U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

OWAA 2004 "Tip Sheet"

National

50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey. Next year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey. The survey determines the status of North American waterfowl populations and is a major factor in setting annual waterfowl hunting regulations. This survey, conducted by the Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, is one of the largest and most reliable wildlife surveys in the world. Pilot-biologists fly more than 80,000 miles at treetop level to track the population levels of waterfowl and other bird species. Ground crews made up of observers and others from federal and state wildlife agencies add to the data collection efforts. The Service will be coordinating opportunities for reporters to interview the pilot-biologists. Some unique opportunities for a select number of journalists to join the pilot-biologists in a plane to see how they perform their survey work will be made available. Contact: Cindy Hoffman, 202-208-3008.

2004/5 Waterfowl Hunting Season. Spring nesting survey data should be available by the end of June. Contact Nicholas Throckmorton, 202-208-5636.

Fish Passage. Extensive participation many partners at every level of the private and public sectors make this very popular program almost always good copy. The program involves notching or eliminating dozens of small dams to expand historic range of a number of species; good work so far involving American shad and other fish. (Not to be confused with large dam removal; most of the dams involved in the Passage program are small earthen structures. Some date back to colonial times). Contact: Ken Burton; 202-208-5657.

Whirling Disease in Trout. The Service has the lead investigation to try to unravel this fatal disease that has infected fish in more than 20 states. Chief investigator is Beth McConnell, who can provide the latest in research notes on this disease. Contact: Sharon Rose at 303-236-4580 and Beth McConnell, 406-587-9265, x129.

Predator Trapping Boosts Duck Production. A trapping program that removes skunks, raccoons and fox from 23,000 acres in and around Kellys Slough National Wildlife Refuge near Grand Forks, N.D. for the past five years has helped double waterfowl nesting success. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners, Delta Waterfowl and the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, believe predator management is another tool to boost waterfowl production. One manager remembers some sites with six percent success before predator control began. Now, many sites test in the 40 to 60 percent range. Last year, nesting success at Kellys Slough NWR exceeded 57 percent. The Refuge has some of the best water conditions in the state this spring, so managers are expecting excellent production this year. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton , 202-208-5636 or Roger Hollevoet, 701-662-8611.

Pacific Region; California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho

Lampreys? Yeah, lampreys! It's not just a matter of "the ugly ones need love, too," lampreys are an important part of the ecosystem. For starters they were a vital food source, medicine and a cultural ceremonial focus for Native American tribes in the Pacific Northwest. They've been studied by medical science as a possible source of medicinal anticoagulants. They're a very important link in the food chain for other species, too, including: as adults, they are the most abundant dietary item in Pacific seals and sea lions because they're easy to capture, higher in calories, and they migrate in schools; their larvae and eggs are eaten by salmon fry; juveniles are consumed by gulls and terns; they're in the diets of channel catfish and northern squawfish, and their carcasses are an important dietary item of white sturgeon in the Snake and Fraser Rivers.

Sure, they have a bad reputation. But that's based on the Great Lakes, where humans allowed a non-native lamprey species to get at fish populations which were not adapted to co-existing with lampreys. Today their populations appear to be declining. The Service has been petitioned to list four Pacific Northwest species of lamprey, and a number of Tribes and agencies are beginning to see how they might work together to make some conservation measures happen to benefit lamprey. Also, the Fish and Wildlife Service's Columbia River Fisheries Program Office has a three-year ongoing project on Cedar Creek, a tributary to the Lewis River.Contact: Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211 or Greg Silver, 360-696-7605.

Old wolves in Idaho. One of the oldest wolves ever recorded in the wild died this spring in Idaho. "B-2" was believed to be about 14 and was one of the original 35 wolves that were relocated from Canada to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in central Idaho in 1995. Of the 764 wolves estimated to be roaming the wilderness of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, only 3 of those original transplanted wolves remain. They all live in Idaho, and may break more records for old wolves in the wild. What kind of saintly lives have they led to steer clear of trouble with ranchers all these years? Contact: Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211 or Carter Niemeyer, 208-378-5639.

Not your average Fidos. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has acquired the first specially trained Karelian bear dog in Washington. Karelians have been bred and used in Finland for centuries to hunt bears. In America, they are used to teach bears where they don't belong. The dogs are trained to bark ferociously to drive bears away from areas where they are not welcome, such as campgrounds and back yards. The technique, pioneered in Montana and Wyoming, has been shown to be effective as a non-lethal way of reducing bear problems. Washington's effort both provides the WDFW with a tool for managing problem black bears and the Service with a means for addressing potential problems as the agency works to recover the grizzly bear population in the North Cascades. The North Cascades Ecosystem is one of the largest grizzly bear recovery zones in the contiguous United States but likely has the smallest grizzly bear population, including the only grizzlies left in the lower 48 states that are exposed to salmon. Just north of the border, the Canadians are preparing to add bears to their portion of the ecosystem, an action that may result in bears moving back and forth across the border. The Service and other agencies are preparing for this potential by concentrating on sanitation and education, including the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project. Contact: Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211 or

Doug Zimmer (360) 753-4370.

Don't "pass" on a great recreation experience. State and Federal agencies in Washington and Oregon are now collectively offering a convenient day-use recreation pass that is honored at the majority of agency sites in the two states. The Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass is an add-on to the existing Golden Eagle Passport, reducing the need to purchase multiple passes while providing a cost savings to the avid outdoor recreationist. The pass is honored at all Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management sites charging entrance fees, as well as 26 Oregon state parks charging a day-use fee, 20 participating Washington state parks charging a vehicle parking fee, and 6 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites charging facility-use fees. Contact: Susan Saul, 503-872-2728.

