About Genoa NFH

Genoa NFH was established over 80 years ago by the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Act. The mission of the hatchery has changed from providing sport fish for area waters to a conservation hatchery concerned with the recovery of endangered aquatic species.

The hatchery is open for tours during business hours. For large groups, please call for an appointment. You can reach the hatchery at 608-689-2605 from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm. You can also find us online at: fws.gov/midwest/genoa

And on Facebook at: facebook.com/GenoaNFH

Summer Help Arrives at Genoa in the Nick of Time

The Genoa hatchery is full of activity in the summer time, or as we say in Wisconsin, we are busy making hay while the sun shines. Being cold blooded animals (or poikilothermic), fish growth is regulated by water temperature. The fish growing season is a short one in the higher latitudes, and trying to get them as big as possible before release in order to increase survival and avoid predation is a major goal of the staff every summer season. In order to do this, especially with the lake sturgeon, a species that does not accept prepared diets, the staff must be temporarily increased in order to meet our production goals. This summer we welcome Laura Chappell to the staff as one of our Pathways Interns. Laura is a natural resource major with Coast Guard experience on the Great Lakes. Having boating experience helps at the Genoa station due to the large amount of time hatchery staff spend on the water to complete their mission. Laura has been able to jump right in and help with hatchery chores involving boating (such as minnow harvesting) that helps us feed our mussel host fish and broodstock without skipping a beat. The hatchery also hired 2 home grown high school students, Manning and Brynn from the local area. They are also helping out with sturgeon chores and completing some small maintenance chores that the staff can't normally slow down to accomplish. Summer jobs allow young people to test drive a natural resource career to see if they would like to participate in active conservation for a majority of their lives. It also gives some of our more advanced program enrollees such as our Pathways interns, on the ground experience in their fields which assists them when they graduate and begin the exciting and somewhat scary process of applying for jobs in their field. We welcome all of our summer helpers and hope that their experience enriches them both in the present and the future.

By: Doug Aloisi

Genoa's summer help, YYC students Manning and Brynn with newest pathways intern Laura Chappell.

Tomah VA Fishing Day

On May 18th, 2016 staff from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) participated in the annual fishing event held at the Tomah Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC). Weeks prior to this event, staff stocked the Tomah VAMC fishing pond with rainbow trout and various types of pan fish. In addition to providing the fish to catch, staff and volunteers from Genoa NFH served a fish fry for the veterans that were participating in this year's event. The American Legion – Vernon County Posts donated 100 pounds of flat head catfish that were served after a successful morning of fishing. More than 100 veterans from the VAMC along with members of the Tomah Middle School's seventh grade class tried to catch the biggest fish using worms, corn, and minnows for bait. The fishing tournament started at 9:00 a.m. with an awards ceremony following. The American Legion Tomah Posts donated a dazzling array of prizes for the fishermen. The Genoa NFH staff and volunteers were presented with a plaque commemorating their efforts. The Tomah VAMC is located on a 173 acre campus that encompasses a 271 bed facility focusing on primary care, mental health services and nursing home care for veterans from mid-western Wisconsin and the bordering counties of Iowa, Minnesota and Michigan. In addition to the favorite fishing pond with 2 handicapped assessable fishing piers, the VAMC offers the veterans a canteen, library, golf course and a bowling alley. All of these activities provide the veterans with therapeutic social and recreational opportunities to augment their long term care. By Darla Wenger

Tomah MS students assisting vets in the Tomah VA fishing day.

Tomah VA event coordinator Victoria Braham awarding Genoa staff with an appreciation certificate.

Genoa National Fish Hatchery's mission is to recover, restore, maintain and enhance fish and aquatic resources on a basin-wide and national level by producing over 35 aquatic species of varying life stages, participating in active conservation efforts with our partners, and becoming a positive force in the community by educating future generations on the benefits of conservation stewardship

Genoa National Fish Hatchery
75 Years of Fisheries Conservation
1932-2007

They Grow Up So Fast...

Smaller newly constructed individual HED cages.

