



Making Waves



Volume 11, Issue 8 August 2013



Youth Outdoor Fest ... Still on Target

by Jenna Merry

It just keeps getting better.

Each year the La Crosse FWCO, in partnership with the Friends of the Upper Mississippi and the City of La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department, hosts Youth Outdoor Fest—a free outdoor festival held at Pettibone Park.



Year after year, the fest has grown and 2013 was no exception. Well over 2,500 people attended the fest this year, making it the biggest ever.

Children and families enjoyed a fun-filled day visiting nearly 40 activity booths. New activities



this year included bird house building with the Home Depot and target shooting at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation BB gun range.



The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation inflatable BB-gun target shooting range was a popular attraction



Motor boat driving with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is always a huge hit

In addition to these new events, returning favorites like archery with the Chaseburg Rod and Gun Club, motor boat driving with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and trout fishing with the Genoa National Fish Hatchery allowed many children to partake in activities that they may never before have had the opportunity to experience.

That was the goal USFWS biologist Heidi Keuler envisioned for the fest when it was formed five years ago. She wanted to create an event that allowed kids the opportunity to get outside, try something new, and hopefully spark their interest in outdoor activities. By the looks on the faces of participants this year, there was no doubt this goal was realized.



The event also helps parents and family members interact with local agencies and businesses that offer these activities so that children can continue to enjoy them all year long.



A La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department lifeguard leads the way for a youngster learning to kayak at the Pettibone Park lagoon

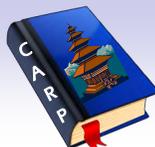
Thanks to all our of partners and participants for their continued commitment to make this event a success year after year—we could not do it without you and can't wait to see what next year brings.



Wisconsin DNR Warden Ric Groenman teaches wildlife identification skills with furs

Mark your calendars now for the 6th annual Youth Outdoor Fest on July 12, 2014. See you there!

What's Inside?



Asian Carp Chronicles
Page 2-3



A Walk in the Pasture
Page 3



Meet Me Here
Page 3



Others Say ...
Page 4



The Asian Carp Chronicle - Updates from the Front Lines

New Work Around the Windy City

By Nick Blomfield



By Kyle Mosel



Asian carp related projects on the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) have kept the La Crosse (WI) FWCO busy for several years. Most of these ongoing projects are surveillance efforts designed to find Asian carps near the electric dispersal barrier, either by the direct capture of fish using traditional sampling methods (e.g., electrofishing, netting) or the use of standardized laboratory methods to isolate and detect Asian carp genetic material (DNA) from water samples. This year, we've added two new projects to the fold.

Starting this past spring, we began a mark/recapture project to study fish movements around the barrier. While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) has been studying fish movements here using telemetry methods, this effort has been limited by the small numbers of fish that can commonly be captured here. Our new project will allow us to expand on this earlier effort. Along with ACE and Illinois Department of Natural Resources crews, we have been marking large (>12-inch) fish here with floy tags and placing them below the dispersal barrier. We will also mark large numbers of hatchery-reared fish of several species and release them below the barrier this fall. Locations where tagged/marked fish are recaptured will give us a better idea of the movements of both large and small fish in relation to the electric barrier.

Meanwhile, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) role in DNA surveillance during past years was limited to the collection of water samples that were subsequently filtered and analyzed by trained staff from the ACE and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This year however, the FWS took over all aspects of sample processing. For our field crews, this meant filtering as well as collecting water samples and transporting the filters to the FWS's Whitney Genetics Laboratory (WGL) in Onalaska (WI). When the nearest FWCO is located hundreds of miles away however, the major challenge in filtering samples is coming up with a laboratory to filter samples in

Luckily, our colleagues at the Alpena (MI) FWCO have constructed a mobile laboratory in a trailer designed specifically for filtering environmental DNA (eDNA) samples like this. We parked the



unit at the T.J. O'Brien Lock and Dam for the week. Once the samples were filtered, the filters were packed on dry ice and shipped to the WGL. Another mobile laboratory trailer for eDNA sample processing is in the works to serve the big river FWCOs. Hopefully this will be available for our next sampling event in October. When available, the results of all samples processed by the WGL for Asian carp eDNA are posted at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/eDNA.html>.

