

Iron River Hatchery Highlights

U . S . F I S H & W I L D L I F E S E R V I C E

BUTTERFLIES ABOUND BY CAREY EDWARDS



Above: Iron River Elementary School students plant perennials in the fifth annual butterfly garden. Below: Students steady stepping stones molds while Hatchery Manager, Dale Bast, fills it with cement.

It seems like the new buzzword these days is pollinator and rightly so. They are an integral part of the world's life cycle. Efforts to cultivate areas where pollinators can reproduce, feed and grow are in effect across the country. At the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (IRNFH), where it is commonplace to find 1.65 million fish feeding and growing, a fifth pollinator garden is growing. The Iron River Elementary School is located in a small town eight miles south of the hatchery. Fifth grade teacher Melanie Ogren was contacted about participating once again in the fifth annual gardening event. On June 5th, seventeen students arrived by 9:30 a.m. for the first step in the gardening process: creating stepping stones for the garden path.

In an effort to put more ownership into the project, the students would not only help plant the garden but they would also make their own stepping stone. After curing, the stones would be placed in the adjoining garden to last year's garden, creating a path that would allow hatchery visitors to view their hard work up close and personal. Hatchery staff hoped that students would come back repeatedly to view the garden and show family and friends the unique stones they had made. Stones were decorated with an assortment of stamps, stones and shells.

Once the students smoothed out their concrete mixtures, it was time to plant. Students spent the remainder of the morning weeding the connecting gardens and planting flowers in the new one. After lunch, the students toured the hatchery and decorated their stepping stones. Students enjoyed light refreshments before cleaning up the work area and catching the bus back to school at the end of the day.

With a little bit of elbow grease and a lot of teamwork, a very successful and rewarding project was accomplished. The students were able to learn about gardening and butterflies as well as gaining awareness of fish hatchery pro-



Above: Purple coneflower is one of the flowering perennials that can be viewed in the butterfly garden. Below: Students smooth the cement in their molds before it cures.



EARTH TRACKS BY CAREY EDWARDS

For the past eleven years, the Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth, MN has hosted an Earth Tracks Day. The goal is to inspire students to be more environmentally conscientious and put thought into ways of not leaving their "tracks" on the Earth. Over 1,200 students from area elementary and middle schools visited the zoo on May 17, 2013 to take part in this green event.

Making its fifth appearance was the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (IRNFH). Carey Edwards, fish biologist from IRNFH, set up a booth with fish replicas and an interactive display that students could quiz themselves on fish anatomy. Students also received fish tattoos or hatchery pencils for participation in the booth.

Many local businesses, organizations and government agencies were in attendance. These groups were encouraged to set up hands on displays where children could learn about the environment that surrounds them and explore ways of decreasing their impact on Earth. This fun event is one of several collaborations the Iron River Hatchery has with the Lake Superior Zoo and we hope to continue this partnership in the future.



Students from area elementary schools spend the day visiting the zoo and booths manned by local environmental organizations.



IRON RIVER HOSTS HEAVY EQUIPMENT TRAINING

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BY CAREY EDWARDS

April 2013 marked a hallmark event for the staff at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (IRNFH). The hatchery hosted a region wide heavy equipment training session for service employees on forklift, skid steer and agricultural tractor.

Prior to the three day session, students were to complete the appropriate training on DOI Learn before attending. The training consisted of classroom instruction on policy, safety, and tie down procedures with practical examinations, followed by hands on demonstrations with a detailed walk around on each piece of equipment. The final phase for certification was the successful completion of the one hour driver's test.

While Iron River boasts two

forklifts, two tractors and a bobcat, an additional forklift with a boom was brought in for seat time. Concurrent sessions where run with students alternating between classroom sessions and seat time. The hatchery library was turned into a lecture hall and several obstacle courses were set up on hatchery grounds. Piles of snow were used to simulate loading a dump truck and pallets of fish food were available for forklift certifiers to transport and stack.

The hatchery was excited to be able to host an important training session such as this. We would like to thank Dale Pitman and all of the instructors for all the hard work that was put into making the event possible and successful.



