



Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

Monthly Activity Report

May 2014



Staff

Project Leader • Grant Webber

Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo

Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra

Fish Biologist • Rick Echols

Administrative Technician • Sandra Castañeda

Pathways Student • Rueben Mendoza

Volunteer • Ian Westmeyer

Workforce Management

Rueben Mendoza began his summer work at Uvalde NFH. Rueben is a Service Pathways Student and began working at Uvalde NFH on May 23. He hails from Paonia, Colorado and has just completed his sophomore year at the University of Montana. He is enrolled in the wildlife biology program and plans to be a wildlife officer with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Prior to coming to Uvalde, Rueben worked at the San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge in Douglas, Arizona as part of the Pathways program. His first exposure to the US Fish & Wildlife Service came when he was hired to fill a summer term position at the Southwest Native Aquatic Resource Center in Dexter, New Mexico. Rueben will assist with routine aquatic species maintenance activities and will take on special projects such as working with the PhD student from Texas State, who is cooperatively conducting research on the endangered Texas wild-rice.

Partnerships and Accountability

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas Wild-rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs pupfish, and Devil's River minnow. All species continue to be performing well. The station continues to maintain communications with the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center and Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program for existing and upcoming refugia activities of threatened and endangered species native to the Edwards Aquifer system.

Grant is coordinating with the Texas Fish and Wildlife Coordination Office in an effort to supply the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of eastern Texas with some excess 2013 YC channel catfish. They were receptive to the offer, but no firm plans have been formalized for getting them to the Tribe.



FWS Pathways Student Rueben Mendoza

Ian Westmeyer continued this month to volunteer with us. For the month, he logged 47.25 hours. He will soon be finishing his school work for the year, and therefore, may be

increasing his volunteer time over the next couple of months.

Cirilo Alonzo, Heavy Equipment Operator, traveled back to the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resource Center in Dexter, NM, to assist them with some additional pond creation work. The project is nearly complete and should be done with one more visit from Cirilo in early June.

Hatchery staff completed 3 days of retirement training by live feed broadcast. Everyone agreed that it was very beneficial to all employees, not just those nearing retirement.

Aquatic Species Activities

The hatchery's annual health inspection took place this year on May 6th. Hatchery staff collected 45 broodstock channel catfish, 60 2013 year class channel catfish, and 60 Comanche Springs pupfish from ponds in the days leading up to the inspection. In addition, 60- F1 fountain darters were sacrificed for the fish health inspection. This year Ashlie Rademacher and Jason Woodland conducted the sampling. Results are pending but should be received in approximately 30 days. With the exception of a black widow scare, everything went smoothly.



Jason Woodland and Ashlie Rademacher busily taking samples for the fish health inspection

Staff completed very limited channel catfish spawning this month. Fry will be large enough to stock into a pond in another week. We only

anticipate keeping 2,000 – 3,000 fish for the 2015 fishing derby and to supplement broodstock numbers.

Once channel catfish spawning was complete, the broodstock pond was drained and 34 remaining broodstock were added to the pond that will be used for the 2014 annual fishing derby. These large fish should provide some extra excitement to the youth anglers. In addition, a pond containing 1,317 catfish, averaging one pound each, was harvested to provide the bulk of the fish for the 2014 fishing derby.

The station has completed spawning fountain darters for the USGS study with the commitment of 700 fish fully met. We will continue to grow out the darters until arrangements are made for the USGS to receive the fish.

Michelle Crawford's light intensity PhD project officially got underway this month. Rueben helped her plant 120 seeds in individual pots. Pots were placed in 2 tanks under full spectrum artificial grow lights on a 14 hour on / 10 hour off cycle. Plants will be placed in various light exposure treatment groups after they germinate.

Additional Facility Activities

The annual Uvalde NFH Youth Fishing Derby was held this year on May 31. There was a large turnout for the event this year, possibly due to the fact that local schools were still in session and had not yet released students for summer vacation. This year there were 242 children registered for the event, compared to 102 last year.

Fish cooperated very well as nearly everyone who was serious about fishing caught multiple fish. The unlimited creel made it easy to catch enough for dinner and the freezer. Fishing gear was also given away as door prizes. Everyone

seemed to have a good time. In addition to the Uvalde NFH staff at the event, additional assistance was provided by members of the border patrol, Uvalde EMS, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Game Wardens, and family and friends of staff.



Volunteers and employees that helped put on this year's fishing derby



Happy angler with the day's catch

Facility Maintenance

Our wildlife pond is currently receiving gravity fed effluent water from our tankhouse. The pond level has reached a stable equilibrium over the past few months, even during recent heavy rains. Porous rock was purposely exposed during the construction process to allow for this ground filtration. The primary goal of this pond is to provide an additional safeguard against any potential escapement from the hatchery's tankhouse. The pond is static and has no discharge points. The pond has successfully contained all the discharge from the station's tankhouse. The pond has maintained approximately 50% of its capacity, even with over six inches of heavy rainfall. The pond also provides avian fauna with loafing and nesting habitat.

Gravity filling the wildlife pond has also resulted in a tremendous fuel cost savings since we no longer have to utilize a diesel pump to fill the wildlife pond. Last year during a 9 month period of low evaporation, 865 gallons of diesel fuel at \$3.35 per gallon for a total of \$2,897.75 was used to maintain water in the wildlife pond. This translates to an annualized savings of \$5,768.70 (1,722 gallons of diesel fuel), and a reduction in air pollution, not to mention wear and tear on the pump.



The wildlife pond at Uvalde NFH is the center piece of the hatchery's nature trail

Grant completed his annual training requirement of three on-line training sessions to maintain his elevated computer access account. This elevated account allows him to be the station's computer administrator to work on minor computer issues and to install necessary programs/updates to meet the hatchery and Service goals/mission. His computer work assists the Regional Office IRTM staff by minimizing the number of computer issues that have to be elevated to the Regional Office IRTM staff, thereby minimizing their overall workload.

Recycling Efforts

Staff recycled 20 pounds of cardboard, 10 pounds of paper, 5 pounds of glass, 20 pounds of plastic, and 80 pounds of small batteries this month.

Facility Visitors

Two hundred forty-two children and 150 adults participated in the annual fishing derby. Other visitors/on-site tours included the Utopia Independent School district's third grade class and third-fifth grade Gifted and Talented (GT) students from the La Pryor Elementary school, totaling 19 children and 6 adults. Outside of the annual fishing derby and school field trips, another 15 individuals visited the hatchery for a total of 432 individuals for the month of May. Visitors were given hatchery tours and participated in photography, hiking, and bird watching.

Weather

Temperatures for April ranged from a low of 46°F to a high of 96°F. Overall, high temperatures were normal with the reported average high for the month and the long term average at 88°F. Low temperatures were below normal with the average for the month at 63°F versus the long term average of 66°F. Measurable rainfall occurred on 8 days in May with precipitation totaling 5.82 inches, most of which came in less than one week. According to The Weather Channel, the monthly precipitation average for Uvalde in May is 3.28 inches. This month's abundant rainfall only helped slow the decline in the aquifer level this month as farmers are at the height of irrigation season. The Edwards Aquifer (Uvalde pool; measured in Uvalde) is at 830.8' which is down 832.5', which is down 1.7' over last month and down 4.3' over last year.

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