

# Great Plains Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office News

## Monitoring Endangered Species

A primary responsibility of the Great Plains Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) is to monitor the federally endangered pallid sturgeon, as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment Program, to inform management decisions.

From April to June, we completed 100 gillnet, 80 trotline, 80 trawl, and 84 trammel net sets in the Missouri River downstream of Fort Randall Dam, SD, to sample pallid sturgeon and other native, large river fishes.

To accomplish this intensive sampling, we relied on two “volunteers” from the Columbia (MO) FWCO: Jessi Rouda and Bryon Rochon, and two public volunteers: Joe Mrnak (graduate student working on pallid sturgeon ecology at South Dakota State University) and Denny Pierce.



Jessi Rouda (left) and Bryon Rochon (right) assist with gillnet sampling for pallid sturgeon.

We caught 37 pallid sturgeon, 73 shovelnose sturgeon, 9 sauger, and numerous other species. Pallid sturgeon stocked in this reach are up to 21 years old!

A big THANK YOU to our volunteers for persevering through the long hours and challenging conditions!

Contact [Landon\\_Pierce@fws.gov](mailto:Landon_Pierce@fws.gov) for more information

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Pierre, SD

January—June 2018

### Highlights

- 4 awards
- 5 new hires
- 2 Columbia FWCO “volunteers”
- 2 public volunteers
- Novel research results
- \* *Bluegill predation on zebra mussels*

## Managing Aquatic Resources on Air Force Bases

Great Plains FWCO provides fisheries technical support to Offutt (Omaha, NE) and Ellsworth (Box Elder, SD) Air Force bases (AFB).

At Offutt AFB, we are evaluating potential options to manage invasive zebra mussels, which have established in the base’s lake. This lake provides valuable recreational opportunities to military personnel. Man-

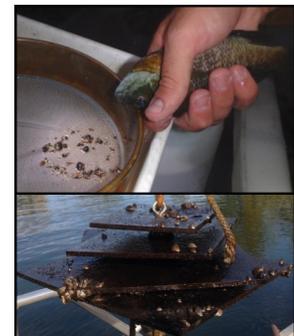
agement options under consideration include stocking redear sunfish, which eat zebra mussels, and altering the substrate to reduce habitat for zebra mussels.

Redear sunfish stocking only recently began, but diet analysis of other fish species in the lake has shown that bluegill consume zebra mussels! This finding is particularly interesting because

bluegill consumption of zebra mussels had not been documented in peer-reviewed literature.

Throughout 2018, we will continue to study zebra mussel colonization rates to improve our understanding of the potential of using fish predation as a zebra mussel management tool.

Contact [Daniel\\_James@fws.gov](mailto:Daniel_James@fws.gov) for more information

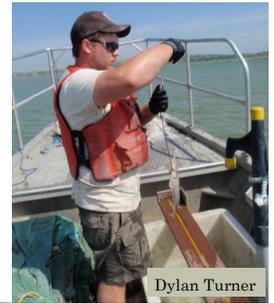


Collecting bluegill diet samples (top) and zebra mussel abundance estimates (bottom).

## New Faces

In spring 2018, the Great Plains FWCO filled five vacancies. Jennifer Johnson and Jason Kral were hired as biologists for the Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment Program. Brandon Boehm, Alyssa Gunning, and Dylan Turner were hired as technicians.

**Welcome!**



Dylan Turner



Brandon Boehm



Alyssa Gunning



Jason Kral



Jennifer Johnson

## Awards

**Kristen Grohs** – USFWS Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) award for identifying a significant underground water leak at D.C. Booth National Fish Hatchery, resulting in \$3,600 savings in the first month alone!

**Daniel James** – USFWS STAR award for service as Project Leader, in addition to his regular Biologist duties.

**Landon Pierce** – USFWS STAR award for service as Pallid Sturgeon Technical Lead and Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Co-lead, in addition to his regular Biologist duties.

**Landon Pierce** – Dakota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society David W. Willis Outstanding Young Professional Award in recognition of dedicated service to the advancement and improvement of fisheries science as a young professional.

## Publications and Reports

Hamel, M., M. Porath, and **L. Pierce**. 2018. Young professional survey results: member and nonmember perspectives on decisions to join the American Fisheries Society. *Fisheries* 43:271-277.

**Pierce, L., D. James, and D. Turner**. 2018. 2017 annual report: pallid sturgeon population assessment and associated fish community monitoring for the Missouri River: Segments 5 and 6. USFWS Great Plains FWCO, Pierre, SD. Prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Missouri River Recovery Program.

**Turner, D., D. James, and L. Pierce**. 2018. Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska: 2017 zebra mussel survey report. USFWS Great Plains FWCO, Pierre, SD.

## Presentations

**James, D., G. Brundige, L. Pierce, and D. Turner**. 2018. Effectiveness of thermal and oxygen mixing by a wind-powered water circulator in a small, shallow reservoir. Contributed paper. Annual Meeting of the Dakota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (DAFS).

Mrnak, J., S. Chipps, and **D. James**. 2018. Effect of water velocity on growth, survival, and energy reserves of endogenous pallid sturgeon *Scaphirhynchus albus* larvae. Missouri River Natural Resource Conference (MRNRC), Annual Meeting of the DAFS, and Upper Basin Pallid Sturgeon Workgroup meeting.

**Pierce, L., D. James, and D. Turner**. 2018. Age-at-stocking effect on recruitment, growth, and condition of pallid sturgeon. Contributed poster. MRNRC, and Annual Meeting of the DAFS.

**Turner, D., D. James, L. Pierce, H. Meyer, N. Starzl, and J. Powell**. 2018. Acoustic tag retention and initial dispersal of hatchery-reared juvenile paddlefish. Contributed paper. Annual Meeting of the DAFS.

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