



# Uvalde National Fish Hatchery Monthly Activity Report August 2016



## Staff

*Project Leader • Patricia Duncan*

*Fish Biologist • Valentin Cantu*

*Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo*

*Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra*

*Administrative Assistant • Mark Dietrich*

*CDP Intern • Tamika Wright*

*YCC • Vincent Diaz, Moira McDowell*

Grande in Texas is planned for the week of October 17.

Discussions on cross-programmatic plans to advance the conservation of the Yaqui catfish were initiated by partners in Refuges and the Fish and Wildlife Services. Plans are underway for future meetings and development of strategies for collaboration for conservation activities for the Yaqui catfish.

The Annual FIS Accomplishments report for Uvalde NFH was submitted on August 23.

## Partnerships and Accountability

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continued for the Texas Wild Rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs Pupfish, Devils River Minnow, and San Marcos salamander in August.

The station continued to maintain communications with the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) for existing and upcoming refugia activities of threatened and endangered species native to the Edwards Aquifer system.

In collaboration with the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (SNARRC) and other partners, Uvalde NFH also continued culture of Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) in FY2016. During August, the 140,000 RGSM stocked into four ponds at Uvalde NFH in May, continued to thrive and grow. As with last year, the fish grown out at Uvalde NFH will augment the numbers released to the Rio Grande in Texas in recovery efforts. Harvest of the RGSM from the ponds is planned for the last week of September and stocking into the Rio

## Workforce Management

In August, our Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern, Tamika Wright continued her work with Texas wild rice germination at the station. She also assisted with the care and maintenance of the other endangered species held at Uvalde during her stay. After she completed her program at Uvalde in August, she provided a final report on the study she conducted on Texas wild rice.



YCC Vinny Diaz and SCA intern Tamika Wright work on pupfish research aquaria

The Uvalde National Fish Hatchery (UNFH) continued to host the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program in August 2016. The YCC program provides opportunities to young students on a variety of projects at the UNFH, to learn more about potential career positions within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This month, Moira McDowell, a Utopia High School Jr. and Vinny Diaz, a Sabinal High School Jr. assisted biologists with daily refugia activities including assisting with the control of aquatic nuisance algae and macrophytes within refugia and display tank systems. They also assisted with setting up tank systems for Comanche Springs Pupfish reproduction trials.



YCC Moira McDowell feeds display catfish

In August, our two area Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) members also assisted with care and feeding of channel catfish, pond vegetation removal, raceway management and other activities. They also learned about pond production of Comanche Springs Pupfish and also refugia culture of other species in the tank house.



YCC Moira McDowell and Vinny Diaz along with SCA intern Tamika Wright stock catfish

Another term fish biologist, GS 7-9 was selected in August for Uvalde NFH to work primarily with Rio Grande silvery minnow production along with other endangered species. The new staff member will report to work in late September.

Pat Duncan attended the 2016 Texas Mollusk Symposium in Dallas from August 8-11.

### Aquatic Species Activities

In August, Tamika Wright continued studies on the germination rates of Texas wild rice seeds in different solutions as part of her Student Conservation Association intern program. Her study looked at the effectiveness of different protocols to produce successful germination of new and older stored Texas wild rice seeds. At the end of August, she completed study at Uvalde and provided a final report on her results. Plantings of germinated seeds started by Tamika will continue to be cultured as part of the Texas wild rice population in the refugium at Uvalde NFH.

In August, reproductive trials were initiated with Comanche Springs pupfish held in the tank house in refugia. Research trials were initiated to determine the effectiveness of different spawning mats and also to develop methods to

improve the hatching success of the eggs produced.

In August the communal spawning method to trigger reproduction in the federally listed San Marcos salamander was continued with salamanders at Uvalde NFH. The method was first successfully (oviposition events occurred 70% of the time) used at San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) to trigger reproduction with another closely related plethodontid salamander (Barton Springs salamander). The procedure involves separating males and females for about two months, combining them for two weeks to initiate courtship behavior, and then separating the males from the females to minimize disturbance to encourage the oviposition of eggs. This is the first attempt to reproduce San Marcos salamanders at the UNFH.

Propagation efforts continued with the Devils River minnow. Tank rearing of various offspring from different group spawnings of Devils River minnow continued in refugia tanks.

Temperatures continued to warm in August. Pond water temperatures ranged from 25.3°C to 32.4 °C. Channel catfish fry from 2016 spring and summer production had all been stocked into pond 38 and continued to thrive and grow well.

## Facility Maintenance

Work continued on the construction of a canopy over the existing deck for the cedar trailer by Uvalde NFH staff. The frame was also erected for the canopy for a parking area next to the cedar trailer by Uvalde staff.

Staff continued work on obtaining various valves and pipe needed for repairs throughout the Uvalde NFH pond system. Leaking or poorly operating valves in the system will be replaced with new valves to improve the efficiency of water flow in the pond system

Work on the repair of several pieces of equipment continued in August. These included the crane, large tractor and mower.

Progress was made in the acquisition of the water tank listed in the deferred maintenance program. A vendor was selected and the tank should be on site in September.

Cirilo Alonzo and Jae Ahn continued work on the GPS guide to the station water system, including all water control valves and the pond water lines. This diagram and location guide should be of great value for the future operation and maintenance of the station water system.

## Outreach



Valentin Cantu teaches children about amphibians

Valentin Cantu provided a guest lecture on amphibians to a group of 30 children at the El Progreso Memorial Library in Uvalde on August 17. The event was in honor of the month long celebration of aquatic conservation and education.

Pat Duncan provided a tour of Uvalde NFH for members of the Native Plant Society and the Texas A&M Agri-life Center. Historical

perspectives of Uvalde as a bird watching center were discussed along with potential landscape improvements for attracting wildlife and pollinators. Plans were made for future work on pollinator landscaping and habitat restoration. During the visit, methods for native plant enhancement at Uvalde NFH were discussed along with future collaborative projects with the Native Plant Society.

Four separate tours of the Uvalde NFH were provided to visitors and groups of local residents during the month of August.

### Visitors

Uvalde NFH hosted a total of 54 visitors during the month of August.

### Weather

Temperatures continued to warm in August with a maximum temperature in Uvalde of 103°F. Temperatures ranged in Uvalde from a low of 69°F to a high of 103°F with an average temperature of 85°F in the month of August. There were 6.22 inches of measured rainfall in Uvalde in August.

### Upcoming Events

Planning visit with Native Plant Society for pollinator gardens at Uvalde NFH on October 4.  
Wage Grade Workshop from October 7-11 in Tuscon, Arizona for Cirilo Alonzo and Rene Guerra.  
Stocking of Rio Grande silvery minnow in the Rio Grande is scheduled for the week of October 17.

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