



Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Accomplishment Report

September 2016



Little Colorado River

Photo Credit: USFWS

AZFWCO Staff

Flagstaff

Jess Newton, Project Leader
Kirk Young, Assistant Project Leader
Vacant, Project Coordinator
Randy Van Haverbeke, Senior Fish Biologist
Dennis Stone, Fish Biologist
Michael Pillow, Fish Biologist
Jim Walters, Biological Technician
Rick Deshler, Biological Technician
Vic Scott, Administrative Officer
Kevin Dunlap, Administrative Support Assistant

Pinetop

Jeremy Voeltz, Project Coordinator
Jennifer Johnson, Fish Biologist
Tim Grosch, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Stephanie Vail-Muse, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Louis Eastwood, Apache Trout Crew

Parker

Chase Ehlo, Fish Biologist
Mitch Thorson, Fish Biologist
Brad Buechel, Fish Biologist
John Naugle, Biological Technician
Sean O’Kray, Pest Control Worker



AZFWCO Mission: Working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and other aquatic organisms and their habitat in Arizona and the Southwest.



Humpback Chub

Kirk Young, Randy Van Haverbeke, and Michael Pillow sampled the fish assemblage in the mainstem Colorado River in Grand Canyon. The objective of the 18 day trip was to monitor the status of Humpback Chub at recognized aggregations within Grand Canyon. They primarily used baited hoop nets to capture and document native and non-native fish, however, they also used baited, remote, submersible PIT tag antennas to detect PIT-tagged fish in proximity to hoop nets that may not have been captured in the nets.

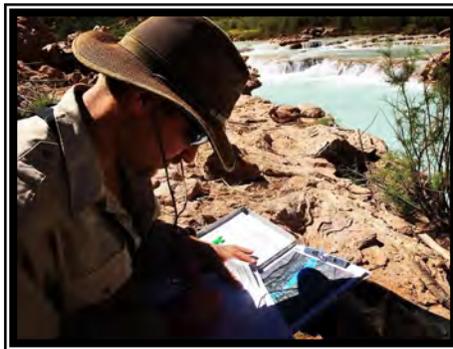
As has been common in recent years, the catch was dominated by native Flannelmouth Suckers throughout much of the mainstem Colorado River, however of particular interest was the increased capture rates of Humpback Chub at the sites sampled in the Western Grand Canyon.



Flannelmouth Sucker from the LCR

Photo Credit: USFWS

Dennis Stone, Mike Pillow, Rick Deshler, Jim Walters, and Stephanie Vail-Muse directed the September 20-30 Humpback Chub monitoring trip in the Little Colorado River (LCR). On this trip, crews set unbaited hoop nets targeting the Humpback Chub population in the LCR. A few remote, submersible antennas were also set out in the lower reaches of the river to detect PIT tagged fish that may not be captured in hoop nets in September.



Mike Pillow recording Humpback Chub population data. Photo Credit: USFWS

National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) staff drafted a long-term management plan for Yaqui Catfish found on San Bernardino NWR. Jess Newton and Jeremy Voeltz reviewed and provided comments on the plan.

Jeremy Voeltz worked with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and National

Photo Credit: Laurie Nessel

Fish and Wildlife Foundation to provide reporting metrics for use in an upcoming NFWF Board Meeting discussing the ongoing Apache Trout Keystone Initiative. USFWS has received funding through NFWF since 2008 for this initiative.

Jeremy gave a presentation on the status of Apache Trout recovery to Jess Newton, Kirk, and Stewart Jacks (Assistant Regional Director). Jeremy will give a similar presentation in October to staff from the Arizona Ecological Services Field Office.

Jennifer Johnson and Louis Eastwood removed 962 nonnative trout from Paradise, Squaw and Thompson Creeks. Jennifer and Louis tagged 186 Brown Trout (94-400 mm in total length) with Visible Implant Elastomer tags below the barrier on Paradise Creek in an effort to determine how Brown Trout are passing over or through the barrier.



