

1996 Report of Region 1 - Northeast

It should come as no surprise that Bob Jenkins at Roanoke College is consumed once again by redhorses. His systematic studies of all species of *Moxostoma* and several of *Scartomyzon* progressed amply in 1995, from much field, museum, and home-lab studies. Earliest manuscripts are likely in late fall 1996. *Moxostoma* n. sp., thinlip redhorse (tentative name), sister species of *M. erythrurum*, is now known from nine specimens from the Pee Dee drainage (mid to upper Coastal Plain), and in the Cape Fear drainage, in the upper Cape Fear river and lower Deep and Haw rivers. It is rare in the Pee Dee, maybe less so in the Cape Fear; however, sampling is planned in 1996. Range of sicklefin redhorse, *Moxostoma* sp., is now known as middle Hiwassee and Little Tennessee systems; five counties in NC, one in GA. This species is known from small streams to medium rivers, and was taken in Hiwassee and Fontana reservoirs near the dam of each. Beyond the middle Oconee River population of robust redhorse, *M. robustum*, searches in 1995 failed to find it in the Pee Dee and Yadkin rivers or the Little River of the Pee Dee system. Further sleuthing of the itinerary of E.D. Cope during 1869 in NC, from which he described *M. robustum*, located the house (being restored) from which Cope sampled the Yadkin. Three weeks later, Hank Bart, Joe Buckley, Bud Freeman, Lee Hartle, and Jenkins boat-electrofished Cope's Yadkin site, and in a boating accident, Lee was almost lost to the river. They figured the ghost of Cope caused this. Among zooarchaeological material at Wake Forest University, Jenkins identified bones of *M. robustum* from two sites, one in the Yadkin River well above Cope's type locality, the other from Hunting Creek, a tributary of the South Yadkin River. Possibly the latter bones are remains of fish brought to the Hunting Creek Indian village after capture in the Yadkin or South Yadkin rivers. Striped jumprock, *Scartomyzon rupiscartes*, shows apparently rapid dispersal after introduction in the upper Yadkin system. Menhinick (1991) plotted valid records for the upper South Yadkin River, the fish taken in mid-1970s. Far above the South Yadkin, striped jumprock were found in the uppermost Yadkin River in 1988, and much downstream, at the head of the Great Bend of the Yadkin River in 1995. Perhaps two introductions occurred in the Yadkin River and South Yadkin River.

Mike Pinder at Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted surveys for *Phoxinus tennesseensis* by reexamining documented sites for *P. oreas* in western VA. He found one new population and two highly probables (fish not in color). This raises its known occurrence from two streams to five. He plans on conducting a habitat inventory in 1996. Mike re-surveyed *Etheostoma acuticeps* in the South Fork Holston River. It is still present. Funding has been obtained to do a life history study of *E. osburni*. The Forest Service conducted a basin wide survey of Big Stony Creek to quantify habitat and numbers for the candy darter. Mike plans on revisiting all known sites of *E. osburni* and doing basin-wide habitat inventories in 1996. Stream restoration work was done in *Percina rex* streams.

The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences finally has a Curator of Fishes. Welcome back south, Wayne Starnes. Wayne has his work cut out for him since the Museum still hasn't published the endangered and threatened freshwater fishes report. It is already dated since many of the accounts were written 10 years ago.

Peter Ruhl, USGS NAWQA Program in NC, has been conducting stream surveys in the Albemarle-Pan-Aico drainage in eastern NC the past several years. Fish community data are being analyzed to explore relations among fish community structure and land-use, habitat, and water chemistry.

Mary Moser at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington is surveying NO coastal rivers for additional populations of shortnose sturgeon. She and Fritz Rohde (FCR) of the NC Division of Marine Fisheries are sampling fish populations of the Waccamaw River drainage in a gear comparison study. They collected (as did Wildlife Resources Commission biologists) the first state records of *Labidesthes sicculus*.

Rudy Arndt of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and FCR are continuing their study of South Carolina's freshwater fishes. Last year, a "brook lamprey" ammocoetes was collected in north-central SC. Upon examination, it turned out to be *Petromyzon marinus*.

Tom Abrahamsen of the USGS NAWQA Program in SC will be surveying (with assistance from FCR) streams in the Santee drainage in the fall of 1996.

John Dean of the University of South Carolina will be surveying fishes in Francis Marion National Forest in 1996. Joe Quattro of the same university has been studying the mtDNA of *Noturus*.

F. Rohde

1996 Report of Region 2 - Southeast

Conservation and Research Activities:

South Carolina-Gary Meffe, Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, has just completed a book manuscript for the Department of Defense entitled "Conserving Biodiversity on Military Lands." As difficult as it is to imagine the DOD being "green," in the past five years the DOD (in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy, Department of Interior agencies, and academia), has demonstrated a serious commitment to inventory, monitoring, and conservation of biodiversity on military reservations. With a few exceptions, however, much of the emphasis has been on terrestrial components of ecosystems. Gary also noted that he has been teaching ecosystem management courses to U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel.

Georgia-Steve Vives, Georgia Southern University, is one of the relatively few researchers to receive funding to work on fishes on a military reservation. He is completing a fish survey of Fort Stewart Military Reservation in southeastern Georgia. Fort Stewart is located on the Coastal Plain in the Ogeechee River drainage. To date, Steve and his students have recorded 55 fish species but has been unable to discover any populations of the illusive and patchily-distributed *Enneacanthus chaetodon*.

