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Alpena FWCO eDNA Program Completes Another Successful Season

By Chris Olds

After collecting 1,575 samples from tributaries of Lakes Erie and Huron, and assisting other Midwest Region and Northeast Region Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices to collect an additional 2,300 samples, Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office's (FWCO) eDNA team completed its spring early detection program for Asian carp! The eDNA program began collecting its first samples the week of April 21, 2014 from Lake Erie and completed sampling the week of July 14, assisting the Carterville FWCO on the Ohio River. Alpena's eDNA team traveled with the Mobile eDNA Lab throughout the Midwest and Northeast Regions, assisting other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Offices with their eDNA sampling, while also completing its own work on tributaries of Lakes Erie and Huron.

This year's early detection efforts were spread across more tributaries of lakes Erie and Huron to determine the presence or absence of Silver and Bighead Carp DNA in the environment. Early detection efforts were expanded this year to include more tributaries that could be suitable for spawning activities by silver and bighead carps. Tributaries were ranked as either high priority (to be sampled twice) or medium priority (to be sampled once). The high priority tributaries received this classification based on previous sampling results, connections to known Asian carp waters, such as the CAWS and Ohio River, and literature reviews. A medium priority tributary was classified based on literature reviews identifying rivers with suitable spawning characteristics, and proximity to previously sampled tributaries that had positive eDNA results for silver or bighead carp. This year's sampling was targeted during two distinct water temperature thresholds (10 and 20° C)

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Top: eDNA collection crew setting out of the Conneaut Creek Harbor to collect samples. Bottom: Director Dan Ashe stopped by for a visit of the mobile eDNA lab while touring Shiawassee NWR. Photo credits: USFWS.

thought to correspond with silver and bighead carp spawning activities. Alpena FWCO had four tributaries ranked as high priority, however only two of them were sampled twice at the desired temperature thresholds. In 2013 only seven tributaries were sampled, all of which were in Lake Erie. In 2014 sampling was expanded to include 12 tributaries from Lake Erie and five from Lake Huron.

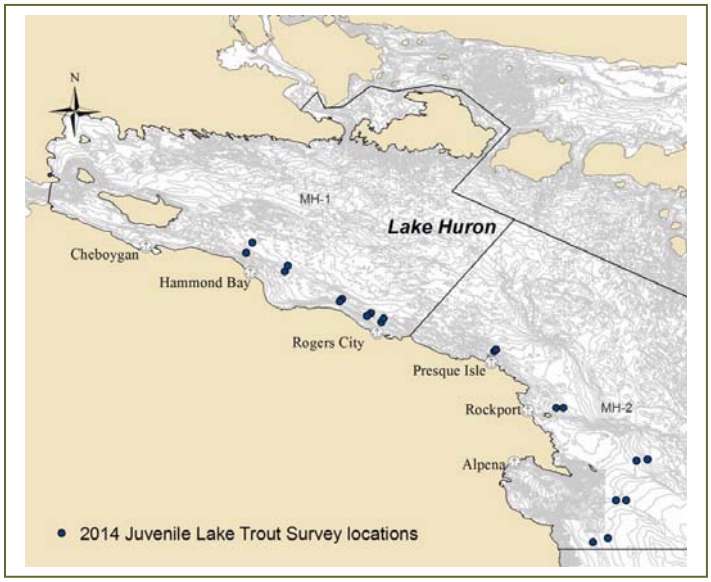
With the assistance of 11 biologists from four U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offices spread over four weeks, Alpena FWCO was able to complete its work in a timely manner. The crew collected and filtered an average of 100 samples per day and drove over 7,000 miles to complete the work. This effort covered seven states spanning the Midwest and Northeast regions. Each tributary sampled required a location for setting up the lab and a water source in close proximity. This lead to several new partnerships being developed with local municipalities, state parks, and campgrounds that could be affected if Silver or Bighead Carp were to become established. Overall it was a very successful season with all of the ranked tributaries being sampled at least once. Despite the challenges, the partnerships developed with the local municipalities. State agencies, and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Offices throughout the region will strengthen the program for the future. Plus, while sampling in the Saginaw, Michigan area, the Alpena eDNA team had the opportunity to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe while he was there for a separate meeting. Alpena staff were able to provide a tour of the mobile eDNA Lab and describe the eDNA program in detail, which truly made the season end on a high note for everyone.

Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Conducts 2014 Fishery Independent Juvenile Lake Trout Survey in Northern Lake Huron

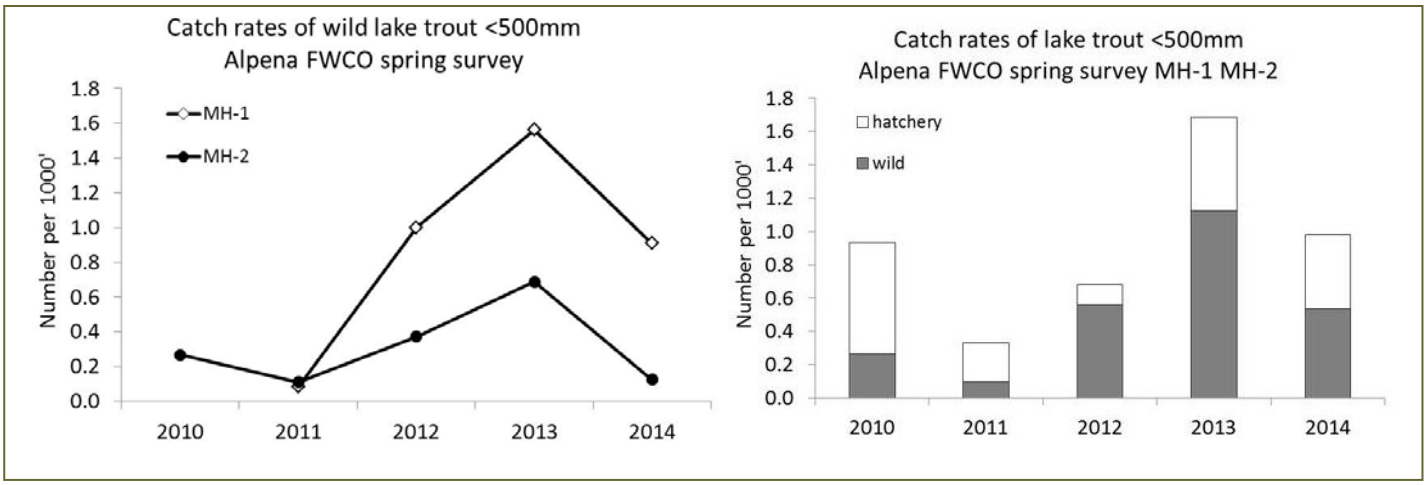
By Adam Kowalski

During May and June, staff from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office conducted a juvenile lake trout survey in 1836 treaty waters of northern Lake Huron (Alpena north to Hammond Bay). This study was designed to index juvenile lake trout abundance and collect biological data on juvenile lake trout for population models developed for lake trout stocks in northern Lake Huron.

During the survey, Alpena FWCO staff conducted 21 graded-mesh (2.0-3.5”) gill net lifts at randomly selected ports (Figure 1) in two Lake Huron lake trout management units: MH-1 (Rogers City north) and MH-2 (Rogers City south to Black River). Biological data was collected from all lake trout encountered, including length, weight, sex and maturity, diet, visceral fat index, and lamprey wounding. Similar biological data was collected from non-target species. Tissue samples were taken from unclipped and presumably wild lake trout for future DNA analysis. Thirty-three lake trout less than 500 mm, which is a commonly accepted size cutoff for juveniles, were captured during the survey. Eighteen



Map showing 2014 juvenile lake trout sampling locations. Image credit: USFWS.



Left: Catch rates of wild lake trout greater than 500 millimeters from the Alpena FWCO spring survey. Right: Catch rates of wild lake trout greater than 500 millimeters from the Alpena FWCO spring survey MH-1, MH-2. Image credits: USFWS.

of the 33 juveniles were of wild origin based on the absence of fin clips and two were less than 300 millimeters. The shallow (100 to 150 feet) and deep (greater than 150 feet) depth strata contained 54 percent and 46 percent, respectively, of the total juvenile late trout catch. Catch-per-unit effort (CPE) of juvenile lake trout was 1.0 fish per 1000 ft. of net. These catch rates are similar to 2012 and lower than 2013 (see figures).