Brown Trout

Photo Credit: TU

Conserving Aquatic Species (*continued*)

In July, Brown Trout were discovered above the barrier. Young-of-the-year Brown Trout were also found indicating the adult Brown Trout found above the barrier had successfully reproduced the previous winter. Jennifer and Louis installed two additional trail cameras to evaluate the effectiveness of the barrier at a variety of flows.

Chase Ehlo deployed six remote PIT scanners into Cibola High Levee Pond. These were test deployments to determine if two different antennae orientations (i.e. laying down or standing up the antennas) are more effective than the other at detecting Bonytail in the backwater. The antennas had a total of 2640 contacts and 130 fish. Only two of the fish were Bonytail, and the remainders were Razorback Sucker. Deployments will continue in the future with the hopes of increasing the number of PIT tagged Bonytail in the backwater.

Chase Ehlo submitted a final version of the 2014 Colorado River Indian Tribes sonic telemetry report to the Lower Colorado River Multispecies Conservation Program (MSCP).

Chase Ehlo worked with Arizona Game and Fish and National Wildlife Refuge staff to sample each of three Desert Pupfish ponds at the Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge, Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, and Imperial National Wildlife Refuge along the Colorado River. The purpose of the ponds is to provide a refuge population and preserve genetic diversity of Desert Pupfish. Over 1000 pupfish were collected with evidence of reproduction and recruitment in each pond.

Chase Ehlo put together a poster to be presented at the Annual Region 2 Leadership meeting in Albuquerque this October. The poster outlines the sampling and scanning that has been conducted by Par-



Chase Ehlo helping to collect Desert Pupfish

Photo Credit: USFWS

ker Office staff in 2016 in which they have encountered 17% of Razorback Sucker stocked into Topock Marsh on the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge almost 6 years ago in December 2010.

Brad Buechel and Mitch Thorson deployed six PIT scanning antennas in Office Cove at the beginning of September. This was a three-week effort to determine how many Razorbacks are utilizing this facility. The batteries needed to be replaced every three to four days and the data has not been downloaded yet.

Mitch Thorson and Sean O’Kray performed five off-channel habitat water quality surveys during the month of September.

Stephanie Vail-Muse continued working with Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI), Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Southern Rockies LCC to find funding for the Rio Grande Assessment. The SRLCC has agreed to fund \$44,000 for the assessment and to assist Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) and WNTI

on setting up workshops after the assessment has been completed.

Conserving, Restoring, & Enhancing Aquatic Habitats

Jess Newton participated in the “Arizona Annual Coordination Meeting” of State and Federal land-management and wildlife agencies. Agency leaders gather to tackle issues influencing our collaborative, efficient, and affective management of public lands and wildlife/fish resources. Jess provided updates and led a discussion on responses to the detection of Bacterial Kidney Disease in captive Apache Trout populations.

Kirk Young and Jessica Gwinn met with the Lower Colorado River Multispecies Conservation Program (MSCP) staff to continue planning for Three Fingers Lake, Planet Ranch, and Beale Lake. The three sites are at various stages of conceptual planning and if completed will provide significant habitat for native aquatic species.

Conserving, Restoring, & Enhancing Aquatic Habitats (*continued*)

Kirk Young provided updates on the Bear Wallow Mogollon Emphasis Area (MEA) project to Bill Radke.

Engineering for the project was not completed in time for construction this year pre-monsoon. Engineering solutions ranged from \$80k-\$900k and alternative two with an estimated cost of \$286k was selected. Using a blend of MEA (\$40k) and AZGFD (\$240k) funds the project is scheduled for construction next year pre-monsoon.

Jeremy Voeltz and Stephanie Vail-Muse completed additional fish passage evaluations on road crossings on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. A final report is in preparation.



Fish Passage Barrier Surveys

Photo Credit: USFWS

Chase Ehlo attended an Imperial Ponds work group meeting with representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona State University, Wayne State University, and University of New Mexico. Imperial Ponds is a complex of six ponds located on Imperial National Wildlife Refuge in Southwestern Arizona. The purpose of the ponds is to provide nonnative free habitat for the endangered Razorback Sucker and Bonytail.