Hatchery staff have been busy this spring and summer trying to keep up with the sturgeon, mussels and pond culture, and now with the Hine's emerald dragonfly, the place is really hopping! The learning curve has been quite steep for the eggs and newly hatched larvae, but the station is seeing some early successes. The complications with the late arrival of the rearing tanks for the mobile rearing trailer have now been sorted out and it is up and running well. The newly hatched larvae were initially placed just loose in the rearing tanks, but after a large rain event brought in some sedimentation, the staff grew nervous no longer being able to see the microscopic larvae in the tanks. Smaller cages were constructed to place in the tanks allowed biologists to more closely monitor the growth and survival of the larvae rather than just crossing our fingers waiting until they were large enough to see again! Throughout the weeks, the cages would be checked; the larvae would be split into new cages, reducing their numbers in the single cage, hoping to prevent predation. As the larvae grew large enough, they were placed into the small cages in the pond. The slow start to the summer has kept water temperatures ideal and pond zooplankton production optimal and we are seeing great growth in the larvae for both the ponds and the trailer. After 4 long weeks of no larvae in sight in the first couple tanks with the "free-range" larvae, the first ones were spotted crawling on the sides of the cages in the tanks. Hatchery staff then carefully siphoned the sediment on the bottom of the tanks through a sieve, revealing the larvae. Growth rates between the two rearing environments were very different, while the cage larvae grew from approximately 1mm to 4mm in that time (which was initially impressive), the "free-range" larvae were measuring up to 7mm. During the winter, the staff will be going over the data from the summer and will work on fine tuning the culture methods for the newly hatched larvae in the trailer.

New cages of freshly hatched HED larvae.

The larvae in the pond have produced some startling results as well, in the new, larger mesh cages, their growth rates were even greater than what was seen last year. There were several larvae that started to appear different in color and behavior, prompting a quick call to the USD folks. It was determined the larvae were ready to emerge, hatchery staff quickly moved those larvae to the original pvc and mesh cages. These cages were then placed close to shore so the larvae would be partially submerged, but also able to crawl out of the water. One of those larvae did actually emerge and staff was able to watch its behavior for a little while and then get the measurements to determine if this early emerging dragonfly was impacted to the point it would not be productive. The results were very positive, the male dragonfly was large enough and his wings were long enough, he would have been able to forage and reproduce. During the recent cage check, 10 larvae of the right size and weight were transferred to USD so they could emerge at their Lockport Prairie location. Of those 10, another 3 emerged, two perished from possible handling stress and we are still waiting to see what the final 5 will do, emerge this year or wait until next year. We will be keeping some of the larvae in the same size cage throughout the summer and then moving others up through the larger mesh cages to see if their growth can be controlled in that method. This could possibly be used to slow their growth if it becomes an issue with emergence or development. By Angela Baran

Genoa's first Hines emerald dragonf.ly.

A mussel relocation a decade in the making

The last week of June saw a large group of interagency personnel working on the banks of the St. Croix River to begin the work of relocating over 600 Federally Endangered mussels. This is no small number and it's made even more impressive by the fact that they were produced in 2005 and were not discovered until 2014. In 2005 recovery efforts for the winged mapleleaf included placing a handful of mussel cages stocked with winged mapleleaf bearing channel catfish in the St. Croix River at Hudson, WI. At the end of the season the cages were retrieved and only 20 individuals were recovered. The process was repeated in 2006 with no juveniles being recovered and the site was abandoned as a cage culture location. Fast forward to 2014 and during routine monitoring of the site 385 adult winged mapleleaf were recovered in the exact location of the previous cage work. For the next two years our conservation partners worked on a plan to relocate the mussels to formerly occupied habitats. So last month roles around and a large group from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, MN and WI Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service and the Minnesota Zoo all gathered to collect, mark and relocate the mussels. Divers were able to collect a total of 648 winged mapleleaf from the site, all of which appear to be from the same cohort produced in 2005. Group participants split three ways and all mussels were measured and fitted with two separate tags. The first is a standard shellfish tag with a serial number identical to those used at Genoa to monitor broodstock mussels. The second is a PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag. These tags are secured with superglue and then protected with a layer of dental cement or two-part epoxy. The PIT tag also has a unique number, but requires a meter with antennae to record the number from the animal. It is our hope that by using multiple tags we'll be able to track the individuals in stream and if either tag is lost we'll still know it is one of our individuals. The 648 individuals were divided into 3 groups. The first group will continue to live in the St. Croix. The second was relocated to our previous stocking location in the Mississippi River at Hidden Falls in Pool 2. The third group will be taken to the Chippewa River to re-establish a population in there. The mussels destined for the Chippewa River will spend at least a month in quarantine at the MN DNR mussel propagation facility to ensure that no zebra mussels are present before their introduction into that zebra mussel free facility. This project has taken several agencies and over 10 years of soaking time for the animals for the big move to arrive. Hopefully they will be happy, healthy and prolific in their new homes.