The eclectic robust redhorse research group (Jimmy Evans and Les Ager from Georgia DNR, Bud Freeman and Cecil Jennings plus students from University of Georgia, and Bob Jenkins from Roanoke College) had a successful year in 1995 observing the reproductive behavior and habitat of this great river beast, and were again able to successfully strip adults and rear young for reintroduction into formerly occupied rivers. The artificial propagation efforts again will be repeated in May 1996. Papers on the robust redhorse dominated the first day of meetings of the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, surely a first for anything ending in "ucker" to beat out anything ending in "ass" or "out." The discovery of the robust redhorse has lifted Bob Jenkins to a new level of sucker euphoria, not seen since those halcyon days at Cornell. Bud Freeman is collaborating with Bob on much of the sucker research and now Bud imagines to identify small *Moxostoma* in the field.

Mary Freeman, recently transferred to a National Biological Service lab at the University of Georgia, is hoping to garner that illusive block of time needed to finish the description of the Halloween darter, an Apalachicola endemic cryptic to *Percina nigrofasciata*. Mary and Bud have discovered yet another *nigrofasciata* -look-alike in the upper Chattahoochee River system. Mary has a manuscript in press with a former masters student, Lane Hill, an Auburn graduate, on the life history of the Halloween darter. For the past four years, Mary and Ph.D. student Zachary Bowen, have been studying fish communities in the regulated reaches of the Tallapoosa River and in the unregulated river above Harris Dam. One of the most interesting preliminary results is that sustained periods of low flow appear to be very important for recruitment of certain species. If this tentative observation bears out, it has portentous implications for management of regulated river reaches.

A citizens environmental group, the Coosa River Basin Initiative, based in Rome, Georgia, was instrumental in temporarily blocking an interbasin transfer of treated sewage water from the upper Chattahoochee River to the upper Etowah River. The Etowah River has been selected by the national conservation group American Rivers, Inc. as one of the ten most endangered rivers in the United States. Perhaps this dubious notoriety will assist in attracting much needed funding for conservation research on the Etowah River.

Florida-Carter Gilbert, University of Florida, swears that he and Jim Williams, Southeastern Biological Science Center, Gainesville, are making progress on the fishes of Florida book. Carter also swears that his keep-you-riveted-to-your-chair type catalog manuscript is 95% complete. Realizing the golden years are now enfolding him, Carter has opted to form partnerships with "stakeholders" (a new word in federal lexicon) and has asked Rick Mayden, University of Alabama, to co-author the descriptions of the *Macrhybopsis aestivalis* species group.

It has been a difficult year for the folks at the Southeastern Biological Science Center (SBSC), National Biological Service, and soon to become part of the U.S. Geological Survey. Despite timely layoffs (like Christmas) or the abrupt closing of programs and loss of personnel (e.g., cancellation of Steve Walsh's Global Climate Change program), nonessential research by nonessential personnel has continued at a steady pace. Steve has a manuscript in press, with Dennis Haney and Cindy Timmerman, entitled "Variation in thermal tolerance and routine metabolism among spring and stream-inhabiting freshwater sculpins (Teleostei: Cottidae) of the southeastern United States." Jim Williams swears that he and George Burgess, University of Florida, are going to finish the description of the shoal bass before the ASIH meetings in New Orleans. (I think bald guys swear too much). Leo Nico and Rob Robins of the Nonindigenous Species Section (SBSC), along with Jim Williams, are conducting a survey of the aquatic fauna of Avon Park, an Air Force bombing range in south central Florida. Jim, Leo, plus Pam Fuller and Charles Boydston, have labored on a large manuscript on the nonindigenous fishes of the United States; it may be out by early fall 1996. Leo and Steve have a manuscript in *Florida Scientist* on a record of a new population of the catfish *Hoplosternum littorale* (Callichthyidae) from Florida. Noel Burkhead, Steve Walsh, and Bob Dorazio (the biometrician who will tell us what it all means) have finally completed the matrix for an analyses of patterns of imperilment of southern Appalachian Fishes. Noel, Steve, and Bud Freeman are continuing to collect data on putative new forms of the *Etheostoma brevirostrum* species group. Howard Jelks recently completed a revised draft of the new recovery plan for *Etheostoma okaloosae*, a species that the Fish and Wildlife Service may push to have delisted.

Bruce Bauer, Dames & Moore, Inc. of Orlando, with Dave Etnier, University of Tennessee, and Noel Burkhead just published the description of *Etheostoma scotti*, a new snubnose darter from north Georgia. With the Presidential moratorium still in effect, *Etheostoma scotti* and *Etheostoma (Nothonotus) etowahae* were the last vertebrates to be placed on the federal endangered species list (as Threatened and Endangered, respectively); both are endemic to the Etowah River system. Incidentally, Bruce successfully underwent triple bypass surgery in March

1996 and I am sure the membership of SFC wishes him a full and speedy recovery.

Both Buck Snelson, University of Central Florida, and Walt Courtenay, Florida Atlantic University, both report they are presently inactive in freshwater, overworked, and must get all their research thrills vicariously from students.

