

Missouri River Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

Bismarck, ND November – December 2020

Interior Region 5

Missouri Basin

Who we are:

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Editor:
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Foreword

It is now that time of year when the office quiets down after the seasonal technicians head home for a reprieve and the buzz of a well orchestrated field season settles in to the plucks and clicks of keyboard and mouse. Staff are now diving in to the data management and processing phase of the year and investigating the outcome of the season's activities. Reports are being written and upcoming field work planned. Simultaneously, staff are also participating in meetings and

conferences to showcase their results or learn new methods to apply to their work. Most importantly, new partnerships are being cultivated and current ones tended. The mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service is to;

work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

To achieve this mission the Service relies on partnerships. When people work together to achieve what they cannot do alone, stewardship and conservation prevail. Not surprisingly, much the work we do in the MRFWCO involves input and coordination with numerous partners to accomplish the mission. In the following pages we highlight our full time staff and their November and December activities under the framework of our partnerships and collaborations.

Species Recovery

Pallid Sturgeon

Recovery of the federally endangered pallid sturgeon is based upon valuable partnerships across the broad geographic expanse of the Missouri River basin. Interdepartmental partnerships between staff at the FWCO and the National Fish Hatcheries (NFH) is one significant aspect of the recovery effort. In 2019, the Garrison Dam NFH in ND and the Gavins Point NFH in SD coordinated their pallid sturgeon spawning efforts so that 1 and 5 day post hatch (DPH) free embryos could be released into the Missouri River near Wolf Point, MT. The hatchery coordination began months in advance as water temperatures had to be adjusted at each facility so that the females would ovulate on



a certain dates to produce the 2 different hatch dates. Then, this past field season, the MRFWCO population assessment team lead by Ryan Wilson randomly surveyed 6 sampling units of the Missouri River in ND out of the 12 normally sampled due to covid19. Genetic testing of the free embryos that were captured during their efforts verified 9 age-1 pallid sturgeon from the 2019 free embryo release in Montana.

Ryan Wilson

Ryan Wilson has been employed with the MRFWCO for nearly 20 years. Since 2005, he has been the crew leader for the Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment Program in segment 4 of Missouri River in North Dakota. In his spare time, he enjoys hanging out with his wife and six kids while playing a variety of sports, taking kids hunting, woodworking or learning how to play a musical instrument (though he was deemed unteachable after 2 days).



Sikes Act

Sikes Act

The foundation of the Sikes Act is based on interagency partnerships to promote fish and wildlife conservation on military lands while continuing to support the military mission. Here, the Department of Defense (DoD), USFWS and the state wildlife management agency come together to develop and implement a natural resource management program on DoD owned lands. In North Dakota, we have expanded that to include other partners such as local universities, the Monarch Joint Venture (MJV), and the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). These additional partnerships allow the USFWS Sikes Act Biologists Amanda Goldstein and Beth Davies to leverage another organizations expertise for mutual benefit.

Our collaboration with the Entomology Department at North Dakota State University (NDSU) began in 2016 with moth and butterfly identification for specimens collected on both Grand Forks and Minot AFBs. Several of our moth specimens were the first records of the species in the state and were added to NDSU's collection. This year NDSU entomologists will also be identifying bee specimens collected by the USFWS at each air force base as part of the USAF Pollinator Conservation Strategy which lays out a strategic vision, goals and objectives for the Air Force to achieve pollinator conservation on Air Force lands. This strategy and resources for implementing the strategy were developed collaboratively with the USFWS and the Air Force Civil Engineering Center and can be found in the [USAF Pollinator Conservation Reference Guide](#).



Now that the monarch butterfly has officially become a candidate species for protections under the Endangered Species Act, partnerships with states, tribes, private landowners, private partners, and other federal agencies to carry out conservation actions for the monarch to prevent further decline and possibly eliminate the need for listing are crucial. We have partnered with the Monarch Joint Venture to implement the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP) on GFAFB which is designed to monitor various indicators of monarch population health and habitat quality and availability. This newly established monitoring program also supports the USAF Pollinator Conservation Strategy.

Our recent partnership with the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality has allowed staff biologists to integrate biological assessments of the fish and macroinvertebrate assemblages, water quality, and habitat into a more holistic stream assessment of the Turtle River segment on GFAFB. While much of the data is still being analyzed, the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) score for the GFAFB site on the Turtle River falls in to the *fully supporting* aquatic life use attainment category for fish!

We anticipate growing and expanding these important partnerships into the future as we continue our work with the DoD. While we highlight our current work with the Air

Force in North Dakota, a new partnership is underway with the Navy and we look forward to the opportunities still to come!

Other Accomplishments:

- * Provided final furbearer report to GFAFB.
- * Developed and provided correspondence to GFAFB to improve project status tracking.

Amanda Goldstein



Amanda has been an integral part of the Sikes Act program in North Dakota since 2014!



Beth Davies

Beth has been with the Sikes Act program for just over a year and is expecting baby number 1 to arrive by early February! That 7 month belly didn't put a damper on her hunting season!

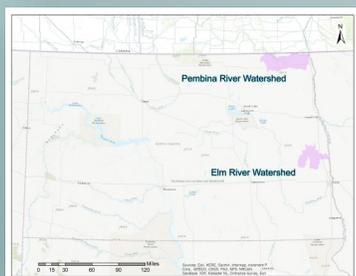


Fisheries

Fish Passage

Tait Ronningen has been leading the MRFWCO's interagency collaboration with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) to expand the Southeast Aquatic Barrier Prioritization Tool to include North Dakota and other western states interested in participating. The tool is a comprehensive living inventory of dams and road stream barriers and includes detailed metrics to help prioritize barriers for removal or remediation projects to improve habitat connectivity for aquatic organisms. This past field season Tait's crew conducted fish barrier inventories in the Pembina and Elm River watersheds and the data generated is being incorporated into the SARP's prioritization tool to assess fish habitat connectivity issues with these watersheds.

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



Tait Ronningen

Tait specializes in fisheries conservation planning through geospatial tools to guide research and management. Tait earned a B.S. and M.S. at South Dakota State University. He and his wife, Samantha, are parents of a son and two daughters, and enjoy hunting, fishing, birding, and camping.

Native Species

Another important interdepartmental partnership at the MRFWCO lead by Wade King involves his work with fish reproduction surveys on North Dakota's National Wildlife Refuges. The data that Wade and his team generate inform stocking requests made to the National Fish Hatcheries to supplement natural

sportfish reproduction on the refuges. This collaboration ultimately increases recreational opportunities for sportsmen and sportswomen on USFWS lands.

Wade King

Wade has been working in fisheries with the USFWS for nearly 27 years! Much of his current work centers around recreational fishery management in North Dakota and eastern Montana. In addition to this work, Wade is the lead MOCC instructor for ND and SD, and has been the legacy region 6 uniform coordinator for 14 years, and the Acting National Uniform coordinator since 2019.



Administrative

Stephanie Hauge

Stephanie joined the USFWS service a little over a year ago. Her position as the Administrative Assistant in the Bismarck office is shared between the Bismarck and the Ecological Services office in the Missouri River Basin.

payroll and human resources, fleet support, and many more. Outside of work, Stephanie has two daughters who love to spend time outdoors and enjoy fishing (when it's warm).

Tough times do not last, tough teams do.

-Robert Schuller