Surveys indicate that wild year classes from 2009 and 2010 have added significantly to the lake trout population in northern Lake Huron, although subsequent year classes appear to be less abundant. These past years have given us a better understanding of the abundance and distribution of juvenile lake trout in northern Lake Huron, where positive steps toward lake trout rehabilitation continue.

Region 3 Conducts MOCC Training at Alpena FWCO

By Adam Kowalski

Dave Wedan and Nicholas Bloomfield) traveled to Alpena Michigan to assist instructors Adam Kowalski and Anjanette Bowen with a MOCC course. The course was conducted at Alpena FWCO during August 26 – 28, 2014. MOCC is designed to give training to Department of Interior (DOI) employees before they are allowed to operate DOI watercraft.

The following is a list of topics covered during the course: in-water survival, proper use of floatation devices, proper anchoring techniques, required and recommended equipment for DOI vessels, changing a propeller, how to properly connect a boat trailer to a vehicle, how to tow a trailer with a vehicle, rules of the road, navigational aides, slow speed maneuvers, at speed maneuvers, proper launching and retrieval of vessels, proper docking techniques, and aquatic nuisance species spread prevention.

Visual distress training during MOCC. Photo credit: USFWS.

Overall this course was a success and all nine students successfully completed the training. Students reported that they learned a great deal and felt that this course provided the necessary tools to begin operating vessels in a safe and prudent manner.

Lafarge North America Partners with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to Fight Invasive Species

By Heather Rawlings

Lafarge North America - Presque Isle Quarry, a limestone quarry located in Presque Isle County, Michigan is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the nonprofit Huron Pines to eradicate a persistent invasive species on their property. Phragmites australis, known by most as phragmites, is an invasive wetland grass that, once established, reproduces quickly and out-competes native wetland vegetation along riparian areas and coastlines. Phragmites reproduces through rhizomes, which are horizontal stems growing underground. These rhizomes can grow greater than 60 feet and produce roots and stalks at regularly spaced intervals. The quarry has a thriving population of phragmites growing along the riparian corridor of the Bell River. This short river is the outflow of the quarry's considerable wetland and bedrock habitat of approximately 5,000 acres.

A large stand of phragmites located during the inventory. The phragmites is scheduled for treatment in October 2014. Photo credit: USFWS.

Huron Pines Americorps members and Service Biologist Heather Rawlings completed an inventory of phragmites and purple loosestrife on the Lafarge property August 25, 2014. The inventory documented 20.4 acres of phragmites in 68 locations. This inventory completed the work started by students that participated in the Great Lakes Natural Resources Camp in July 2014. Plants that were located are scheduled to be chemically treated in fall 2014 by contractor JFNew. Follow-up treatments will occur in future years as necessary. The amount of treatment will be contingent on the method of treatment recommended and the amount of funding available. Funding is in place for the treatment with a 50:50 cost share between Lafarge North America and the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

The removal of the invasive phragmites will allow for native cattails and emergent wetland species to repopulate the area, providing habitat for nearshore and juvenile fish, reptiles, amphibians and birds dependent on native wetland habitats.

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The Friends of the Lake Huron Watershed group holds their monthly meeting on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:30 pm. The group meets at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office at 480 W. Fletcher Street in Alpena, Michigan. All are welcome to attend!

Asian Carp Delivered to Besser Museum

By Steven Gambicki

Besser Museum located in Alpena, Michigan is in the process of updating and enhancing their fish exhibit. The Executive and Education Director at Besser Museum, Christine Witulski, reached out to the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office for assistance with the exhibit in 2013. Alpena FWCO Fish Biologist Steven Gambicki has been helping the museum reorganize and improve the exhibit. Gambicki recently delivered replicas of silver and bighead carps to the museum. These two mounts will highlight the threat of new invasive species to the Great Lakes. The new exhibit will also include information about established invasive species and the impacts they have had on native species and the Great Lakes fishery.

