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Currents

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REGION 2 – SOUTHWEST REGION

Fisheries Program Highlights

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Edited by Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona FWCO



San Marcos NFHTC is conducting reproductive research on three rare salamanders native to Texas to aid in captive propagation efforts

Read the complete story on page one

Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder at San Marcos NFHTC



Male testes and female eggs (within ovaries) are apparent through the translucent skin of Barton Springs salamanders: an indicator of reproductive readiness.

The San Marcos NFHTC is maintaining refuge populations of three rare salamanders: San Marcos, Texas blind, and Barton Springs. Although thousands of eggs have been produced at the Center over the years, reliable or predictable breeding by manipulating environmental conditions has not been consistent, possibly due to the environmentally stable spring systems in which they evolved. After exhausting numerous traditional techniques to encourage reproduction such as light, temperature, and food manipulation, a novel approach was attempted: separating salamanders by gender and recombining the sexes at a later date. The results appear to be promising, resulting in successful reproduction 77% of the time. It appears that the old adage “absence makes the heart grow fonder” is indeed true for members of this family of salamander.

Valentin Cantu, San Marcos NFHTC

Tishomingo NFH Provides Fish for Hagerman NWR Fishing Derby

Tishomingo NFH provided channel catfish, averaging over 19 inches in length, to the Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge for their 2nd Annual Fishing Derby. The refuge staff, aided by members of their Friends Group and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, helped over 100 kids fish during the event. The joint venture between the Tishomingo NFH and the Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge provides youth the chance to have a fun day fishing in a safe location.

Ralph Simmons, Tishomingo NFH



Youth anglers fish for channel catfish at the annual Hagerman fishing derby

Inks Dam NFH Hosts a “SOAR” Workshop

In January, Doris Mager, known as the “Eagle Lady” and founder of SOAR (Save our American Raptors) made a presentation at the Inks Dam NFH to show the flying ability of four birds of prey whose medical conditions unfortunately preclude them from being released into the wild. SOAR has travelled across America for the last 28 years educating audiences about the importance of raptors and the dangers they face. The group is credited with rehabilitating over 80 bald eagles. After the program, folks participated in guided tours of the hatchery performed by the Friends of Inks Dam NFH. It was a great opportunity for adults and children with an interest in birds of prey and a nice reminder that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an vested interest in all of our nation’s unique fish and wildlife resources.



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Paul Dorman, Inks Dam NFH

“Digger” the burrowing owl was a big hit with the crowd

Tishomingo NFH Attends Annual Easter Egg Hunt



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The annual Easter Egg Hunt in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, drew a large crowd of adults and children and provided a great outreach opportunity for the Tishomingo NFH

The Tishomingo NFH provided an informational booth at the 15th annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Tishomingo High School football stadium. The event featured over 10,000 eggs filled with candy and prizes, which were arranged on the field by the Johnston County Emergency Medical Services staff and the Easter Bunny. Five age groups of children filled their baskets with eggs on one side of the field while EMS staff “hid” eggs on the other side for the next age class. The Tishomingo NFH booth featured turtles, candy, and freebies for all attendees, with staff available to answer questions about the hatchery. The event is one of the largest of its kind in Oklahoma and provides the hatchery with a chance to educate youth about the environment.

Ralph Simmons, Tishomingo NFH

Students Raise Apache Trout in the Classroom in Arizona



Elementary students raised Apache trout in the classroom this year in Arizona

Four Eastern Arizona schools participated in “Trout in the Classroom” projects with the Arizona FWCO this year. Each classroom received juvenile Apache trout at the beginning of the school year and fry were added to the tanks in February. The aquaria were divided into two sections so students could study different age classes at the same time. At the conclusion of the school year each class had an art contest with the winning artwork featured on “I Raised Fish in My Classroom” t-shirts. “Trout in the Classroom” is an environmental education program in which students raise trout, monitor tank water quality, engage in stream habitat studies, learn to understand ecosystems, learn to appreciate water resources, and begin to foster a conservation ethic. Through this classroom experience, students experience a greater understanding of Arizona's unique fisheries and aquatic habitats.

Jennifer Johnson, Arizona FWCO

Tishomingo NFH Installs Bird Netting to Prevent Avian Predation

Tishomingo NFH staff used hidden game cameras to identify birds as the chief predators of stocking sized paddlefish last year. Approximately 500 feet of 12-foot tall, 2-inch, heavy knotted bird netting was installed this year around six 20-foot circular tanks from the edge of an existing metal canopy to the top of a chain link fence around the perimeter to prevent any possible entry by large birds. Since installation, paddlefish numbers have remained high in all six tanks without any mysterious overnight losses.