Above: Biologist Paul Larson, IRNFH, trains on the forklift. Below: Instructors and students watch on while students take their turn at seat time on the forklift, bobcat and tractor.



Above: Brood fish are anesthetized before being vaccinated. After vaccination, fish pass down a shoot and into the water. Below: Coaster brook trout are injected with the vaccine.



VACCINATIONS COMPLETE

BY CAREY EDWARDS

Furunculosis (pronounced fur-unc-you-low-sis) is a bacterial disease primarily found in cultured salmonid and warm water species. It is found widespread in natural waters. Diseased fish appear lethargic, go off feed and display clinical signs such as exophthalmia (bulging eyes), hemorrhagic fins, and furuncles (open boil-like sores). The pathogen is usually transmitted as the result of contact with diseased or carrier fish but can also occur via water passed from one contaminated water supply to another (tank to tank). Fish may be carriers of the disease without showing any clinical signs, which is why hatchery fish are biannually tested by the La Crosse Fish Health Lab.

The disease positive classification can impact the U.S. Fish & Wild-

life's ability to meet stocking goals with its many partners including state and tribal agencies because some states have regulations regarding the transport of eggs and fish from positive facilities. A priority for Iron River National Fish Hatchery has been to maintain a disease free status.

Small brood fish (approximately 2g in weight) are immersed in a dip while larger brood fish receive an injectable version of the vaccine. This is the third year that the vaccine has been implemented with adults being injected in late June and the final immersion of juveniles in early September. It is hoped that the early vaccination process will be part of a successful biosecurity plan at the Iron River NFH to help maintain a disease free status.



AN EGGCITING STORY

BY CAREY EDWARDS

For the past eleven years, raising trout and salmon in the classroom has been common place in the Northwood's of Wisconsin. The program started at the Superior Middle School and has since spread to Northwestern, and Ashland Middle schools. What better way would there be to teach students about the life history of trout and salmon then to have them raise fish in the classroom? All it takes is a 30 gallon aquarium, chiller unit and trout or salmon eggs. The equipment is quite costly, but with the help of two local sportsman's group donating the funds for chiller and aquarium, the schools were up and running.

The last ingredient for the program was eggs and Iron River National Fish Hatchery agreed to provide lake trout eggs for the program with the stipulation that the fish would be humanly euthanized at the projects end. (This is due to stringent regulations and permitting in the transportation of fish due to disease concerns.)

Nearly 900 students spread out in four schools, welcomed 500 eggs into the aquarium mid-October. They monitored water temperature daily and made sure the conditions were perfect for the developing fish. Excitement abounded when the eggs hatched, followed by surprise and disappointment that the newly hatched fry sought shelter in the gravel. After over 30 days of waiting, the eager students began feeding the fish as they swam-up. Some aquariums have better suc-

cess than others with anywhere from 12 to 200 fish surviving the duration of the project.

As part of the program, the hatchery agreed to come to the classroom and continue the learning process with a presentation and hands-on lab to all three schools. Fish Biologist, Carey Edwards brought the hatchery to life with a power point presentation and students were able to simulate egg enumeration in the same manner that occurs at the hatchery. This involved displacing water with "eggs" (BB's), recording data and calculating eggs/ml. Students were also presented with additional math problems that mimic day to day calculations occurring at the fish hatchery. This helped to strike home how important and frequently math is used in everyday life.

This program is very rewarding for all involved. The school, sportsman's club and hatchery are looking forward to this fall, when the next group of students gets to learn about the life history of lake trout. 



An Ashland Middle School student counts "eggs" into a graduated cylinder as part of the presentation.

2013 SPRING DISTRIBUTION ENDS

BY CAREY EDWARDS



Above: Biologist James Anderson sweeps fish from the Pendill's Creek NFH distribution truck. Below: Fish are piped from the truck into tanks on the M/V Spencer F. Baird.