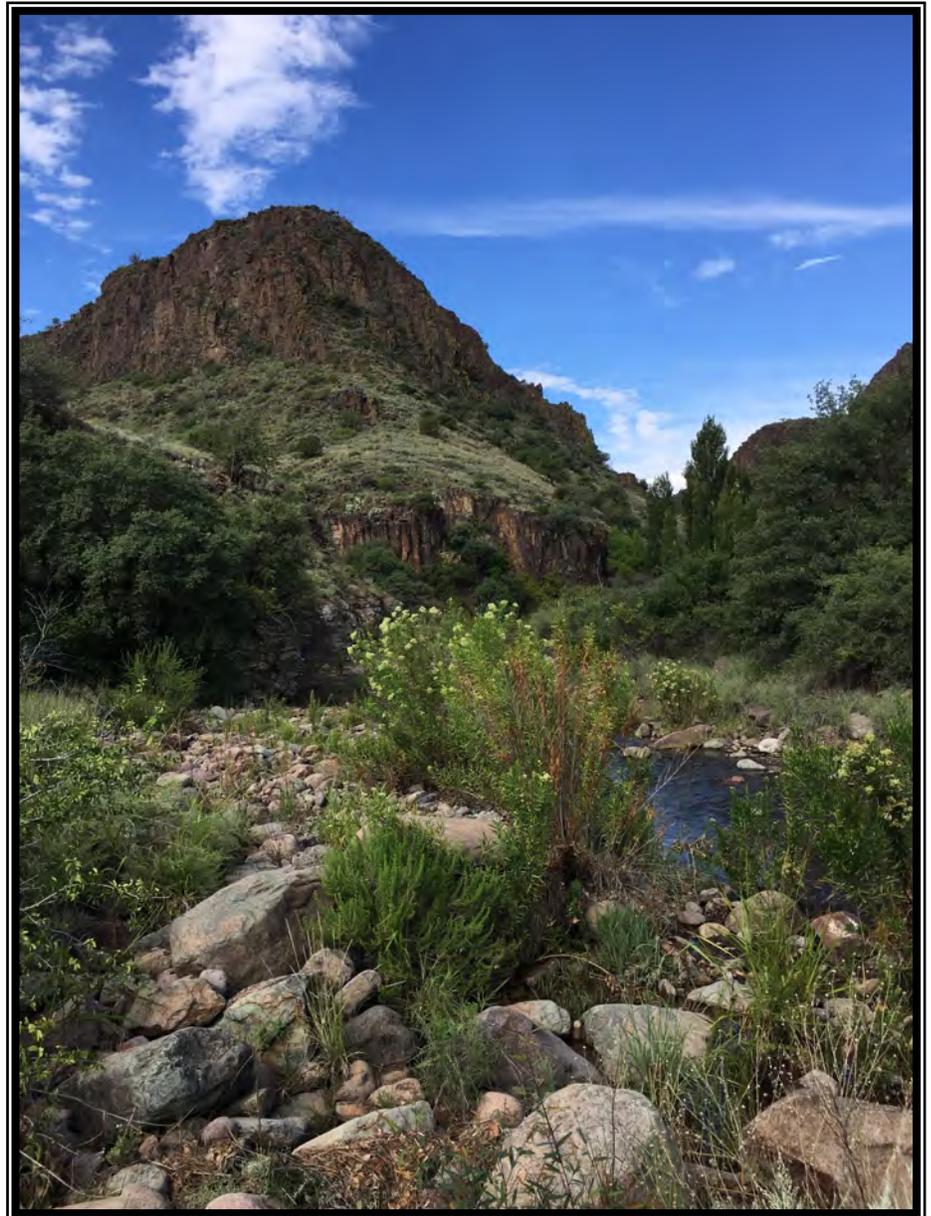
Mitch Thorson completed monthly water quality sampling on Alamo Lake as part of an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Mitch, John Naugle, and Sean continued to pump down Office Cove Pond to enhance the physical parameters such as pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, temperature, and turbidity.

Tim Grosch continued to coordinate efforts on Battle Tank Grassland restoration project. This project is ongoing to enhance local grassland communities. Cultural surveys had been completed and the selected brush management cooperators has begun tree removal in the project area. Tim also inspect-

ed a fencing project designed to increase public access to private and state owned lands.