Noel Burkhead

1996 Report of Region 3 - North-Central

New Recovery plans and other important publications:

The proceedings of the 1994 symposium hosted by the Tennessee Aquarium, "Aquatic fauna in peril--the southeast perspective," is soon to be published. Also, Chris Coco Associate Curator of Fishes, recently circulated a draft recovery plan for Lake Sturgeon, *Acipenser fulvescens*, in Clinch River. This is a cooperative effort with several state and federal agencies and universities. These include the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Geological Survey, the University of Georgia, and Kentucky State University.

TWRA will soon publish a revision of "Tennessee's Rare Vertebrates," that was originally published in 1983. Peg Shute, Dave Etnier, Charlie Saylor and Rick Bivens updating the fish section.

Recovery plans that are available since our last S regional report include: final pygmy madtom, *Noturus stanauli*, plan; technical draft for palezone shiner, *Notropis albizonatus*; and technical draft for bluemask darter *Etheostoma (Doration)* sp. All of these are available from the Asheville, NC U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) office.

Status surveys and other interesting finds:

Although there is currently a moratorium on listing of Endangered and Threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act, several status surveys have been completed, or are ongoing. These projects are funded by the Asheville, NC and Jackson, MS Field Offices of the FWS, as secured by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and Alabama Department of Game & Fish, and are described below. Pat Ceas and Larry Page (INHS) produced a final report on the status of three Tennessee River drainage endemics: the crown darter, *Etheostoma corona*; lollipop darter, *E. neopterum*; and egg-mimic darter, *E. pseudovulatum*. They did not make specific recommendations about possible federal listing of any of these species. However, they concluded that because all three species inhabit relatively small streams that are easily impacted, and because the ranges are small, they are all in danger of population extirpations or extinction. They reported only 13 breeding sites for *E. neopterum* and commented that if the populations in the Shoal Creek system were to become extirpated, the species is likely to become extinct. *Etheostoma corona* was considered relatively common throughout its small range (Lauderdale Co., AL and Wayne Co., TN), and in no immediate danger of extinction. New localities were documented for *E. pseudovulatum* in two new stream systems within the Duck River system. However, despite these new populations, several populations were considered tenuous, and Ceas and Page considered the conservation status of *E. pseudovulatum* to be intermediate between *E. neopterum* and *E. corona*.

Lesa Madison (Tennessee Cooperative Fishery Research Unit, Tennessee Technological University) published the results of her status survey for the Barrens darter, *E. forbesi*. She reported the species from eight streams in the upper Caney Fork River system, and described its

continued existence as threatened by various activities, mostly agricultural, on the Barrens Plateau.

Chris Skelton (UTK student) is currently investigating the taxonomic and distributional status of the undescribed *Phoxinus*, recently known as "laurel dace". The "laurel dace" is currently known from three Tennessee River tributaries on the Walden Ridge portion of the Cumberland Plateau, in Bledsoe County, TN.

Pat Rakes is continuing his status survey of Barrens topminnow, *Fundulus julisia*. In 1995, *F. julisia* was initially observed at eight localities. Rakes also reported two new distribution records for the species: a North Prong Barren Fork tributary (Miller Branch, Warren Co., TN); and a Collins River tributary (Charles Creek, Warren Co., TN). On subsequent visits to two of these eight localities in 1995, no *F. julisia* were observed, however. Rakes reported the abundance of all previously known populations was greatly reduced over that estimated in the early 1980s, that all populations are vulnerable to extirpation, and that the survival of the species is tenuous. During 1996, this survey will continue; in addition to FWS funding, the project has been supplemented through a contract secured from Arnold Engineering and Development Center (AEDC) by the Tennessee Field Office of The Nature Conservancy. As a result of this funding, captive populations on AEDC property, additional to those currently maintained by Rakes at Conservation Fisheries Inc. (CFI) facilities, may be arranged.

During 1995, J. R. Shute and Pat Rakes (CFI) continued work begun by Brooks Burr (SIUC) to determine the status of the undescribed "chucky madtom". The "chucky madtom" is currently known only from Little Chucky Creek, Nolichucky River system of the Tennessee River drainage (Greene, Co., TN). Preliminary genetic analyses by Brooks Burr and Jim Grady indicate that the "chucky madtom" is a distinct species. However, its taxonomic relationship to topotypic *Noturus elegans* and other *N. elegans*-like specimens from elsewhere in the Ohio River basin remains unclear; this is unlikely to be resolved soon, because of the inability to secure additional specimens from most of these areas. The Dunn Creek (Sevier Co., TN) locality in the Pigeon River system that may have historically produced specimens of this taxon was surveyed by CFI. Taylor listed these earlier specimens as *N. elegans*. Several other streams in the Nolichucky River system were also surveyed. During the 1995 surveys, no "chucky madtoms" were observed at any localities, including Little Chucky Creek. Burr and Grady are continuing the taxonomic work, and CFI will continue field surveys in 1996.

Rick Mayden, Bernie Kuhajda, and students at UAIC are concluding a three-year status survey of Tuscumbia darter, *Etheostoma tuscumbia*. In addition to estimating abundance at the various spring and spring-run populations and surveying for additional populations, student Jessica Boyce is comparing behaviors of the various populations. E.B. Jones (UAIC student) is also currently analyzing and comparing the genetic composition of the various populations.