Growing and stocking lake trout sounds simple and mindless in theory. How hard could it be, really? Isn't it just a matter of throwing them some food, loading them into a truck and hosing them off at the nearest boat landing? Not hardly. It is a vastly complicated process that starts years in advance before the fish are even created. It doesn't just happen at the local Department of Natural Resources or Fish and Wildlife Office, it encompasses a plethora of state, federal, and tribal agencies as well as conservation clubs and other organizations such as the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Managing inter-jurisdictional fisheries can be tricky. A federal court order, called the 2000 Consent Decree, was negotiated between the state of Michigan and five Chippewa and Ottawa tribes to set forth standards in managing the fishery in 1836 Treaty waters of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron with the Fish and Wildlife Service being the United States representative for implementation of the Decree. All of these groups work together to evaluate the fisheries, assess the status of fish stocks, establish harvest limits, stock fish and control parasitic sea lamprey which is all part of restoring lake trout in the Great Lakes. From a hatchery standpoint, decisions are made years in advance on

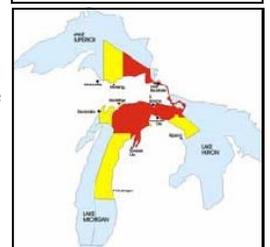
how many brood fish are needed to meet future goals for egg production and how often gametes are to be collected from the wild to keep hatchery stock genetically sound. Decisions are also made as to what strain of lake trout will be raised and where it will be stocked and often times, studies are conducted with multiple strains of lake trout at a given site to determine what type of lake trout survives better. These studies could not be completed without the mass marking program which began in 2010. It is a coordinated effort between all jurisdictions to mark (tag or clip) all trout and salmon stocked in the Great Lakes to evaluate whether a fish caught in an assessment is a native or hatchery fish. Information gathered from tagged fish could impact the type of lake trout and how many are being stocked from each hatchery. Putting aside all the planning and technology that takes place at each hatchery to make and grow a healthy lake trout to stocking size, whether it leaves as a shore stocked fall fingerling or as a yearling or is stocked off of the M/V Spencer F. Baird as part of the main distribution season, the planning and collaborative processes that takes place is commendable. Nearly a dozen Fish and Wildlife, Coast Guard and Department of Natural Resource offices work together in what is nearly a three month operation to stock fish on reefs in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The ending result is this: approximately 4.4 million lake trout were stocked and we are in the process of making it happen all over again next year. 

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Above: Lake trout are sent through the mass marking trailer where a fin is cut off and a coded wire tag is implanted into their heads. Below: 1836 Treaty waters.





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TO:

STAFF UPDATES



Staff photo: From left to right, circling the table from behind: Biologist Paul Larson, Biologist Carey Edwards, Assistant Manager Nick Starzl, Bio-Technician Brandon Keesler, Hatchery Manager Dale Bast, Administrative Technician Laurie Gucinski, Biologist Shawn Sanders.



Above: Laurie uses a magnifying glass to read a print out from FBMS.

Meet and say goodbye to Laurie Gucinski! Laurie worked for IRNFH 20 years (to the day) as an administrative technician. She lived through six dome failures AND hatchery Vikings fans and made life-long friends during those 20 years. Laurie enjoys hunting, fishing, knitting and other crafts and is a notorious craft hoarder. She is heavily into volunteerism in the surrounding community. In retirement, she is doing all the things she loves, including spending time with her two children and two grandchildren.



FRIEND'S GROUP

Jane Snilsberg, Friend's of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery's Secretary/Treasurer attended the Region 3 Friends Meeting in Gaylord, MI. Jane was able to meet members from other Friends group across the region. The Friend's of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery is gearing up for the hatchery's open house in September. Come check us out on September 28th from 10 am to 2 pm.

Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Iron River Hatchery. Everyone is welcome.

Membership information can be found at the Friend's website: <http://ironriverhatcheryfriends.org>, by emailing the Friends at somethingfishy@ironriverhatcheryfriends.org or by contacting the hatchery office.



Calendar of Events:

- July: Lake Superior Day
- August: Bayfield County Fair Spawning Begins
- September: Open House Mass marking begins



Would you like to receive your newsletter via email? Contact Carey_Edwards@fws.gov.



Above left: Attendees of the Region 3 Friends Meeting. Above right: Jane Snilsberg, Friends of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery member, receives a Certificate of Appreciation from Assistant Regional Director, Todd Turner.