Gambicki also connected with Biology professor Brenda Kelley at Alpena Community College. She has enlisted the help of her field biology class to research the fish species in the exhibit. "The students are excited about the project and have some good ideas about the display" said Kelley. The information the students provide will be incorporated into new exhibit labels.

Christine Witulski Executive Director at the Besser Museum, accepts the silver and bighead carp (Asian carp) replicas from Steven Gambicki. Photo credit: Besser Museum.

Reorganization of the Besser Museum fish exhibit is a collaborative effort between the museum, Alpena Community College, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Witulski hopes the improved fish exhibit will "… educate the public, and bring an awareness that will deepen their appreciation of the Great Lakes."

It's Hard to be a Fish

By Margaret Hutton

Many students in and around metro Detroit have never been out on a boat in the Detroit River, never caught a fish, and some have never seen the river. They may have learned about ecosystems and waterways in the classroom but have never had the opportunity to observe how that knowledge is put into practice. This past May, that all changed. 6th graders from metro Detroit and Monroe County attended either the Detroit River Water Festival at Belle Isle on May 8th or the Lake Erie Water Festival at the IHM Motherhouse on May 28th.

At both events, students had the chance to see what many different organizations including DTE Energy,

Fish biologist Margaret Hutton cheers students on while playing the "lake sturgeon" game at the Detroit River and Lake Erie Water Festivals. Photo credit: Mark Kuntiz.

University of Michigan Dearborn-EIC, Monroe County ISD, Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) were doing in and around the watershed to protect this valuable resource. Classes were able to see presentations on topics such as eradication of invasive species using cutting edge technology, preventing soil erosion, solar energy projects, and about different species that call these waterways home.

For some of the students, Service fish biologist, Margaret Hutton, had a special treat. She described the ancient creature that her office focuses on preserving, the lake sturgeon. Joining her was a juvenile lake sturgeon that the students could observe up close and see some of its interesting prehistoric characteristics. The students were in awe when they heard that the small 8 inch juvenile sturgeon in front of them would grow to be over 6 feet and live over 100 years old. Margaret described the lake sturgeon's tarnished past, from overfishing to habitat destruction, and described what the Service and partner organizations are doing today to help this species.

Margaret then turned some of the students into lake sturgeon for a game so they could better understand how the sturgeon had to cope with all the hardships happening in the Great Lakes in the early 1900s. Imitating a lake sturgeon, the students goal was to collect pieces of food from one end of the playing field and make it to the spawning grounds at the other end as many times as possible without being caught or killed (tagged) by the students who were construction workers and anglers (to represent overfishing and habitat destruction). After about five minutes of play, most of the lake sturgeon had perished to the anglers and construction workers, symbolizing the drastic decline of the fish. Good thing there was biologist Margaret on hand to regulate fishing and habitat destruction by having fewer anglers and construction workers during the next round of play. After about five more minutes of play, more lake sturgeon were able to survive. After playing the game the students were asked what they had learned. One student promptly replied, "It's hard to be a fish."

Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Conducts 2014 Fishery Independent Lake Whitefish Survey in Northern Lake Huron

By Adam Kowalski

During July and August, staff from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) and volunteers conducted the annual fishery independent lake whitefish survey in 1836 Treaty waters of northern Lake Huron. The purpose of this survey is to collect fishery independent abundance and biological data on lake whitefish stocks in treaty waters for use in statistical catch-at-age population models that are updated annually to determine harvest regulations for commercial fisheries in 1836 Treaty waters of the Great Lakes.

During the survey, 24 variable mesh gill nets (two to six inch) were set at randomly selected sites in lake whitefish management unit WFH 04 (Hammond Bay to Presque Isle) and lake whitefish management unit WFH 05 (Presque Isle to Alpena). All whitefish and lake trout collected were measured, weighed, sexed, assessed for maturity and visceral fat content, and checked for sea lamprey wounds, fin clips, and tags. Scales and otoliths were collected for age determination. Similar biological data were collected from non-target species. Four lake whitefish were collected from unit WFH04 and one was collected from unit WFH05.