Tim Grosch conducted a site visit with a White Mountain landowner north of Heber to discuss project possibilities on his privately owned land. The ranch appeared to provide good habitat for local wildlife and little work is needed at this time. The landowner does intend on enhancing wildlife/livestock waters and will evaluate for any future projects



Potential brush management project

Photo Credit: USFWS

Managing Aquatic Invasive Species

We received word this month that a grant proposal submitted in May by Jess Newton was selected for funding to study why native and nonnative fish appear to coexist in some Arizona streams and not in others. This USGS Science Support Partnership grant will provide \$61,000 to the Arizona Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to complete the 2.5-year study.

Kirk Young and Dennis Stone drafted a study plan to guide invasive species surveillance efforts in the Little Colorado River watershed.

Fulfilling Tribal Trust Responsibilities

The Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife requested AZFWCO assistance in conducting a survey of Wheatfield's Lake. Jennifer along with staff from NNDFW collected 80 Rainbow Trout, averaging almost 12 inches.

Stephanie Vail-Muse assisted White Mountain Apache Tribe wolf technician Theo Guy with the Mexican gray wolf monitoring program. Stephanie spent two days working with Theo tracking and collecting data in preparation for the upcoming trapping and collaring of any un-collared wolves on tribal land. While assisting Theo she learned; the differences between the reservation wolf packs, the difference between tribal monitoring and the states monitoring plans, how the tribe handles predation of livestock, and how the tribe has helped play an important role in the Mexican gray wolf reintroduction program.



Mexican Gray wolf print

Photo Credit: USFWS

Enhancing Recreation Fishing & Public Use of Aquatic Resources

Jeremy Voeltz met with staff from the Alchey-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery complex and Arizona Game and Fish Department to discuss 2016/2017 production goals for the recreational Apache Trout program.

Jeremy helped to coordinate a stocking of surplus Rainbow Trout from state hatcheries into two lakes on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

Mitch Thorson participated in the National Public Land Day Clean Up. Over 80 participants kayaked along the shoreline on Havasu Refuge cleaning any debris they could find. A special thanks to the service members from the Marine Corps in Yuma, AZ. Over 500 pounds of garbage was removed.

Partnerships & Accountability

Jeremy Voeltz participated in several conference calls with the USFWS

Roundtail Chub and Headwater Chub technical team working on the final listing decision for Headwater Chub and Distinct Population Segment of Roundtail Chub. In September, the AFS/ASIH Joint Committee on the Names of Fishes issued a report that available data support recognition of Roundtail Chub, Gila Chub, and Headwater Chub as one species: Roundtail Chub.

Staff from AZFWCO, NMFWCO, R2 FAC, New Mexico Game and Fish Department, and Arizona Game and Fish Department had a meeting to discuss the detection of Bacterial Kidney Disease at the Mora National Fish Hatchery.

Jeremy Voeltz and Jennifer Johnson reviewed a draft of the Apache Trout Monitoring Plan in development by Trout Unlimited through funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Tim Grosch met with Al Eiden, Program Manager for the Arizona Game and Fish Department Landowner Relations Program (AGFD LRP). The two discussed topics on how both agencies could work together as partners to increase viable habitat restoration projects. Several ideas were discussed and Tim will continue coordination efforts with regional LRP specialists located around the state of Arizona to gather more localized needs for area landowners. The two also discussed partnership in a landscape scale grassland restoration project which entails multimillion dollar collaboration between several agencies to remove invasive juniper trees throughout Northern Arizona. This joint venture will be known as the Northern Arizona Grassland Initiative.. The project is proposed to start in 2017.

Partnerships & Accountability Cont.

Tim Grosch attended the Navajo County Natural Resource Conservation District meeting in Holbrook, AZ. The meeting covers financials, ongoing projects, future projects and general information for conservation measures occurring within the county. This platform is a good way to meet local landowners and pitch the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to potential co-operators.

Stephanie and the WNTI Coordinator worked with Sage Lion Media videographer Nick Hoover in editing and finalizing the Blueheads and Bonneville campaign video. Stephanie and the WNTI Coordinator are currently working on a crowdfunding page and social media posts to coordinate their fundraising efforts.

