



Missouri River Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

Bismarck, North Dakota

August 2020

Interior Region 5

Who we are:

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Administrative
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Fish and Wildlife
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Technicians:

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Species Recovery

A significant portion of our fisheries work involves the federally endangered pallid sturgeon, *Scaphirhynchus albus*, native to the Missouri and Mississippi River systems. There are several key aspects of recovery work and this past August, that work has focused on population assessments. Ideally



Bobby Weiland measuring a live pallid sturgeon.

sampling would have occurred all month, however rising Covid19 cases in the state caused a necessary pause in field work. Fortunately the crews were still able to achieve two full



Matt Gardner with a live pallid sturgeon.

weeks of sampling on the Missouri River in recovery priority management area 2. The river is divided into 14

segments composed of sampling units determined at the bend level. The population assessment for August focused on segment 4 which has 23 sampling units. Over three days, six of these units were randomly sampled with an otter trawl for young of the year sturgeon. Trawls are towed through the inner and outer bends as well as channel crossover habitats in the sample unit. Ryan Wilson and the crew completed 144 trawl tows for young of the year sturgeon. They captured and released 11 age-0 sturgeon and seven hatchery released sturgeon.

Learn More:

- ◆ [Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Program](#)
- ◆ [Pallid Sturgeon Library](#)

Native Species Restoration

The MRFWCO works with individual USFWS National Wildlife Refuges to provide technical assistance on aquatic issues for the management of the waters on the refuges. This includes working closely with refuge personnel, State and local agencies and the public to maintain a recreational fishery for the enjoyment and appreciation of anglers where applicable and compatible with refuge objectives.

This month, staff performed fall reproduction surveys on Lake Darling of the Upper



Wade, Kelsey and Kat processing a reproduction net.

Souris NWR looking for young of the year fish. Lake Darling is one of the premier Refuge recreational fisheries in North Dakota that provides thousands of anglers opportunities to catch limits of quality walleye, as well as

ample chances to catch whopper class smallmouth bass. Fall reproduction trend data has been collected on this lake for over twenty years and is used to set future stocking rates to supplement the lake's natural reproduction.



Walleye captured in the reproduction net.

Learn More:

- ◆ [NWRS Fishing Guide](#)



**Grand Forks
Air Force
Base**



**Minot
Air Force Base
5th Bomb
Wing**



**Minot
Air Force Base
91st Missile
Wing**

Partnerships

Sikes Act

Enacted in 1960, the Sikes Act enhances cooperation between the Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife agencies to promote fish and wildlife conservation on military lands while continuing to support the military mission. [Learn More: Sikes Act](#)

Minot AFB

Vane trapping of bees has continued bi-weekly on Minot AFB. The final week of vane trapping will occur in early September. We have



collaborated with the entomology department at NDSU for expert apoidea identification. Anticipated work this fall includes targeted weed spraying of Canada thistle in natural areas.

Grand Forks AFB

A lot has been happening on GFAFB this month. Crews have continued to conduct weed mapping inventories, and vane trap bees. Both monarch and milkweed monitoring plots were surveyed twice this past month.



Butterfly transects were also surveyed in August. The first overnight moth capture survey was conducted with 109 specimens collected and pinned for ID by our partners at NDSU. We also had a



unique opportunity to collaborate with the ND department of environmental quality watershed management program to conduct an elec-



Melissa, Kelsey, & Josh

trofishing survey of the GFAFB portion of the Turtle River lead by Josh Wert of the DEQ program. All staff completed the FWS electrofishing safety course prior to participation. A total of 11 species were identified along the transect!

NCTAMS LANT Lamoure
(Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Atlantic Detachment Lamoure)

Communication is ongoing between the Service, ND Game & Fish Dept. and the U.S. Navy related to the Lamoure detachment in ND. The Navy's environmental dept. is developing a new Integrated Natural Resources Management plan with approval anticipated in 2021.