Kuhajda and Mayden are continuing a status survey for the Alabama cavefish, *Speoplatyrhinus poulsoni*. Their objectives are to determine methodology to estimate population size and trends

and to document the range of the species within the cave system. As reported previously, they continue to observe what is believed to be a single specimen of the southern cavefish, *Typhlichthyes subterraneus* at the same locality in Key Cave. They reported that numbers of *S. poulsoni* observed 1992-1995 were comparable to those observed during earlier FWS surveys, indicating a relatively stable population size. During the initial survey to discover additional populations of *S. poulsoni*, caves that contained *T. subterraneus* were not considered likely to contain populations of *S. poulsoni*, and were not thoroughly surveyed. They plan to more thoroughly survey other nearby caves for *S. poulsoni*.

A survey, funded by the National Park Service (NPS), for duskytail darters, *Etheostoma percnurum*, in the Big South Fork system of the Cumberland River has substantially extended the range of this species. Previously, specimens only existed from the Big South Fork at the mouth of Station Camp Creek (Scott Co., TN). Individuals from CFI, SIUC, Kentucky Division of Game & Fish and NPS surveyed 14 localities over nearly 22 river km by seine and snorkel. As a result, *E. percnurum* is currently known to occur in appropriate habitat between the mouth of Station Camp Creek as far downstream as the mouth of Bear Creek (McCreary Co., KY). This is the first record of the species in Kentucky. At most sites where they occurred, they were moderately abundant, and abundances indices (calculated from fish observed per unit effort) compare with those observed in the Citico Creek (Monroe, Co., TN) population. No additional specimens of the unusual *E. (Catonotus)* sp. previously reported from the Big South Fork were observed during this survey. This survey is continuing in 1996.

We report another interesting finding as result of 1995 CFI Big South Fork snorkel surveys. Ashy darters, *Etheostoma cinereum*, were abundant at several localities in the New River, tributary of the Big South Fork. *Etheostoma cinereum* is known historically and currently from several localities along the main channel of the Big South Fork. Although the localities surveyed by CFI were previously sampled (Comiskey and Etnier, O'Bara, etc.), *E. cinereum* was not documented there. At the time of the earlier surveys, aquatic habitats in the New River were described as significantly degraded as a result of coal mining. Considering these earlier assessments, our qualitative observations indicate that benthic habitats in the New River have considerably improved, perhaps as a result of mine reclamation. Brian Evans, a UTK student is planning to resurvey the fishes of this system. This will take place in conjunction with John T. (Bo) Baxter's survey of the fishes of the upper Cumberland System.

Rex Strange and Brooks Burr (SIUC) produced a final report on genetic variability and metapopulation dynamics for the blackside dace, *Phoxinus Cumberlandensis*. They described some variation between metapopulations and made is recommendations about possible future reintroductions for conserving the species. A major consideration reported by Strange and Burr was the importance of dispersal corridors to the long-term maintenance of the species.

The SATURN Corporation has provided funding for a life history survey of the redband darter, *Etheostoma luteovinctum*, listed by TWRA as "Deemed in Need of Management." Redband darters occur in two streams on the SATURN property, and its numbers have been monitored by

SATURN since they broke ground for their factory in 1986. This study is being conducted by Chris Paxton, UTK student. under the supervision of Dave Etnier.

Champion International's efforts to improve water quality in the Pigeon River are apparently showing some success. Greg Seegert, Ecological Analysts, collected *Etheostoma gutselli* at several localities in the Pigeon in North Carolina and Tennessee below their notorious mill in Canto, NC. According to Greg, they were syntopic with *E. blennioides newmani*. We have not seen the specimens yet.

Etnier's regional faunas class revisited the Bear Creek site in west Tennessee that represents the only TN locality for *Notropis dorsalis*. It continues to be present there--along with numerous y-o-y *Ctenopharyngodon* and *Hypophthalmichthys*.

Negative data from 1995 field surveys: no pygmy madtoms, *Noturus stanauli*, were observed or collected in the Clinch or Duck rivers; no slender chubs, *Erimystax cahni*, were collected, despite the efforts of Etnier's ichthyology classes, TVA River Action Team (RAT) crews, and others.

Captive propagation and reintroduction:

Boulder darters, *E. wapiti*, were successfully spawned and reared in CFI aquaria, using techniques developed using bloodfin darters, *E. sanguifluum*, as surrogates. A single pair spawned three times in captivity, producing 8-10 viable eggs and five hardy offspring; a pair of adults is currently being maintained at CFI. In addition to the adults currently at CFI we will attempt to collect a few more adults in 1996, and hope to produce more offspring. These may eventually be used to bolster the Elk River populations, or to reintroduce the species into Shoal Creek (Lawrence Co., TN and Lauderdale Co., AL). Upgraded waste-water treatment facilities have improved water quality in Shoal Creek. As part of an "ecosystem management" project, Jim Layzer (NBS Cooperative Fisheries Unit at Tennessee Technological University) has a student surveying habitat stability and the fish community currently present in Shoal Creek. -In addition, Layzer and other students are investigating the stability of substrate in the stream, and have reintroduced some common mussel species. If the results of these surveys are favorable, the reintroduction of *E. wapiti*, *Cyprinella monacha*, and several species of endangered mussels may be attempted.