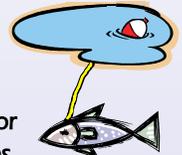
I joined several FWCO colleagues from Cartersville (IL) and Columbia (MO) July 15-19 to participate in a series of tests to study movements of fish caused by barge traffic as tow boats proceed through the U.S. Coast Guard's restricted navigation area that surrounds the electric dispersal barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal near Romeoville.



The dispersal barriers are located here to prevent fish movements, especially those of Asian carp upstream to Lake Michigan.

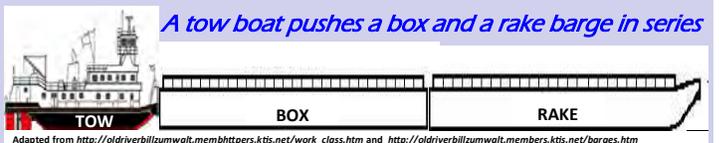
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Chicago District, which operates the dispersal barrier, has been spearheading this study to analyze the effects of large metal-hull barges on the electrical field that is supposed to halt migratory movements of fish here.

Our specific objective was to monitor the whereabouts of gizzard shad, tethered by fishing line to floating bobbers, after the fish were returned to the canal and placed next to (Test I) or in front of (Test II) a tow boat pushing two barges (parallel or serial configurations) through the barrier electric field.



The procedure consisted of one crew electrofishing to catch gizzard shad while a second crew (mine) tethered brightly colored fishing bobbers to the shad's mouth with one meter of fishing line. We used 20 test bobbers for each trial: 10 tethered to live fish; 5 tethered to dead fish; and 5 tethered to no fish (experimental controls). Each tethered fish was placed in a separate water-filled bucket to prevent it from becoming entangled with others before deployment. Once the tow and barges were underway, bobbers (with and without tethered fish) were deployed at pre-determined locations around the perimeter of the barges (Test I) or ahead of the barge just downstream of the barrier (Test II).

Barges were arranged in parallel configuration for two days and in serial configurations (rake to box, rake to rake, and rake to tow) the remainder of the week. After the barges cleared the



barrier, each bobber/fish was found and its' location recorded before it was retrieved from the water. Data analysis is ongoing and results are in preparation.

All in all, the days were long and hot, but we completed a lot of work thanks to Aaron Parker, Jeff Stewart, Stan Bell, and Jordan Fox.

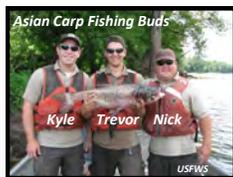


New Work Along the Upper Mississippi River



Pool 16

By Katie Jardine and Kyle Mosel



Pool 17

By Trevor Cyphers and Kyle Mosel

Crew Leader Kyle Mosel, Trevor Cyphers, and I headed south for UMR Pool 16 on July 19th. Our mission was to conduct Asian carp surveillance here using traditional collection gears and to identify sites where Asian carp could be captured in support of planned telemetry studies.

Adult carp tend to inhabit warm, slow flowing or standing water where they may feed and will seek warmer backwaters as adequate environments for spawning and larval survival. The capture of either large mature adults or small juveniles here could be a sign that Asian carp are successfully reproducing in Pool 16.

After a four hour trip to Muscatine County, we ended the evening on the river by setting our gill nets and mini-fyke nets. Tuesday morning brought warm overcast weather as we traced our path back to the nets to reveal what had ventured into them. Our catch included a suite of minnow species, sunfish, longnose and shortnose gar, and the occasional species of turtle.

No Asian carp were collected during this trip, but several other sites remain to be visited. If adult Asian carp are captured here in the near future, current plans call for acoustic transmitters to be surgically implanted in as many as 10 individuals to evaluate their movements among other pools. Our search will continue as we try to find Asian carp in Pool 16.

