



Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

Monthly Activity Report

March 2014

Staff

Project Leader
● Grant Webber

**Engineering
Equipment
Operator**
● Cirilo Alonzo

**Maintenance
Worker**
● Rene Guerra

Fish Biologist
● Rick Echols

**Administrative
Technician**
● Sandra
Castañeda

Animal Caretaker
● Vacant

Volunteers
● Thomas Jetzer
● Patricia Schenk
● Ian Westmeyer

Partnerships and Accountability

“Channel catfish destined for the hatchery’s annual fishing derby are on track to be perfect size by derby time.”

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas Wild-rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs Pupfish, Devils River minnow, and San Marcos salamander. All species continue to be performing well. The station continues to maintain

communications with the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) and Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program for existing and upcoming refugia activities of threatened and endangered species native to the Edwards Aquifer system.

The station also continues to propagate channel catfish for annual fishing derby activities and other youth related events.

Workforce Management

On March 27, staff attended a 7-hour safety training that was held in Austin, Texas. The training was presented by Aerosol Monitoring & Analysis, Inc. The training was coordinated by the Regional Safety Office.

Sandra participated in a teleconference call concerning Budget Tracking Tool. She also completed the monthly utilization reporting for fleet, heavy equipment, and miscellaneous small equipment.

Volunteers Thomas Jetzer and Patricia Schenk worked up until March 19th this month. As the winter months drew to a close, they unfortunately had to return to their summer responsibilities in Indiana. They will be missed. We look forward to their return. Before leaving, they constructed five wooden

canopy frames that support black plastic sheeting, which will cover the Texas wild rice raceways. These canopies will be used to block ambient light for the variable light intensity study for Texas wild rice. Light intensity for each raceway will be controlled through the use of shade cloth.

Grant Webber traveled to San Antonio, Texas, where he was able to pick up and activate his Department of Interior identification card. This saved a trip to Temple, Texas.

Cirilo Alonzo and Rene Guerra spent eight days at the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resource and Recovery Center assisting them with earthwork activities. Uvalde is providing assistance since they do not currently have maintenance staff.



Rick Echols at the Capital Building in Washington D.C.

Rick Echols attended the recent bi-annual "Fisheries Academy" course at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, WV. The training provided participants with the opportunity to be exposed to a multitude of programs throughout the Fish and Wildlife, while also learning valuable leadership and negotiating skills. It also provided a setting for individuals to share experiences including identifying, and solving problems while building networking relationships and friendships with fellow students.

Leadership was a central theme of the training. Nothing exemplified proper leadership more than the class trip to Antietam Battlefield. The leadership styles displayed by the various generals involved were profound in the success and lack of success on the battlefield.

Ian Westmeyer, our home schooled volunteer returned late this month to again provide much needed assistance for a few hours each day. He indicated that he missed us and was eager to get back to work.

Aquatic Species Activities

"Artificial light will foster algae and plant growth which is a critical need of the Devil's River Minnow"

The station continued to maintain and make adjustments to captive refugia systems that house some of the threatened and endangered species on station.

A light bracket was designed and constructed by the Patricia and Thomas. The bracket will be used to hold an existing light fixture over Devils River minnow raceways. The light fixture will be fitted with grow lights to stimulate algae and plant growth, which are critical needs of the Devil's River minnow.

Comanche Springs pupfish continue to thrive at the hatchery. The intensively reared Comanche Springs pupfish that were being held indoors, for additional protection during potential extreme cold weather during the winter months, were transferred to outdoor ponds.

The station continues to captively spawn wild caught fountain darters for a life history study. Insulation was

added to exposed aquaria tanks to minimize temperature fluctuations that can occur when the ambient air temperatures fluctuate. Testing of different sized pumps is also being conducted to see if the heat generated from the pump is also a contributing factor to increased tank temperatures.