As previously reported, smoky and yellowfin madtoms, *Noturus baileyi* and *N. flavipinnis*, and duskytail darters, *E. percnum*, (Citico Creek parental stock) were again successfully captive propagated. To date, a cumulative total of nearly 1000 *N. baileyi*, 500 *N. flavipinnis*, and 250 *E. percnum* have been reintroduced into Abrams Creek in the Great S Mountains National Park, (Blount County, TN). More than 2500 spotfin chubs, *Cyprinella monacha*, have also been reintroduced into Abrams Creek.

Individuals of all four reintroduced species (*N. baileyi*, *N. flavipinnis*, *E. percnum*, and *C. monacha*) were observed in Abrams Creek during the 1995 field season. Reproduction was documented for *E. percnum* and *N. flavipinnis* and inferred for *N. baileyi*.

Two-year-old captively spawned blackside dace, *Phoxinus cumberlandensis*, spawned in CFI aquaria. Offspring reared from this effort will be maintained as a captive population; no reintroductions are planned for this species at present. Although the No Business Branch locality (Campbell Co., TN) where *P. cumberlandensis* had been translocated in 1993 has been surveyed several times since 1993, no *P. cumberlandensis* have been seen there. Ron Cicerello and Ellis Laudermilk (Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission) and Rick Bivens (Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission) have recently resurveyed historical and new localities for *P. cumberlandensis*. The status of the species is apparently stable at present, and several new populations have been discovered. As described above, Rex Strange and Brooks Burr (SIUC) have made recommendations for conserving these populations.

The Tennessee Aquarium has become more involved in cooperative efforts for conserving regional biodiversity. In cooperation with CFI, they may become involved in captive propagation and reintroduction projects by rearing *C. monacha* produced by CFI to stocking size. The number of individuals that can be produced in the current CFI facility is limited. TWRA permits allowing the Aquarium to hold this state and federally listed species are currently pending.

Local and regional watershed activities:

The USGS has designated the upper Tennessee River (from southwestern Virginia downstream to about the Chattanooga, TN area) as one of their National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) areas. As a result, Steve Ahlstedt is in the process of producing a historical retrospective of the aquatic fauna of the streams of the area. They will also establish long-ten-n sampling sites and conduct biological and water quality samples in this area.

The TVA RATs continue to collect biological, water quality, and other data on the streams within their area of interest. They are also working with organizations and individuals to protect sensitive resources. Much of their work involves working with landowners to improve agricultural practices that have resulted in degraded aquatic habitats. This coordination greatly improves our abilities to conserve and restore our rare aquatic resources. For example, the activities of the USGS, the Clinch/Powell RAT, the Tennessee Field office of The Nature Conservancy, and the recently formed Upper Tennessee River Protection Planning Committee has resulted in increased awareness of the local public to the importance of the resources of their area.

Other multi-agency cooperative projects in our region include the activities of the Upper Tennessee River Protection Planning Committee, Little Tennessee Watershed Association, and the Paint Rock River Initiative. The Upper Tennessee River Protection Planning Committee is composed of state and federal agency personnel and other organizations interested in conserving important aquatic habitats in the upper Tennessee River drainage in Virginia and Tennessee. Regular meetings keep all participants informed and involved in activities occurring in the area of concern. The Little Tennessee River Watershed Association is also supported by federal, state, and local agencies, but the membership is also largely composed of an enthusiastic grass-roots

organization led by Bill McLarney. The Paint Rock River Initiative has a broader mission to "conserve and improve the quality of life and natural resources of the Paint Rock River through voluntary participation. " This relatively new group is currently in the process of planning and prioritizing and acquiring funding for their activities.

The Tennessee office of The Nature Conservancy has established a local office in the Clinch River. Their work involves helping farmers to restore riparian vegetation, and fencing cattle or other livestock from streams; target areas for this work were chosen based on biological resources. In addition to the Clinch/Powell activities, the Tennessee and Georgia field offices of The Nature Conservancy are currently cooperating on a similar project in the upper Conasauga River watershed in Tennessee and Georgia.

Peggy W. Shute and David A. Etnier

1996 Report of Region 4 - South-Central

Jim Williams of the National Biological Survey in Gainesville, Florida continues to work on the description of *Percina (Alvordius)* sp. along with William Smith-Vaniz; it appears that this is a complex of several species. Jim is also describing, along with Rick Mayden at the University of Alabama, a new species of *Cottus* confined to the Tallapoosa River above the Fall Line in Alabama and Georgia.

Noel Burkhead, also at NBS in Gainesville, reports that the organization American Rivers has listed the Etowah River as one of the ten most imperiled rivers in the United States. This infamous rating was based largely on a manuscript by Noel, Steve Walsh, Jim Williams, and Bud Freeman, which outlines the severe pressure the Etowah is under. This habitat deterioration has resulted in over a dozen species of fishes and almost all of the mussel fauna becoming extirpated. The Etowah also contains more endemic endangered species than any other system in the U.S.

