Rice transplants, and designing recirculating systems for rice tanks in addition to his daily care of the Fountain Darter, Devil's River Minnow, and San Marcos Salamander. We appreciate all his time dedicated to the hatchery.

Being Grant's last month, he worked to get moved out of the office as well as delegating tasks and completing paperwork to make sure his transition out would be smooth. His official last day of work will be October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Catherine Baxter began volunteering at the hatchery one day a week in early September. She has a MS degree in environmental toxicology from Texas Tech. She is using her volunteer time to gain valuable experience while looking for work in her field.

#### Partnerships and Accountability

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas Wild-rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs pupfish, Devil's River minnow, and San Marcos salamander. All species are performing well. The station continues to maintain communications with the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) and Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program for existing and upcoming refugia activities of threatened and endangered species native to the Edwards Aquifer system. In addition, an agreement is in place for the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery to provide 700-F1 juvenile fountain darters to the USGS's Leetown Science Center in West Virginia.

We continue to coordinate with the Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in preparation to receive emergency transfers of additional Devil's River Minnow should the need arise.



**Volunteer Catherine Baxter tagging wild rice pots**

Rick Echols attended the project leader's meeting in Albuquerque. It was a great opportunity for him to network and get to know people he had only previously known only by name.

### Aquatic Species Activities

Young of the year channel catfish now average approximately 7-8 inches in length. Growth rates this summer continue to be outstanding.

Recent checks of our discharge sand filters showed that no new Devil's River minnows had escaped the raceways; most likely due to the addition of the micro-mesh screens added to the interior tanks in the previous month. Our wildlife pond functioned properly as a safeguard for any escaping fish. It is nearly dry now and will be put back in service in the next few weeks. This should make our birder friends happy.

Spawning efforts have been a moderate success for the Devil's River minnow. We have approximately 30 fingerlings that seem to have made it past the critical point where high mortality tends to occur. Our success may be attributed to "aging" our spawning baskets under artificial light such that algae grows on

the fabric. Fry are often seen picking at the netting material. Efforts will be ramped up in the coming months.

The station continues to hold 812 juvenile fountain darters destined for life history studies at the USGS Leetown Science Center in West Virginia. These fish should be shipped by the end of October.

Newly arrived San Marcos salamanders continue to do well. Males and females will soon be paired for spawning purposes.

Michelle Crawford's Texas wild rice light intensity, PhD project, continued this month with more test trials to configure the most efficient protocols. She has seen some significant improvement in controlling algae in her tanks and on her plants in the last month.

### Additional Facility Activities

Feral hogs have not been spotted this last month; however, their presence is still occasionally detected through rooting and crossings.

### Facility Maintenance

The maintenance crew distributed recently acquired gravel across the dirt roads on the facility to reduce the muddy sections after rainfall.

Rueben removed and disposed of torn nets from the big storm in June. He also cut tree limbs and weeds from around the observation pond which had overgrown the trails and benches.

The soffit / wind damage repair work has not yet begun, but should commence in the near future. The tank house electrical project should be awarded soon.



**New sewer line extension**

In addition, a ramp to load equipment onto trucks and trailers is currently in the process of being constructed. To accommodate three travel trailers for volunteers this fall, a third sewage line of 40 feet was added to the pre-existing line.

### Safety

A quarterly safety meeting was held this month to finish out the 2014 fiscal year. Carbon monoxide poisoning was the topic.

### Facility Visitors

A couple from San Antonio was given a tour of the hatchery in September as well as shown to the wildlife ponds as they were birding enthusiasts. In total, the hatchery hosted approximately 8 visitors for the month of September.

### Weather

Temperatures for September ranged from a low of 63°F to a high of 99°F. Overall, high temperatures were slightly below normal with the observed average high for the month at 91°F compared to the 110 year average of 92°F. Low temperatures were much above normal with the long term average for the month at 67°F versus the observed 71°F. This can be largely attributed to abundant cloud cover. Measurable rainfall occurred on 13 days in September with precipitation totaling 3.61 inches. According to The Weather Channel, September monthly precipitation averages 2.33 inches. Year to date rainfall is currently at 18.26 inches compared to the 110 year average of 18.97 inches. The Edward's Aquifer has been slowly increasing in September and is currently at 826.4', compared to 826.0' at the end of last month and 836.1' this time last year.

#### **Uvalde National Fish Hatchery**

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<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/fisheries/uvalde/index.html>

<b>Uvalde National Fish Hatchery September 2014</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Year Class</b>	<b>Geographic Origin</b>	<b>Approximate Number</b>
Channel Catfish Broodstock	2013	Domestic Strain	136
Channel Catfish	2014	Domestic Strain	3,000
Comanche Springs Pupfish	Mixed	Phantom Springs	294,952
Devil's River Minnow	2013	San Felipe Springs	270
Devil's River Minnow	2014	San Felipe Springs	29
Fountain Darter	2012	Comal River	65
Fountain Darter	2013	Comal River	73
Fountain darter	2013/2014	Comal River	812
San Marcos Salamander (M)	2013	San Marcos River	11
San Marcos Salamander (F)	2013	San Marcos River	11
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (A)	42
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (B)	15
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (C)	2
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (D)	13
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (F)	19
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (G)	18
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (J)	3
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (K)	10
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	SMR (Unknown)	24

Species and number at Uvalde NFH at the end of the month.