Great Lakes Science, Careers, and Environmental Stewardship at Michigan 4-H Camp

By Heather Rawlings

Toting GPS units, datasheets on clipboards, and an enthusiasm for Great Lakes science, youth participating in the 2014 4-H Great Lakes and Natural Resources (GLNR) Camp were on the hunt for aquatic invasive plants this summer. Getting their feet wet exploring Lake Huron's coastal wetlands, they gained first-hand career experience with wetland ecologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Huron Pines. They also contributed to an important stewardship service project aimed at mapping invasive plants along the Presque Isle County coastline.

The 4-H GLNR Camp, held annually in Presque Isle County at Camp Chickagami, provides hands-on learning experiences engaging 70 youth, ages thirteen to fifteen, in exploring science, leadership, and careers (and, of course, recreation) relating to Michigan's Great Lakes and natural resources. The 4-H GLNR Camp is sponsored by Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, Michigan 4-H Foundation, Michigan Sea Grant, and Michigan State University Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, among several others. Through partnerships, this summer camp program brings youth development professionals together with Great Lakes science experts in offering youth these amazing learning and leadership experiences.

During this week-long natural resources experience, Michigan teens participate in science sessions relating to local woodlands and wildlife, Great Lakes invasive species, wetlands, watersheds, fisheries, and more. Campers learn about Michigan's outdoors in numerous hands-on and science-based activities and learn about potential careers by working with professional experts.

Donning their wetland ecologist waders, the campers' science exploration this year included an effort to help map and control invasive plants threatening local coastal wetlands. To take this challenge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Huron Pines AmeriCorps members teamed up to take campers hiking through the coastal wetlands of Presque Isle. While learning about wetland ecology, campers were also on the hunt for invasive plants, such as phragmites, purple loosestrife, and narrow-leaf cattail. Getting wet and muddy wasn't the goal - but certainly a fun bonus.

Top: GLNR Camp students work to dig up a purple loosestrife plant. Students utilized GPS to document invasive species for future treatment and, when visible, removed the plant if individuals were found. Bottom: Students take area measurements of the invasive phragmites. The calculations were used to get a cost estimate for treatment. Photo credits: USFWS.

Hiking the beaches, dunes, and coastal wetlands along the Lake Huron coastline, students blended science and technology using GPS to flag invasive species. The goal of this student mapping project is to help slow the spread of these species into northern Lake Huron coastal areas by helping to identify and document these fairly new infestations. Based on the work of these

campers, teams of professionals will use this data to conduct management treatments later this fall. Campers understand that it will take continued surveillance and management to keep these species contained, but, for now, they leave camp with an appreciation of this environmental issue, how they have contributed in conservation stewardship, and perhaps an eye opening towards the field of natural resources management.

As a MSU pre-college program, this camp offers a great science inquiry experience, career learning, and community leadership opportunity relating directly to the Great Lakes and natural resources we enjoy across Michigan. In the end, these campers returned to their communities with these experiences and may return someday as future leaders in environmental stewardship or as a Great Lakes scientist!

This article was edited from its original version and printed with permission from Brandon Schroeder (Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Sea Grant) and Jacob Dewitt (Huron Pines AmeriCorps).

Partners Working Together for the Early Detection of Asian Carp in the Ohio River

By Steven Gambicki

The Ohio River and its tributaries were identified in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study as a possible route for aquatic invasive species to access the Great Lakes basin. Natural resource managers are therefore concerned about the potential invasion of Asian carp into the Great Lakes basin through the upper Ohio River watershed. Asian carp pose a significant threat to the $7 billion a year fishery of the Great Lakes. Preventing the establishment of Asian carp in the upper reaches of the Ohio River basin is a high priority and any information managers can learn about Asian carp in the Ohio River system may help them limit or stop their spread.

As a result of the heightened concern that Asian carp may gain access into the Great Lakes from the Ohio River, federal and state partners came together in mid-July 2014 to search for Asian carp environmental DNA (eDNA) in the upper Ohio River watershed. The partners collected and filtered 650 water samples taken from the Ohio River and its tributaries between Steubenville, Ohio and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After filtering the water, the samples were sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Whitney Genetics Lab in La Crosse, Wisconsin for processing. Results are pending, and will be posted at the following website http://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/eDNA/Results-ohioriver.html when they are available.