A crew of four from the La Crosse FWCO set out for UMR Pool 17 on August 6 to find the best sites to capture Asian carp here. This served as a reconnaissance trip for a planned, multi-agency Asian carp monitoring project that involves: catching live Asian carps; fitting them with acoustic transmitters; and tracking their subsequent movements throughout the Upper Mississippi River and many of its tributaries with a network of stationary receivers. Data collected from this system will be used to determine if and when each fish is moving, as well as directions and distances of travel.

Efforts this trip were geared to capture bighead and silver carp, both juveniles and adults. To do so, we set mini-fyke nets overnight in semi-stagnant backwaters that appeared to provide ideal conditions for juveniles. Meanwhile, adults were the target of 3 1/2, 4, and 5-inch mesh gill nets (300-foot long) set in backwater chutes and sloughs that ranged 8 to 24 feet deep.

We set 12 mini-fyke nets over the 3-day sampling period that yielded high numbers of fish, but no Asian carp juveniles. The majority of fish caught in these nets were native cyprinids (minnows) and centrarchids (sunfish) with occasional snakes and turtles.

Meanwhile, we also set 14 gill nets with the majority of these placed in shallow-waters. One sampling area yielded six paddlefish, a native species that competes with bighead carp and silver carp for planktonic food resources, which suggests this site may also provide optimal habitat for these Asian carps. Several nets later, a large (31-inch long) female bighead carp was caught. This particular site will receive continued attention in the near future as a location to catch and implant Asian carp with sonic transmitters.

Surprisingly enough, we did have one "volunteer" silver carp (a 35-inch long, gravid female) that jumped into our boat at another location. This site looked promising, proved to be so, and will be another key location to collect Asian carp in the future. Overall, this trip was quite successful and provided vital information on key areas to target Asian carp for future excursions.

Pasture Walk

By Heidi Keuler



Ranch owner Rod Ofte touts rotational grazing

Fishers & Farmers helped organize a Pasture Walk held June 26 at Rod Ofte's Willow Creek Ranch, near Coon Valley (WI).

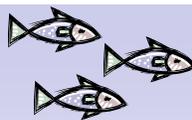
Rod's farm is a member of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative. Co-hosts included the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR), Trout Unlimited (TU), and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC). Fish biologists Matt Mitro (WI DNR) and Dave Vetrano (retired) spoke about the benefits of easements and managed grazing to trout streams and how stream banks are stabilized even during periods of flooding. Rod Ofte highlighted benefits of the easement and grazing system to his cattle, business, and family. George Howe (MVC) emphasized the benefits easements have not only to anglers and farmers, but to all people and our natural resources in the Driftless Area.

Attendees included the Fishers & Farmers Steering Committee, made up of individuals in agriculture and natural resources from federal, state, local agencies, and non-government organizations in IA, IL, MN, MO, and WI. Others attending included representatives from Congressman Ron Kind's office, the Wallace Center Pasture Project, the Kickapoo Grazing Initiative, UW-La Crosse students, and interested citizens (*aka*, trout anglers) from as far away as IL.



Admins Meet at RO

By Ashley Kast



Administrative officers from FWCOs and national fish hatchery (NFH) offices throughout the Midwest Region met the week of July 22 at the Service's regional office in Bloomington (MN).

Annette Dombrowski (Jordan River NFH), Darla Wenger (Genoa NFH), Julie Timmer (Pendills Creek/Sullivan NFH) and I planned the 5-day meeting which was moved from La Crosse (WI) to Bloomington on short notice. All who attended learned more about our Financial Business Management System (FBMS), new reports from Business Objects (BOBJ), and many other administrative duties from regional Budget and Administration Division staff and Fisheries Supervisor Kurt Schilling.

What Others Say ...