Bird netting at Tishomingo NFH is preventing loss of paddlefish due to avian predation

Brian Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Tishomingo NFH Attends Dedication of New Nature Preserve

Tishomingo NFH provided an informational booth at the dedication ceremony of The Nature Conservancy's newest preserve in Oklahoma. The new preserve, located along the Blue River, is officially named Oka' Yanahli, which means water flowing in the Chickasaw language. *The dedication ceremony, titled, "Blue River Revival" featured Governor Bill Anoatubby of the Chickasaw Nation as the keynote speaker, a live performance from the Chickasaw Nation stomp dancers, and live music from Green Corn Revival, an Oklahoma native band. Hatchery staff were present to answer questions from the visiting public and provided a rare chance for many to see a tank of newly hatched paddlefish and live examples of both species of snapping turtles found in Oklahoma: the alligator snapping turtle and the common snapping turtle.*



The new logo for the Nature Conservancy's newest preserve in Oklahoma

Ralph Simmons and Mary Davis, Tishomingo NFH

The Nature Conservancy

Importance of Winter Volunteers at Uvalde NFH



Volunteers assist with a variety of projects at Uvalde NFH

As summer approaches, the "to do" list for upcoming winter volunteers at Uvalde NFH continues to grow. Accomplishments by previous volunteers included tuning up vehicles, caring for endangered Texas wild-rice, and completing work on our park model trailer. Having housing available will help recruit future volunteers and continue to save the agency money by providing on-site accommodations for volunteers or travelling USFWS staff. Uvalde NFH staff cherishes the extra work and accomplishments that winter volunteers provide and look forward to their return each year almost as much as the annual return of the sandhill cranes.

Rick Echols, Uvalde NFH

USFWS

Southwest Region Fisheries Division

National Fish Hatcheries

The National Fish Hatcheries (NFH), at Willow Beach, Alchesay-Williams Creek, Uvalde, Tishomingo, and Inks Dam develop and maintain brood stocks of important fish species, both sport fishes and critically imperiled non-game fishes. The hatcheries are the source of fish and eggs distributed to partners with similar aquatic conservation missions, such as native fish restoration or fulfilling federal mitigation responsibilities. Hatcheries are often called upon to provide a place of refuge for imperiled aquatic organisms, such as aquatic plants and amphibians.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCO) in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas evaluate wild native fish stocks and their habitats, and work with partners and other Service programs to restore habitats and fish populations.

These offices provide technical fish and wildlife management assistance to tribes and other partners with a primary focus on native aquatic species.

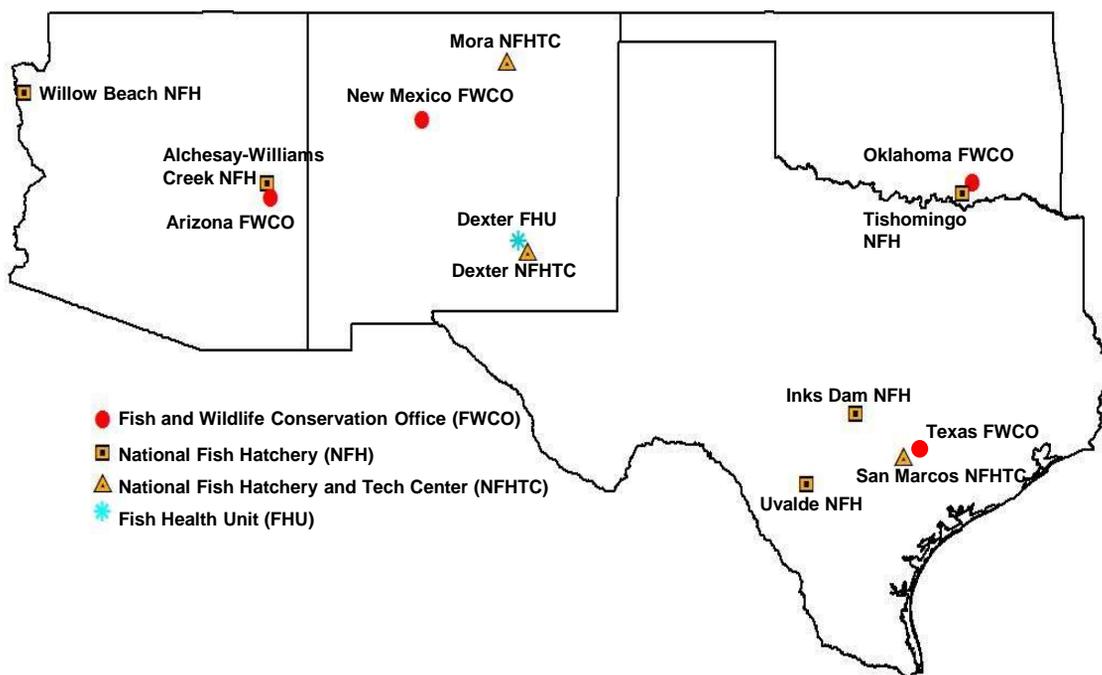
Fish Technology Centers

The Fish Technology Centers (NFHTC) at Dexter, Mora, and San Marcos develop leading-edge technology for use by tribal, state, and federal fish hatcheries and fishery biologists to make fish culture more productive, cost-effective, and scientifically sound.

Technology improves hatchery efficiency, helps assure the genetic integrity of fishes, at the same time minimizing the effects of hatchery fish on wild fish stocks.

Fish Health Unit at Dexter

The Fish Health Unit (FHU) at Dexter assesses the well-being of fish that live in the wild or are raised at hatcheries. Fish health biologists are highly trained in various scientific disciplines, like immunology, epidemiology, toxicology and genetics. They apply that knowledge in fish health assessments that might lead to early detection of potentially devastating diseases, prescribing preemptive measures.



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