Stephanie also continues to monitor the status of the DFHP video and the DFHP templates being created. This footage will be used to help convey the mission and goals of the DFHP on its social media accounts and the DFHP website. The new DFHP templates will assist project leaders in completing their project reports by simplifying and clarifying what the DFHP expects from our funded projects once they are completed.

Stephanie sent out the request for agenda items for this year's DFHP Annual meeting and is working to schedule the October bi-monthly conference call for the DFHP committees.

Workforce Management, Training, & Scientific Capacity

Fisheries Assistant Regional Director, Stewart Jacks, visited AZFWCO for a



Stewart Jacks presenting Jeremy Voeltz with his 10 year pin Photo Credit: USFWS

full day of staff meetings, discussions, and briefings. Stewart presented Jeremy Voeltz with his FWS 10-Years of Service award. Congratulations and much appreciation to Jeremy for all he has accomplished for fish conservation in Arizona during this period.

Jennifer worked with ARD, Stewart Jacks, to finalize in-water job hazard analysis documents for several fisheries tasks for the region.

Tim Grosch went on a two week training opportunity in Region 2 traveling and meeting with Partners for Fish and Wildlife employees in Texas and Oklahoma. The job shadowing was intended to teach him the different techniques other programs use and bring these ideas back to the Arizona program. The trip was very successful and Tim could not thank these Partners programs enough for taking the time out of their busy schedule and showing him around on various projects.

AZFWCO senior staff submitted "priority investment" proposals for new species and habitat conservation

projects we would like to pursue in the coming years. These proposals are for internal FWS-Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program funding.

Jess Newton participated on a stakeholder interview panel to help USGS select the new Deputy Chief for Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC).

Vic Scott (Administrative Officer) and senior staff worked to close out FY2016 budgets and finalize FY2017 budget requests.

Kirk Young coordinated a criminal report with NAU Campus Police regarding stolen license plate removed from the HHR. The police report is necessary in order to reissue new plates for the vehicle.

Public Education & Engagement

Kirk Young met with Tamika Wright, his Career Discovery Internship Program (CDIP) mentee for one last wrap up from her summer internship.

Public Education & Engagement (*continued*)

Did you know AZFWCO has a facebook page? We post information on our staff, upcoming projects, educational events, and volunteer opportunities across the state. We currently have 1,071 “likes” from over 20 countries.

www.facebook.com/AZFWCO.

Stephanie also continued to work on the DFHP database that focuses on funded projects the DFHP has worked on over the last 10 years.

Stephanie Vail-Muse continued to highlight native desert fish for #DesertFishFriday on DFHP’s Facebook page.

Check it out at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Desert-Fish-Habitat-Partnership/193053497376208?ref=hl>

Stephanie Vail-Muse posted the fourth monthly DFHP E-News Shout Out.

Sign up to be on our Newsletter subscription list and get monthly Shout Outs where we share with you what the DFHP is up to that month. Join now at

<http://www.desertfhp.org/>

Stephanie Vail-Muse invites you to follow the DFHP on their Social Media Accounts as they promote their mission and goals to conserve native desert fish by protecting, restoring, and enhancing their habitats in cooperation with state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, federal resource agencies, research and private organizations, and engaged individuals.

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/desertfhp/>

Twitter

https://twitter.com/desert_fhp/

Upcoming Events

October 17-19: Cibola High Levee Pond Sampling

October 18-19: Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program Technical Work Group, Phoenix,

October 18-28: Little Colorado River Humpback Chub Study Trip IV

October 24-28: NFHP Workshops, Panama City, FL

November 1-2: MSCP/USFWS Coordination Meeting, Cibola NWR

November 1-4: Park Moabi Fall Razorback Roundup

November 15-18: DFHP Annual Meeting and Desert Fishes Council Conference, Albuquerque, NM

November 16: Conservation Connect Live Online Broadcast (USFWS, NCTC) – Humpback Chub Hub – 2:00pm ET. Michael Pillow will be the conservation connect expert for November’s broadcast

December 5-9: Lake Mohave Fall Razorback Roundup

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