Top: Fish biologist Steven Gambicki filtering deionized water, the filter will be used as an equipment control. Bottom: Fish biologist Chris Olds collecting a water sample. Photo credits: USFWS.

Partners included the Service's Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Carterville FWCO, Lamar Fish Health Center, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Alpena FWCO fish biologists Steven Gambicki, Chris Olds, and technician Becca Collins travelled to southern Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania to take part in the event. The Alpena crew lent their expertise in collecting and filtering water samples for eDNA and provided the use of their mobile eDNA lab. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New Cumberland, Montgomery, and Dashields Lock and Dams provided the use of their facilities and were ideal locations to set up the eDNA mobile lab.

EDNA sampling is one of several techniques identified in the Ohio River Asian Carp Monitoring and Assessment Plan as a means to learn about Asian carp distribution, abundance, and/or biology on the Ohio River basin. Other techniques outlined in the plan include the use of telemetry, sonar, netting, electrofishing, aging, and natal water determination. Partners working with the monitoring and assessment plan include the Service's Carterville FWCO, La Crosse FWCO, Whitney Genetics Lab, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Ohio River Valley Water and Sanitary Commission.

My Summer as a Fisheries Biologist

By Margaret Hutton

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program was created in 1971 to give students between the ages of 15 to 19 an opportunity to gain hands on experience in the field working with fish and wildlife biologists across the nation. The Detroit International Wildlife Refuge has been hosting students for a number of years. This year, five high school students in the YCC and Steve Harvey Mentoring Program came together from around metro Detroit to participate. The students participated in many terrestrial projects within the Refuge such as trail construction, invasive plant removal, and habitat preservation, just to name a few. This year's YCC crew, though, gained a different view of the Refuge, from the Detroit River. Most of the students had never had the chance to be on a boat and for three weeks out of their summer, they shadowed fish biologists from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Waterford Substation conducting aquatic assessments on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie.

The students were involved in three different aquatic related projects during the summer of 2014, starting with assessing the fish population in Humbug Marsh near the Refuge Gateway. After getting their toes wet learning knot tying and fish identification, the students and fish biologists jumped right in for the next two weeks setting fyke nets and minnow traps in the Detroit River as a part of the early detection monitoring program for invasive species within the Great Lakes.

Students from the YCC and fish biologists Andrew Briggs and Margaret Hutton pull in a fyke net from Humbug Marsh. Photo credit: USFWS.

Left: Students from the YCC and fish biologists from the Alpena FWCO – Waterford substation show off an adult lake sturgeon caught on a setline in the Detroit River. Right: Students from the YCC and fish biologist Margaret Hutton conducting an electrofishing assessment in the Detroit River. Photo credits: USFWS.

After a few short days, the students really began to gain their sea legs and became valuable hands on the boats. With their help, the crew completed the study within the week and moved on to setting setlines in Lake Erie. This was a part of a monitoring program for juvenile lake sturgeon in the St. Clair-Detroit River System that has been ongoing for a few years. The students also had the opportunity to experience other sampling techniques such as bottom otter-trawling, boat electrofishing, shore seining, and setlining for adult lake sturgeon.

At the end of the three weeks in the field, the students were taught how to analyze the data that they had just collected from these assessments. Fish biologists helped the students through two days in the lab which included learning how to age a fish using dorsal spines, use of dichotomous keys to identify different fish and macroinvertebrate species, analyze age and growth curves, and estimate a population based on the number of marked and recaptured fish from Humbug Marsh. Overall, the students gained a broad understanding of the jobs and responsibilities fisheries biologists partake in throughout the year. At the end, the biologists gave the students a little advice about how to succeed in the future, not just in this field but overall when choosing colleges, classes, and future jobs. All in all, it was a marvelous experience for the students and very rewarding for the biologists to watch the students learn, grow, and become part of the crew.

