

FLEUR DE LIS FISHERIES

US Fish and Wildlife Service



4-H Archery Practice at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery Joins with Natchitoches Parish 4-H to Hold Archery Practice at the Hatchery

By: Tony Brady

For whatever reason, I was never exposed to the 4-H program as a kid, and now as a parent I am learning the value of the 4-H program through my daughters. Seeing how 4-H can impact children in many areas of their life, I have been hooked into assisting in any way possible. By attending the Archery as an Outreach Tool class taught at the Fish and Wildlife Servied National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), I have found a way not only for me but for Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery to help out the local parish 4-H and to help connect kids with nature. Until now, the 4-H archery shooting sports practices were held at the local gun range. Imagine trying to practice shooting a bow when you have shotguns going off on one side of you and someone sighting in their deer hunting rifle on the other side of you. Working with the Natchitoches Parish 4-H Agent, we



The hatchery has three different types of bows for the kids to shoot. These young men are trying to find one they like.



These young ladies take aim during 4-H archery practice.

have moved archery practice to the grounds of Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery. With the archery equipment provided by NCTC after completing the archery class, we are able to set up a safe and quiet practice area where the local parish 4-H kids can learn archery skills and safety. A total of 26 kids have been exposed to archery in two practices held at the hatchery. Many of these kids don't have their own equipment and may not have attended practice if it weren't for the hatchery-supplied gear. We expect this program to only grow and get stronger as word spreads about the fun the kids are having at the fish hatchery on Sunday afternoons.



September Outreach Events Give Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery an Opportunity to Connect People with Nature.

By: Tony Brady

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery was able to participate in two Saturday outreach events in September. The first, held on 15 September, was at Tensas National Wildlife Refuge located in northeast Louisiana. I went down the Friday before the Refuge Festival to collect freshwater mussels from the Tensas River. The mussels were placed in a kid-sized swimming pool that had a layer of sand and was filled with water. During the festival, kids were invited to dig through the sand and find the mussels. As the kids would pull up a mussel, I was then able to talk to the kids and their parents about threatened and endangered species and freshwater mussel conservation. An estimated 2,500 people



Grandpa helps the grandkids find mussels in the sand.

attended the festival and a majority of them stopped by the Hatchery's booth. With temperatures being in the 90's, there may have been a correlation between the number of folks stopping by the Hatchery's booth and the number of snow cones sold next door.

The second event, the Woodworth National Hunting and Fishing Day was held a week later on 22 September in Woodworth, Louisiana. This event was sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and several local businesses. Woodworth is located to the south and east of Kisatchie National Forest where there are several streams that are home to the threatened Louisiana pearlshell mussel. Since the Natchitoches NFH is currently studying the reproductive biology of the Louisiana pearlshell mussel, we were asked to set up a display and tell folks about this unique creature that only lives in two Louisiana parishes. With permission from Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, a display of Louisiana pearlshell mussel shells and a few live mussels, collected from one of our research areas on private property, were set up for everyone to see what this animal looks like. A lot of people in the area have heard about the Louisiana pearlshell mussel but don't know what they are. A total of 1923 people attended the event and had the opportunity to learn a little more about their endemic neighbor.



This family gets a close up look at the threatened Louisiana pearlshell mussel.