The Devils River minnow continues to do very well in their new environment at Uvalde NFH. Since the fish's arrival on February 6, 2014, only two mortalities have occurred. Once the hatchery's refugia system has shown to be successful, additional individuals will be received to promote species recovery.

Grant Webber met with Dr. Thom Hardy and Michelle Crawford again this month to discuss the Texas wild rice study that Mrs. Crawford will be conducting to achieve her PhD. Collaborative communication continues between the University, Uvalde NFH and SMARC. SMARC purchased and transferred 10 high intensity grow lights and five submersible pumps to Uvalde NFH for the study efforts.



Devil's River Minnow Tanks with lighting



Transfer of Comanche Springs Pufffish from tanks to Ponds



Quarters 4 porch work

Facility Maintenance

Staff is in the process of replacing a screened-in porch on Quarters 4. The previous structure was badly deteriorated and no longer safe or mosquito proof. Soon cool evenings can again be enjoyed outdoors without the threat of flying insects. A contractor will also be sought to complete painting on the exterior of

the quarters.

Terrestrial vegetation was sprayed around buildings and equipment. Much time was spent mowing the grounds as well. Recent warm, damp weather has encouraged the proliferation of weeds.

Additional Facility Activities

Efforts continue to promote zooplankton in ponds in order to feed endangered and threatened species in tanks. The varied diet promotes more healthy and robust fish. The new micron net pens are used to collect the zooplankton.

Before leaving for home, our volunteers Thomas and Patricia cleaned our circular observation pond. Over the winter, it had filled with decomposing algae and fish feed.

Grant had a very productive meeting and conversation with the new owners, Mr. and Mrs. Lehoski, who purchased the property to the north (previously

the Stockton property) of the hatchery and the property immediately down gradient from the Turner property. The new owners have already conducted a massive clean-up in the slough located on their property, which promotes better water flows within the slough system. The previous owners of that property had let the property get extremely over grown with emergent and woody vegetation, thereby restricting flows in the slough. The hatchery discharges into the slough so unimpeded flows are extremely important to the station. The new owners have state surface water rights in the slough so they were interested in the hatchery operations and discharge volumes.



Students observe preserved specimens at the Sabinal Elementary School Career Day

Outreach

Grant Webber and Rene Guerra participated in the Sabinal Independent School District Career Day. Our viewable distribution tank was taken to their school and put on display along with many visual aids. Educational /outreach items were distributed to the children. They discussed the environment and careers in conservation. The school serves students from pre-K to 5th grade. Around 250 children participated.

Recycling Efforts

Staff recycled 25 pounds of cardboard, 35 pounds of paper, 15 pounds of glass, 8 pounds of plastic, 2 pounds of tin, and 3,760 pounds of scrap metal this month.



Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.fws.gov/southwest/fisheries/ualde/index.html



Weather

March's air temperatures ranged from a low of 30°F to a high of 91°F. Overall, high and low temperatures were normal with high variations in temperatures from one day to the next. This is very normal for south Texas in early spring as opposing seasons do battle. Measurable rainfall occurred on 8 days in March totaling 0.65 inches. The 100 year average is 0.98 inches.

Drought conditions continue. The Edwards Aquifer / (Uvalde pool) 10-day average is at 833.3 feet above sea level. The level is down 2.5 feet from one month ago and is down 4.2 feet from one year ago. Uvalde remains at stage 5 water restrictions.

The agricultural irrigation season is fully upon us. This increased demand in conjunction with worsening drought conditions may reduce natural habitat and spring flows to critical levels for endangered and threatened species, which included the Comanche Springs pupfish, fountain darter, Texas wild rice, Devil's River minnow, and San Marcos salamander this summer. As the drought continues throughout Texas, the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery becomes increasingly important to protecting listed Texas endemic species.

Facility Visitors

The hatchery was visited by 18 individuals this month for hatchery tours, bird watching, and photography activities.



Texas Bluebonnets return color to the station.