

Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

Monthly Activity Report

July 2015



Staff

Project Leader • Patricia Duncan

Fish Biologist • Rick Echols

Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo

Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra

Administrative Assistant • Mark Dietrich

Pathways Program • Rueben Mendoza

Directorate Fellowship Program • Justin Crow

visit for Stewart as the Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries.

Aquatic Species Activities

Rick Echols helped with the annual Texas Wild Rice survey coordinated by Jeff Hutchinson of the San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center on July 20th. The water level was much higher and swifter than recent previous years, so sampling was a bit challenging. Some areas previously colonized with rice plants were scoured out this spring with the heavy rains, but overall, the total coverage of rice plants continues to increase, with patchwork stands filling in quite nicely.



Texas Wild Rice in the San Marcos River

Partnerships and Accountability

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas Wild Rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs Pupfish, Devil's River Minnow, Rio Grande silvery minnow, and San Marcos salamander. All species continue to perform well.

The station continues 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.

Workforce Management

Stewart Jacks and Joy Nicholopoulos visited the hatchery to welcome Patricia Duncan as the new project leader. Stewart and Joy spoke to all employees and invited everyone to voice any concerns they might have. Employee safety was stressed, and future strategic conservation planning efforts were reviewed. It was the first

Justin Crow' pairwise mating of Comanche Springs pupfish is beginning to wind down. Preliminary results indicate that pairwise mating was successful, but less prolific than two females with one male. Male behavior has been extremely aggressive towards the females of late. Fungal infection of eggs has been an issue, but daily treatments of formalin were effective in treating fungal infections in some treatments. We await his official report later this year.

Justin has had the additional task of completing his master's thesis this summer in conjunction

with his DFP responsibilities. He was able to use hatchery staff as an audience to practice his presentation of his master's research in late July before defending in early August.



Newly hatched Comanche Springs pupfish

Rueben Mendoza continues to be successful with his Rio Grande silvery minnow feasibility study. Fish were sampled on July 17th and averaged 32 – 35mm. Water quality has remained good throughout the study with consistently good fish feeding and growth in all the ponds. Fish are still on target to reach the desired length of 55mm by mid-October when they are to be released into the Rio Grande River in the area around Big Bend National Park.

Surplus catfish fingerlings found new homes in five ponds at Camp Mabry and Camp Bowie of the Texas National Guard. Recreational fishing had suffered until the spring rains replenished water levels. In a few years, channel catfish fishing should be excellent.



Brian Knapp, wildlife biologist for the Texas National Guard, stocking channel catfish

Monthly monitoring of Comanche springs pupfish continued in June. Results indicate healthy populations in each of the three ponds.

Young of the year fish have now recruited to our minnow traps adding to our population estimates. July's estimates are provided at the end of this document.

Young of the year channel catfish are approximately 4 inches in length. They were recently switched over to floating feed and have increased their feeding rate and intensity.

Facility Maintenance

Concrete steps are currently being installed adjacent to the kettle in pond 43. This will ultimately alleviate safety concerns by providing solid footing on one of our deepest and steepest ponds.



Step construction is underway in pond 43

An old friend returned to the hatchery this month. Our Ford F-350 was transferred back to us from the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center so that we could surplus an older F-450. This resulted in a net loss of one vehicle for the region in order to comply with the mandated fleet reduction directive. Thanks to Manuel for offering the truck.

Additional Facilities Activities

Final grading work is now complete around our four new rice tanks. Plans are to fill them with new rice plants early this fall.



Tanks ready for new rice plants

Final grading and gravel placement is now complete around our four new rice tanks. Placement of rice plants in the new tanks should begin this fall.

Outreach

Patricia Duncan and Mark Dietrich attended the monthly Uvalde Tourism Board luncheon. Mark introduced her to the members of the Uvalde Community for discussion of future outreach projects for the hatchery. Members of the community again commented on the success of this year's fishing day at the Uvalde NFH and other groups requested future activities at the center. Plans were made to meet with other interested groups for the planning of future educational activities at the station.

Facility Visitors

The hatchery hosted approximately 15 visitors for the month. Rueben Mendoza's family spent a long weekend with him. During their visit, they learned first-hand about his Rio Grande silvery minnow project and took in some of the local attractions.

Weather

Temperatures for June ranged from a low of 67°F to a high of 98°F. Overall, high temperatures were below normal with the observed average high for the month at 93.5°F compared to the 111 year average of 96°F. Low temperatures were normal as the average for

the month and the 111 year average were 72°F. Measurable rainfall occurred on 4 days in July with precipitation totaling 0.04 inches. According to US Climate Data, June's monthly precipitation averages 1.22 inches. Despite the drying trend, the Edwards Aquifer level continues to rise and is currently at 850.0' compared to 848.1' last month, and 826.8 this time last year.

Upcoming Events

Cirilo Alonzo and Rene Guerra have been providing consultation and will be providing hands on heavy equipment operation to San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center for the removal of accumulated debris from a lined settling pond. This will occur in early August.

The station safety review and environmental compliance inspections will be completed in August.

Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

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Uvalde National Fish Hatchery June 2015

Species	Year Class	Geographic Origin	Approximate Number
Channel Catfish Broodstock	2014	Domestic Strain	200
Channel Catfish	2015	Domestic Strain	10,000
Comanche Springs Pupfish	Mixed	Phantom Springs	389,039*
Devils River Minnow (F1)	2013	San Felipe Springs	233
Devils River Minnow (F2)	2014	San Felipe Springs	40
Devils River Minnow (F2)	2015	San Felipe Springs	203
Fountain Darter (W)	2012-2014	Upper Comal River	33
Fountain Darter (W)	2012-2014	Lower Comal River	29
Fountain Darter (F1)	2013/2014	Comal River Mix	443
Fountain Darter (F1)	2015	Upper Comal River	6
Fountain Darter (F1)	2015	Comal River Mix	60
San Marcos Salamander (M)	2013	San Marcos River	6
San Marcos Salamander (F)	2013	San Marcos River	8
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (A)	53
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (B)	36
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (C)	15
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (D)	12
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (F)	15
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (G)	16
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (J)	3
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	San Marcos R. (K)	12
Texas Wild Rice	N/A	SMR (Unknown)	22

Species and number at Uvalde NFH at the end of the month.

*Young of year pupfish have recruited to traps resulting in increased estimates this month