Mary Freeman of NBS is studying the effect of regulated flows on fish assemblages in the Tallapoosa River below Harris Dam. She is also nearing completion (this summer) of a broad scale measure of stream habitat quality, which will be used in the Tri-State Comprehensive Basin-Wide Management Plan. The NBS office at Auburn, Alabama was officially closed in February, and Mary will relocate to Athens, Georgia in June.

Jan Hoover at the Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Mississippi reports that he and Jack Killgore are describing faunas and identifying physical variables associated with abundance and reproduction of individual species in the Yazoo and Big Sunflower rivers in Mississippi. They are also studying the biology of paddlefish in the Big Sunflower River along with Steven George, a student at Northeast Louisiana University. Sherry Harrel, a student at the University of Kansas, is studying fish foraging behavior in a tributary of Bayou Pierre, Mississippi. Additionally, Jan has just finished a study on paddlefish rostrum morphology, and is beginning a morphological study on shovelnose sturgeon to examine variation within a population in the Mississippi River.

Bob Cashner at University of New Orleans reports that graduate student Chris Schieble is working on life history aspects of *Ambloplites ariommus*, the shadow bass. Bob and another student, Jeff Stewart, are conducting a comprehensive survey of the Bogue Chitto River (Pearl River) in Mississippi and Louisiana. Past surveys by students at Northeast Louisiana University 10 and 20 years ago and by Bob on a single creek within the system (yearly, for 18 years) provides baseline data for examining changes in fish community structure. Lastly, Bob is examining the disappearance of *Cyprinella ariommus*, the blacktail shiner, from Bayou LaCombe (Lake Pontchartrain), which was the predominant fish species in a early 1970's survey of the Bayou by a Tulane student. UNO surveys in 1989-90 and 1995-96 have not produced a single specimen.

Hank Bart at Tulane University is writing the final report on a status survey of *Percina aurora*,

the pearl darter, in the Pascagoula River Drainage, funded by the Mississippi Museum of Natural Sciences. Sampling during 1995 at 19 historic and 11 new sites did not produce a single specimen. The last specimens taken in the drainage were by students at the University of Southern Mississippi in 1994. Hank and others believe that *P. aurora* is likely extirpated from the Pearl River, the only other drainage this species is known to occur within. Since most of the records from the Pascagoula are from the late 1980's and early 90's, it still likely survives, but is clearly very rare. Hank also plans status surveys of *Percina brevicauda*, the coal darter, and the undescribed rush darter, both in the Mobile Basin in Alabama. Along with his students, Hank is continuing to uncover new distributional records for eastern Gulf Slope fishes. The latest is *Etheostoma whipplei*, the redbin darter, in the Apalachicola River Drainage, which will be the subject of a future note in the SFC PROCEEDINGS.

Mark Peterson at the Gulf Coast Research Lab in Ocean Springs, Mississippi has recently started a status survey of *Cycleptus elongatus*, the blue sucker, in the Pearl and Pascagoula rivers in Mississippi. Mark is also starting to look at the use of marsh habitat by larval fishes and invertebrates in Biloxi Bay, and how the destruction of this habitat affects the success of these organisms. He has a paper ready to go on the distribution, habitat requirements, and reproduction of *Enneacanthus gloriosus*, the bluespotted sunfish, in Mississippi. Lastly Mark reports that Larry Nicholson has received funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife to study striped bass restoration in Gulf coast waters, which focuses on the performance of the Gulf versus the Atlantic race of stripers.

Stuart Poss at the museum at the Gulf Coast Lab, along with David Besancon and Meg O'Connell, are currently compiling a database to determine if endangered Gulf of Mexico fishes show a decline in numbers through museum records. If they do, then similar declines in other species suggests comparable imperilment. They are also amassing historic and present photos of Gulf coast habitats (including aerial photos) to assess habitat decline. Stuart is continuing to study scorpionfishes, and has been using three dimensional imagery to look at skull morphology.

Steve Ross at the University of Southern Mississippi reports that his book on inland fishes of Mississippi should be sent off to University Press of Mississippi this spring. He is also starting a distributional study of *Leptolucania ommata*, the pygmy killifish, in Mississippi. Todd Slack is completing his dissertation on floodplain-stream interactions in a small tributary of Black Creek, Pascagoula Drainage. Martin O'Connell is pursuing his dissertation research on use of floodplains by fishes, focusing on foraging benefits and predation risk. Lastly, Brett Albanese is studying the life history of *Pteronotropis signipinnis*, the flagfin shiner.

Carol Johnson at the U.S. Forest Service Hydrology Lab in Oxford, Mississippi reports that she and Charles Knight of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science have completed their life history and behavioral ecology study of *Pteronotropis welaka*, the bluenose shiner. Carol is still working on sound production in stream fishes, especially *Cyprinella* and their hybrids. She is also looking at fish community structure in several incised streams. Mel Warren and Wendell Haag continue to examine mussel and fish community structure in the Bankhead National Forest

in Alabama.

Malcolm Pierson of Alabama Power Company in Birmingham reports that he and Terri L. Ballard have a soon-to-be published paper on the fishes of the Little River Drainage. This study was Terri's master's research at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. Ed Tyberghein and colleagues are completing the final year of a three year biotelemetry study in the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama rivers on adult paddlefish. Weekly monitoring indicate that most paddlefish move upstream into the Tallapoosa River to spawn.