By: Nathan Eckert

A winged mapleleaf with an attached PIT tag

Megan Bradley from Genoa and Lisie Kitchel from the WI DNR work to PIT tag adult winged mapleleaf for release

Chasing Dragonflies in Lockport Prairie

This summer Genoa staff had the opportunity to travel to the Des Plains area near Chicago, IL for Hines emerald dragonfly egg collection. Egg collection can be done a couple different ways from the standard method of catching them in a fine mesh net to placing a net into a shallow pocket of water were the HED could possibly lay them. Genoa staff met our South Dakota University partners, Dan and Tristin Soluk, at Lockport Prairie, just outside of Chicago, and observed them locate foraging HED and catch them in nets. Locating the HED proved to be trickier than originally thought as one must be able to identify a dragonfly, mostly while in flight, by either the color or their body shape. If identification by color is possible, as it perches on plants or flies close enough to catch a glimpse, confirmation of the target species is immediate. Weather also played a big role in the ease at which the dragonflies were located. Wind speed, temperature and time of day played a big role in the likelihood of how many HEDs would be available. A low wind speed, mild temperature and mornings would be considered 'ideal' for HED foraging activities. Although the weather was beautiful on the day, the wind proved to be a little too strong as the activity level was low. As luck would have it, one HED female was caught. No eggs were collected as she appeared to have recently emerged. Although no more HEDs were caught that morning the trip down was well worth the time as Genoa staff were able to see firsthand both the foraging and spawning habitats. We were also able to see firsthand the challenges the HED, as well as other native dragonflies, face as they must cross a busy road to get from their foraging site to the spawning site. The dragonflies generally fly at an equal level of a car windshield resulting in high mortality due to being struck by vehicles traveling at high speeds. As some infrastructure build over their habitat was designed to benefit dragonfly flight paths, there is no guarantee they will adjust to it. As with any recovery program, eventually cooperation with development and habitat conservation will come into play. Stay tuned for more updates on the growth and development of Genoa's HED population! By: Erin Johnson

South Dakota University partners Dan and Tristin Soluk looking for foraging HED in Lockport Prairie.

Lockport Prairie foraging site.

Road crossing where dragonflies must cross to get to their spawning grounds.

YCC Enrollees Partner to Accomplish Projects at Genoa Fish Hatchery The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers a wide variety of opportunity and experience for young adults to peak interest in pursuing a career path related to natural and aquatic resource management. These opportunities for some come as early as high school through the Youth Conservation Program (YCC). The YCC program was established for young adults to accomplish conservation work on public lands, provide gainful employment experience and to develop an understanding and appreciation for natural resources. For the past few years YCC enrollees from the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge have teamed up with the Genoa YCC crew to accomplish annual trail maintenance and lake sturgeon coded wire tagging. This provides a unique opportunity for the Necedah YCC crew members to experience fisheries related work, while in return providing necessary help to accomplish projects at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery. Crew members from Necedah spend the majority of their summer improving hiking trails on wildlife refuge grounds, biological and visitor services activities, maintenance projects and helping with other biological surveys. On the other hand, YCC crew from Genoa play an integral role in the hatcheries lake sturgeon restoration program through maintenance and feeding, prepping walleye nets for spring, harvest of fat head minnows for forage, and maintaining buildings and grounds on the hatchery property. Once the YCC crew from Necedah arrives at the hatchery they are welcomed with a tour of the facilities focusing on aquatic work at the hatchery and career opportunities in fisheries. As the morning progresses the two main tasks for the day are trail maintenance and lake sturgeon tagging. Annually the hatchery mulches the walking trail which serves as an essential outdoor education tool for the hatchery's outdoor classrooms and school groups. It provides the opportunity for staff and local schools to teach and learn about various habitats, the importance of diverse habitats and the effects that invasive species have on native species. In addition the trail provides an excellent recreation opportunity for the public to enjoy. Crew members also kicked off the start of lake sturgeon coded wire tagging at the hatchery. The crew tagged over 1200 lake sturgeon destined for Missouri Department of Conservation this fall.

Necedah Wildlife Refuge and Genoa National Fish Hatchery group photo.

Necedah YCC member helping to maintain Genoa's trails.

This continued partnership with the refuge gives these students an opportunity to experience both career fields in fisheries and refuges. The Genoa Fish Hatchery appreciates the work of the YCC crew members in accomplishing these tasks.

By: Orey Eckes

Necedah YCC members helping with Genoa's sturgeon tagging.

Upcoming calendar of events

August 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Cordova Clean Up	4	5	6
7	8	9 Bethel Homes Fishing Event	10 YMCA Day Camp	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Friends of Pool 9 meting	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			