Role of Covid19

This month staff have continued to adapt & overcome the complications caused by Covid19. Crews working on MAFB and GFAFB have shown exemplary flexibility, and dedication. For perspective, MAFB is 123 miles from the Bismarck office, and GFAFB is 236 miles. When increasing Covid

cases prompted a pause to overnight travel, crews continued to accomplish field work by utilizing staggered day trips, and alternating between office work, and other local work with the Ecological Services office. Add in the normal considerations for weather, species phenology, and equipment logistics, our ac-

complishments have been significant but not without delays, longer completion times, and some indefinite postponement. Weekly and often daily strategizing will continue through the fall.



Possibly the most widely recognized and endearing Naval emblem is NCTAMS LANT's "OSCAR". It was designed by Walt Disney's artists in 1947 and is intended to humorously convey the normal plight of a Navy communicator using state of the art equipment at the time. [Learn more here.](#)

Ecological Services

This year our biological technicians have had additional opportunities to conduct field work with the Ecological Services office. This past month Kelsey, Kat, and Melissa worked with Jerry Reinisch conducting bumble bee surveys on BLM lands around North Dakota.



They netted live bumblebees in 100m x 100m plots and identified the species as well as their floral association. Afterwards, inflorescence counts were conducted in 1mx1m quadrats.



The technicians also continued to assist the North and South Dakota ES offices with regal fritillary surveys. This work will help inform a species status assessment and guide future endangered species act decisions.



[Regal Fritillary USFWS](#)



Melissa & Kat on a nectar source line transect.

Fish Passage

Nestled in the Red River Watershed of eastern North Dakota, the Elm River Watershed covers 2,698 square miles. Thirteen fish species have been documented in the Elm River watershed of which five are listed as species of conservation concern within the Great Plains.

The Elm River Watershed Board is in the process of improving infrastructure, which has created a unique opportunity for the USFWS to collaborate with the board and incorporate fish passage into their improve-

ments with potential National Fish Passage Funding. As part of a strategic planning exercise, fish passage surveys began in August to further our understanding of fish habitat connectivity issues. Due to Covid19, fish passage surveys have been limited to public right-of-ways, primarily road stream crossings. 60% of the public right-of-way surveys have been completed, with the remainder anticipated to be completed by the end of September. In 2021 we hope to continue barrier surveys on

private lands with landowner cooperation.

Learn More: [National Fish Passage Program](#)

Early in the history of the U.S, thousands of culverts, dikes, water diversions, dams and other artificial barriers were constructed to impound or redirect water for irrigation, flood control, electricity, water supply, and transportation. All of these changed the natural features of countless waterways, blocking the natural migration of fish to historic habitat used for reproduction & growth

[USFWS National Fish Passage Program](#)

Other News

Staff Updates

Ryan Wilson and Tait Ronningen were selected and accepted the positions of Fish and Wildlife Biologist for the Missouri River Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. They will officially begin their new positions in September. Congratulations to both of them!

Around North Dakota

The hay is in and work on the duck boat begins! **Don't forget to buy your federal duck stamp!**



Still avoiding public spaces? Buy your E-Stamp online for immediate use and your physical stamp will arrive in the mail! Learn more [here](#).

Winter is on the horizon and the woolly worms, or woolly bears are out. What is in store for you? Learn more [here](#).



Life after lockdown...



August & September draws a close to the nesting season for many native nesting birds. Young of the year leave the nest for life's next adventure.

Our Team in Action



Melissa Martin with a bumblebee she netted as part of an ES project.



Bobby Weiland with a live pallid sturgeon.



Ryan Wilson and Bobby Weiland pit tagging a pallid sturgeon.



Shorthead Redhorse



Matt and Bobby on the Missouri River for pallid sturgeon work.



Melissa Martin & Josh Wert electrofishing.



Melissa Martin capturing moths in glass vials.



Kat Padgett identifying fish during the electrofishing survey.



Blackside Darter