— Farthest North Yet: Dead ‘Leaping’ Carp Found North of Winona —



By Paul Walsh and Josephine Marcotty



A silver carp, a dreaded invasive fish known to knock people out of their boats, was found dead at the base of the Mississippi River dam at Winona, Minn., the farthest north the species has ever been detected and a clear sign that it can use its renowned jumping prowess to leap over barriers as it moves up from Iowa.

A worker with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service discovered the 30-inch-long carcass Aug. 9 atop a concrete abutment just below Lock and Dam 5, about 20 miles farther upstream from where the first — and only other — silver carp was found in the state, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The discovery has heightened concerns that the fish, the most alarming of four types of invasive carp that have infested rivers from Mississippi to Iowa and are threatening the Great Lakes, may be increasing in number in Minnesota.

“Finding this carp on the sill of the dam suggests that it was attempting to jump over it,” said Nick Frohnauer, the DNR’s invasive fish coordinator. “There’s no reproducing population here [yet], but that doesn’t mean we have a lot of time.”

Paul Labovitz, National Park Service superintendent of the 72-mile Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, was equally alarmed. The scientific community “is saying consistently that they are here. They are just not jumping into boats,” he said, referring to the fish’s tendency to leap out of the water when disturbed by noises such as motors.

If they do become established, “that’s essentially the end of sport fishing and recreational boating” in Minnesota, he said.

In other states, Asian carp have become dominant species in rivers, displacing most other game and nongame fish. They are capable of eating 5 to 20 percent of their body weight each day by feeding on algae and other microscopic organisms, often outcompeting other fish for food. Scientists believe the fish could severely disrupt the aquatic ecosystems of Minnesota waters.

Of the four species, silver carp are believed to spread the most quickly, said Irene Jones, program coordinator for Friends of the Mississippi River. “And they injure boaters,” she said.

In the past several years a handful of bighead carp, another invasive species, have been found in Lake Pepin and the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers, and as far north as the mouth of the St. Croix in Prescott, Wis. But there is no indication they are established or reproducing, wildlife officials said.



The DNR and other agencies are working on a variety of strategies to stop the carp’s spread into Minnesota. They include installation of a \$12 million noise barrier at the Ford Dam, which is supposed to improve its ability to block the fish but is not guaranteed to work. The Minnesota Legislature already has provided \$7.5 million from the state’s 2008

Legacy Amendment for research and planning for a barrier, and has funded a \$16 million upgrade to the Coon Rapids Dam that would also be a barrier — but which also would not be foolproof.

The most effective strategy would be to close the Upper St. Anthony Falls lock in Minneapolis, one of two dams on the river believed to be high enough to block their spread. The other is in Iowa.

That would protect the Mississippi watershed and the northern lakes that drain into it, but not the St. Croix and Minnesota rivers.

Earlier this year the Senate passed legislation authored by U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken to close the lock and dam at St. Anthony Falls within a year of its passage. The same bill was introduced in the House by U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison of Minneapolis, but is still awaiting action there.

Labovitz said the Park Service has been using an educational campaign to discourage recreational boaters from using the locks on the Mississippi. The hope, he said, is to reduce demand for the locks’ operations to the point that they will no longer be needed.

Asian carp were imported to the United States in the 1970s to clean fish ponds in the South. During floods, they escaped into the wild and have been migrating north along the Mississippi and its tributaries ever since. They have advanced to within 55 miles of Lake Michigan in the Illinois River, which connects with a shipping canal and other waters that reach Lake Michigan.

The Great Lakes region has been sharply divided over how to deal with the threat. Michigan went to court in an unsuccessful effort to force the closing of Chicago-area shipping locks, then joined four other states — Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania — in a lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Chicago’s water district, claiming their refusal to physically separate the watersheds was creating a public nuisance. A federal judge tossed out the case in December.

Debate on whether to close the shipping canal continues.

Editor’s notes: (1) This article was originally published 23 Aug 2013 in the Star Tribune.; (2) reprinted here by permission; (3) Curt McMurl is the USFWS employee who first discovered this fish; and (4) more information is available at: www.startribune.com/local/220684261.html?page=1&c=y.