Eating Lunch with a "Living Fossil"

By Andrew Briggs

Fish biologist Andrew Briggs of the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) – Waterford Substation joined staff of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at the General Motors (GM) Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan on August 5th to educate the public on various environmental topics. The event was part of a series called "Lunchtime with the Department of Natural Resources" that has occurred twice a week this summer at the GM Renaissance Center. Members of the public were given the opportunity to learn about subjects being presented and ask questions about environmental topics of their choice.

The topic of this week's events was endangered species, with August 5th being about the Great Lakes' living fossil the lake sturgeon. Andrew brought with him a live, juvenile lake sturgeon, literature to hand out, along with some of the equipment biologists use to monitor lake sturgeon. Business men and women on their lunch break and tourists from all over the country were among the over 200 people educated. Upon seeing a photo of a 74 inch, 120 pound lake sturgeon, people could not believe that a fish that big resides in the river directly across the street. Many even questioned that the fish in the photo was the same species as the juvenile in the fish tank next to them.

Tables set up for a "Lunchtime with the Department of Natural Resources" session at the General Motors Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan on August 5th, 2014. Photo credit: Andrew Briggs, USFWS.

Aside from questions about lake sturgeon, people also voiced their concern over the invasion of Asian carps. Andrew had also brought a mount of a bighead carp and was able to explain how to identify an Asian carp and who to contact if they catch one. Many of the people attending the lunchtime discussion gained a new appreciation for the environment around them and were inspired to do all they could to protect and restore native species like the lake sturgeon.

Happy Birthday Lake Sturgeon

By Margaret Hutton

Every year in early spring, thousands of lake sturgeon migrate to Port Huron, MI and the waters under the Blue Water Bridge to spawn. This year, at the second annual Blue Water Bridge Sturgeon Festival on May 31, we celebrated the fact that we have lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes with a birthday celebration.

Students get a chance to see their first live lake sturgeon and ask questions to the Service employees on the R/V Nme during their cruise aboard the Lady Huron II. Photo credit: USFWS.

The celebration began on Friday, May 30th when seven science classrooms from around the Port Huron and metro Detroit came to learn about lake sturgeon. Fisheries biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and U.S. Geological Survey, along with avid sturgeon fisherman from the St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow organization accompanied the students on the Huron Lady II for a cruise towards the sturgeon spawning site under the bridge. During the cruise, students were taught about lake sturgeon in Lake Huron and projects that were occurring throughout the system to protect this species. As a

special surprise, the Huron Lady II met with biologists aboard the R/V Nmé who were conducting lake sturgeon research. The students were very excited when biologist raised the large fish out of the tank for all to see.

The festivities continued on Saturday May 31st at the Vantage Point Maritime Center where residents from around Port Huron and metro Detroit came to learn about lake sturgeon through workshops, talks, and different vendors. The events started with a Native American ceremony to celebrate the lake sturgeon. Later on, the public had the possibility to attend a sturgeon cruise of their own where divers hooked up to a live video feed would swim to the spawning grounds. Kids at the event enjoyed the different arts and crafts along with viewing other students' posters about lake sturgeon.

After all the fun, visitors could enjoy a little stroll down the beautiful shoreline of the St. Clair River towards the outdoor classroom. Biologists from the Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources were waiting around a large tank where, this year, patrons had the option to come right up to three lake sturgeon caught right under the Blue Water Bridge. This gave the public a good chance to admire some of their prehistoric characteristics, from their sandpaper skin and sharp scutes to their sucker-like mouth.

At the end of celebration, many people stayed to watch the three lake sturgeon being released back into their

Fish biologists Margaret Hutton and Eric Stadig hold up a lake sturgeon during the 2nd Annual Blue Water Area Sturgeon Festival. Photo credit: Frank Frisk Collection.

home, the St. Clair River. Having the opportunity to see lake sturgeon from different vantage points, such as swimming freely in the water, up close and personal in the tank, and the importance heritage of the fish to different cultures, gave the crowd a good understanding of why there is so much effort to save and preserve this ancient fish. Happy birthday lake sturgeon and may there be many more! If you are interested in attending the next Blue Water Bridge Sturgeon Festival please visit http://www.sturgeonfestival.com/ or are about other sturgeon projects visit the St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrows website at http://www.stclairsturgeon.org/page-index.html.