Randy Haddock of the Cahaba River Society in Birmingham is currently circulating among various agencies a draft of the Cahaba River Protection Plan, which was prepared along with The Nature Conservancy. This plan involves educating the public about the problems in the watershed, and presents possible solutions to these problems. An agreement with Jefferson County to implement watershed protection via creating greenways along the Cahaba and Black Warrior rivers may not happen due to lack of cooperation from the county. This may force the Society to go back to court and force the county into implementing these programs. Lastly, the Society is working with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and Region 4 of EPA on a Cahaba River Basin Management Plan, which would consolidate issuance of permits, thus allowing these agencies to assess non-point pollution in the Basin.

Scott Mettee and colleagues at the Geological Survey of Alabama in Tuscaloosa have completed status surveys on *Alosa alabamae*, the Alabama shad, and *Cyprinella callitaenia*, the bluestripe shiner, and are continuing studies on *Cycleptus elongatus*, the blue sucker, and *Noturus munitus*, the frecklebelly madtom, in the Mobile Basin, and on Tennessee River fishes. They are also starting a survey of mussels in the Tennessee, Alabama, and lower Tombigbee rivers, as well as a fairly large biological water study of the lower Cahaba River. Scott is hopeful that the state fish book for Alabama will be out near the end of this year.

Bob Stiles at Samford University in Birmingham has been studying the courting behaviors of male darters in the subgenera *Etheostoma* and *Ulocentra*. Bob also reports that while snorkeling in the Little Cahaba River at Bulldog Bend, he has seen many young *Percina aurolineata*, the goldline darter, more than in recent years. Mike Howell continues to study the masculinization of *Gambusia*, and is looking at variation (including chromosomes) in *Cyprinella venusta*, the blacktail shiner, from the Cahaba River.

Chuck Lydeard at the University of Alabama continues to study the molecular systematics and conservation genetics of freshwater mussels and snails in the southeast. Herb Boschung and Rick Mayden will soon be submitting to a publisher a manuscript on their state fish book for Alabama. Rick is continuing status studies of *Etheostoma ditrema*, the Coldwater darter, *E. chermocki*, the vermilion darter, and *Speoplatyrhinus poulsoni*, the Alabama cavefish, as well as a study on the effects of malathion on an upper Tombigbee River tributary.

Frank Parauka at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Panama City, Florida reports that his

office has just received fund for an outreach program - Watchable Wildlife. In a joint effort with state agencies and state chapters of the Wildlife Federation, signs will be erected at boat launches on rivers along the Gulf coast that harbor Gulf sturgeon, informing readers on basic life history traits. Frank also reports that the Gulf sturgeon recovery plan has been finalized, which was coordinated by Lorna Patrick. Additionally, a graduate student at North Carolina State, DeWayne Fox, has been working with the Service on capturing Gulf sturgeon in Choctawhatchee Bay and using telemetry to locate spawning beds. Once located, eggs will hopefully be found in the artificial spawning substrate, thus validating spawning sites.

Carl Couret at the Service's office in Daphne, Alabama reports the staff has completed a Biological Opinion on the proposed Bevill Reservoir in Fayette County, Alabama, which addresses the minimum flows and IBI monitoring necessary to protect two federally listed mussels in the North River. Another opinion is nearing completion on the effects of Alabama's water quality standards on federally listed aquatic species for EPA's southeast regional office; this precedent-setting effort will affect how EPA approves water quality standards in other southeastern states.

Ron Larson at the Service's office in Jackson, Mississippi is reviewing the status of southern walleye, which is no confined to five small populations in the Mobile Basin. He is also working with Jefferson County, Alabama in establishing a watershed management program for Turkey Creek, tributary to Locust Fork of the Black Warrior River. Turk Creek contains the federally endangered *Etheostoma nuchale*, the watercress darter, one of two know populations of the undescribed *Etheostoma* sp. c.f. *parvipinne*, the rush darter, and the only population of *Etheostoma chermocki*, the vermilion darter. Ron is also involved in modifying construction of weir dams in Bayou Pierre, Mississippi, which may adversely affect the threatened *Etheostoma rubrum*, the bayou darter.

Lastly, I would like to report on *Scaphirhynchus suttkusi*, the Alabama sturgeon, and the efforts to protect this vanishing species. As a reminder of past events, in December 1994 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdrew the listing of the Alabama sturgeon, citing that it was either extinct or too rare to protect, even though an individual was captured in the Alabama River below Claiborne Lock and Dam in December 1993. On 18 April 1995 a second Alabama sturgeon was caught by a fisherman on a weighted trotline, also below Claiborne. This fish was radio-tagged and followed by personnel from the Panama City FWS office, who also managed to capture a third sturgeon on 19 May 1995 in a gill net, again below Claiborne Lock and Dam. Shortly after these discoveries, Rick Mayden and I submitted our revised manuscript on the systematics, taxonomy, and conservation status of the Alabama sturgeon, which will be published in *Copeia* 1996(2).

