

# FY 2015

## TXFWCO Activity Report: March



### Flooding in the Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake

Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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## Monthly Report

### Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Activities

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## Rio Grande Lower Canyons Monitoring Trip

The Lower Rio Grande Recovery Team conducted the annual Lower Canyons eco-hydrology monitoring spring trip on 2-9 March 2015. The team consisted of representatives from the Big Bend National Park, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Sul Ross State University, the Desert LCC, and the TXFWCO.

Weather and high water river conditions did not allow for completion of the trip objectives of sampling eight sites. Three sites, San Francisco, Silber, and Big Canyon, were sampled for fish, invertebrates, and discharge. An opportunistic fish sampling effort was conducted down stream of San Francisco. At least three Rio Grande silvery minnows were collected in the first seine haul (out of six). Laboratory analysis will confirm the three RGSM and any others potentially caught, but time is needed to process the samples. In addition to the RGSM collected at this site, zooplankton samples were taken for an exploratory look at potential food availability at RGSM capture sites.

A second spring trip will be conducted in June through Boquillas Canyon to look for RGSM and take ecological data. This canyon has not been sampled for RGSM before.



Rio Grande silvery minnow captured in the Lower Canyon stretch.

## Paddlefish Reintroduction Project

On 9-12 March 2015, Mike Montagne and a volunteer, Heston Montagne, conducted American paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) radio telemetry monitoring at Caddo Lake and the Big Cypress Bayou. The area was hit by heavy rains for several days prior to trip and caused massive flooding in the Big Cypress watershed. The bottom of telemetry tower one, at the spillway of Caddo Lake, was three feet underwater and we were unable to download that data recorder. We were able to download data from Tower two, though the water levels were within a few inches of making it impossible. We had no trouble downloading telemetry tower three, the furthest upstream tower due to its location.

All boat ramps were closed except for the City of Jefferson boat ramp so we were able to track in the Big Cypress reaches immediately upstream and downstream of Jefferson, about 26 miles in total. We were still able to contact 31 of the 47 radio tagged paddlefish, 22 of them just below the spillway of Lake ‘O the Pines.



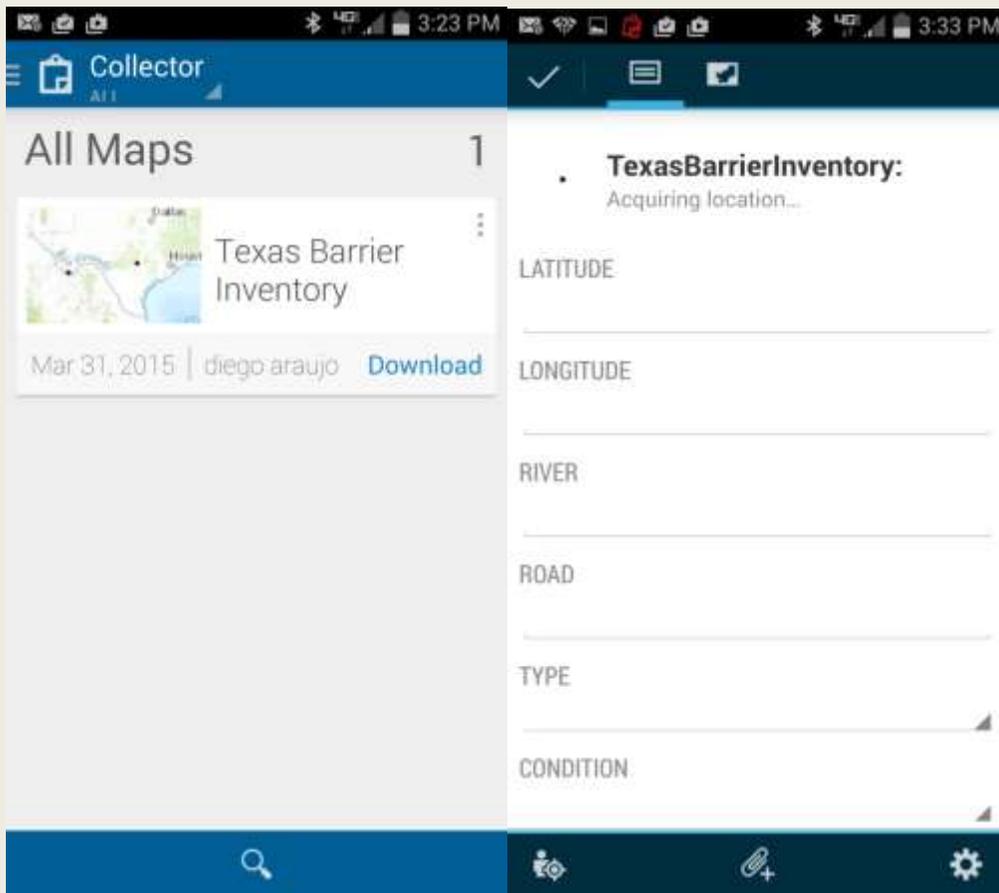
**Heston Montagne tracking radio tagged paddlefish.**

In February 2015, one of the three test tags that we kept to test the equipment went silent. This means that the battery has finally drained and the transmitter is no

longer emitting a signal. The tags are nearing the end of their lifecycle and all will likely go silent in the near future.

## Collector App for Texas Barrier Inventory

The TXFWCO has been working on a smart phone app for years and has encountered many setbacks and roadblocks to a successful version. Diego Araujo (TXFWCO) with help from GIS people in the USFWS and elsewhere, has finally managed to produce a working app that works on your phone both when you have service and when you do not. The TXFWCO is currently field testing the app and once that is completed it will be made available to anyone interested in it. It can be set up for other areas in or out of Region 2, and has other potential applications other than the barrier application.



Collector App for the Texas Barrier Inventory.

## **Great Plains LCC**

On 4-5 March 2015, Mike Montagne participated in the Great Plains LCC Science Meeting for Prairie Rivers and Streams, hosted by TPWD in Austin Texas.

## **Region 2 Emphasis Area Meeting**

On 25-26 March 2015, Mike Montagne participated in the Region 2 Emphasis Areas workshop in Albuquerque, NM.

## **April Schedule of Activities:**

6 April 2015: Capes Dam removal meeting

8 April 2015: Conference call with ES and USACE about NFPP

8 April 2015: Conference Call about Rio Grande Emphasis Area projects

10 April 2015: Conference call about East TX/OK Emphasis Area projects

20-24 April 2015: Paddlefish tracking in the Big Cypress Bayou

13-17 April 2015: West Texas streams and springs monitoring

April 2015: Salado salamander monitoring continues