Although these events would lead one to conclude that the FWS would reverse their decision, this has not happened due in part to a moratorium being placed on listing species. Furthermore, a House resolution eliminating any funding toward searching for additional Alabama sturgeon was passed by Congress as a rider to another unrelated bill. This past winter, the Corps of Engineers

(Mobile District) has proposed a new lock and dam about 40 miles downstream from Claiborne, which would impound the area where these three sturgeon have recently been captured. And lastly, business coalitions in Alabama continue to strongly oppose the scientific validity of this species. Currently, the future looks rather bleak for this endangered species!

Bernie Kuhajda

1996 Report of Region 5 - Northwest

Henry Robison and Bruce Thompson continue to work on the description of the longnose darter form in the Ouachita River system, Arkansas. Robison and Thompson hope to complete their description and submit a manuscript in 1996.

Henry Robison has completed his status survey and report on *Notropis ozarcanus* in the Arkansas portion of its range. Bill Pflieger has also completed a similar survey in Missouri.

Jim Johnson and students continue to work with *Amblyopsis rosae* in the Logan Cave system in northwest Arkansas. Two M.S. theses involving population dynamics and movement, and population dynamics and growth have been completed. A third thesis studying metabolic rates of both cave crayfish and the Ozark cavefish has just been started. The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport is under construction. Clearing and grubbing of the airport site is underway, and a contract has been let for water and sewer lines. Johnson feels there is a strong possibility of adverse impacts to cave systems from petroleum and deicing components in runoff.

A Little Rock environmental consulting firm (Ford, Thornton, and Norton, Inc. = FTN, Inc.) is coordinating efforts of the Arkansas Mercury Task Force. Mercury advisories continue to be in effect for lakes and streams in portions of south and central Arkansas. Some Lower Ouachita River Work Group reports regarding: 1) water and sediment quality, 2) ambient toxicity screening, 3) surveys of fish communities, and 4) instream monitoring of sediment-associated impairment are now available in Executive Summary format.

Business interests and citizens groups continue to promote development of commercial shipping on the White River upstream to Newport, Arkansas. Currently the Corps of Engineers maintains a 100-ft wide, nine-foot deep navigation channel. Proponents of additional improvements are promoting a 200-ft wide navigation channel, which in some upstream would encompass almost the full channel width. Several public information sessions and promotional literature have been provided by the White River Valley Association and the Arkansas Waterways Commission to citizens in the proposed project area.

The Grand Prairie Pumped Storage project is being developed to remove White River water during high stages for storage and use in irrigation. Eastern Arkansas has experienced chronic groundwater level depletion over the last 20 years due to withdrawals for irrigation. This project is sought by the agricultural community, and EIS information is being developed by the Corps of Engineers. Fish community impact concerns voiced by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission include: 1) withdrawals might reduce spring water levels to flooded bottomland hardwood spawning/feeding grounds; and 2) introduction of the zebra mussel, which occurs in the White River, to tributary streams which will receive runoff from fields irrigated with stored water.

The Arkansas Legislature passed Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Regulation 15 which

prohibits instream gravel mining in 24 high quality Arkansas streams. These streams have been designated as extraordinary resource waters and include many of the Ozarks least disturbed water bodies. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology are advocating inclusion of Crooked Creek, a long-time premier smallmouth bass stream, as an extraordinary resource water. Opposition from gravel miners and locals is intense, and a state Gravel Mining Task Force has been established to bring a recommendation to the Governor's Office.

John L. Harris

1996 Report of Region 6 - Southwest H.W. Robison (Southern Arkansas University) is completing the computerization of the fishes of the Ouachita National Forest using 26 years of field notes and miscellaneous literature/museum records, funded by the Ouachita National Forest and the Oxford Research Lab. He is also starting a biodiversity study of 52 springs and seeps in the Ouachita Mountains, continuing a description of the longnose darter in the Ouachita River system and has just finished a book on the endemic animals and plants of Arkansas, called "Only In Arkansas," which can be purchased through the University of Arkansas Press at Fayetteville, AR or through HWR at P.O. Box 1354 SAU, Magnolia AR 71753. Jack Killgore (US Army Corps of Engineers, Waterways Experiment Station [WES]) has completed a study of velocity, preferences and swimming performance of the cypress darter and along with graduate students Jim Morrow and Matt Chan, is monitoring Gulf sturgeon in the West Pearl River system, LA. Jan Hoover (WES) is analyzing data on fish-habitat relationships in the Cypress Bayou system of east Texas. Phil Kirk (WES) has initiated studies of effects of reservoir operations on fish recruitment in Hugo Lake, OK. Eric Dibble (WES) is collaborating with Ray Drenner to study relationships between fish and aquatic plants in experimental ponds at Texas Christian University. Neil Douglas (NLU) is revising his key to Louisiana fishes with Mike Fitzsimons (LSU), Bob Wallus (TVA) and Dick Hoese. The updated version will include all fishes, marine and freshwater, and offer information on behavior and ecology and keys to larval stages. Frank Pezold (NLU) has just completed a study of fish production in an isolated floodplain swamp. He is also directing student research projects examining habitat partitioning by darters in a central Louisiana creek (with Steven Dupre), diet selectivity by saddleback darters (with Lisa Loe), multivariate analysis of fish-habitat associations in Ouachita Mountain headwater creeks (with Luzette Kincaid) and construction of an IBI for headwater streams of the Ouachita Mountains (with Chris Metcalf, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission).

Frank Pezold