Navigating without instruments. More than 2,000 years ago, before European open ocean exploration began, the Hawaiian Islands had been explored and settled. The Polynesian Voyaging Society has a built a replica voyaging canoe and recaptured the lost art of wayfinding, depending on observations of the stars, sun, ocean swells and other signs of nature for clues to direction and location of a vessel at sea. Today, in partnership with the Service and others, the Society is sailing the 62-foot, twin-hulled Hokule'a along an ancient exploratory route to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge as part of an environmental education project christened "Navigating Change." Contact: Susan Saul, 503-872-2728.

The War on Weeds. They are camouflaged with pretty flowers and sweet scents, but they are nearly as deadly to wildlife habitat as is pavement. They have names such as starthistle, dalmatian toadflax, purple loosestrife, rush skeletonweed and reed canary grass. Collectively, they are invasive weeds, and are responsible for the elimination of wildlife habitat on federal lands in the West at the alarming rate of 4,600 acres per year. They also are causing millions of dollars of losses in agriculture, tourism and recreation. Experts estimate that invasive plants already exist on more than 100 million acres of public and private land and continue to increase at a rate of 8 to 20 percent a year – consuming an area twice the size of Delaware every 365 days. In the state of Washington alone, an estimated 800 acres is lost to invasive weeds every day. Contact: Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211.

If a butterfly could sing the blues. The fate of the Fender's blue butterfly rises and falls with that of its host plant, the Kincaid lupine. Both are protected under the Endangered Species Act, but are indicators of a bigger problem in Oregon's highly-developed Willamette Valley: fragmented grassland habitat. The Service and public and private partners are racing the clock to save or restore what's left of the valley's historic savannah habitat. Contact: Phil Carroll, 503-231-6954.

Alaska

Clam On! When low tides bare the beaches of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, hundreds of "anglers" flock to the exposed sands in search of one of the state's most unusual "sportfish," the razor clam. (And yes, you will need an Alaska state sportfishing license to participate.) Dug by shovel, by hand or with a hollow-

pipe device known as a "clam gun" that is shoved into wet sand and, the gunner hopes, will extract a razor clam within the plug of sand it removes, these large bivalves (a lunker will be better than seven inches long) offer great recreation and delicious eating. Surprisingly enough, razor clamming presents a challenge, too. Able to dig as fast as an inch a second in wet sand, your quarry will often leave you groping up to your shoulder in a hastily dug hole, fingertips just brushing the shell of a clam that is rapidly disappearing out of reach. Try your luck at the Kenai Peninsula's popular and aptly named Clam Gulch on June 3 and 4th of this year, when tides lower than -5 feet will open up long-covered sands and, in the breathless words of local outdoor writer Les Palmer, "virgin clams will be exposed!" Bruce Woods, 907.786-3695.

Mountain Prairie Region; Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Greater Sage Grouse: The Service has initiated a full status review of this species, to determine whether it should be protected under the Endangered Species Act. This process, which includes a request for input from the public, should be completed within about nine months. When the review is complete, either the Service will find that listing is not warranted and no further action will be taken, or the Service will propose listing the species or the species will be added to the Federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list will be deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. In the meantime, however, hunting seasons for greater sage-grouse will continue to be regulated by State fish and wildlife agencies. Contact: Diane Katzenberger 303-236-4578.

Rocky Mountain National Park Native Trout Restoration. A cooperative partnership between Service, National Park Service and Trout Unlimited is working to recover the greenback cutthroat and Colorado River cutthroat trout in Rocky Mountain National Park. Completed back-country projects have made a only-in-Colorado experience of fishing for greenbacks under catch-and-release regulations. In early July, greenbacks spawn in restoration sites. Partners are also working in other parts of the area. Diane Katzenberger, (303) 236-4578.

Prairie Pothole Joint Venture. The Service will provide $21 million to the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture to support wetland and grassland acquisitions in the Prairie Pothole Region. The prairie pothole region is the most important waterfowl producing region on the continent, generating more than half of North America’s ducks. Of the 800 migratory bird species in North America, more than 300 rely on this region – 177 species for breeding and nesting habitat and another 130 for feeding and resting during spring and fall migrations. During the last century, much of the prairie pothole region has been converted to intensively cultivated cropland and heavily grazed or hayed grasslands. This loss of habitat has caused steeper, more consistent and more widespread declines in grassland birds over the past 25 years than any other North American bird group. Diane Katzenberger, (303) 236-4578.

Brothers Relive Childhood Memories of Once Abundant Fish. Seventy years ago,

two brothers from Vernal, Utah, caught and ate Colorado pikeminnow – now one of four

endangered Colorado River fish species. During the depression in the1930s, Dale and Max Stewart, of Vernal, Utah, caught fish in the Green River near Vernal to feed their family. Many of the fish were Colorado pikeminnow (called squawfish or whitefish in those days). At the age of 8, Max caught a 25-pound Colorado pikeminnow that was nearly as big as he was. Dale still holds the record in Vernal for the biggest pikeminnow caught -- 26 ½ pounds. They recall community "fish frys" where these fish were enjoyed in large quantities. Changes to the Colorado River system during the mid-1900s led to the decline of these fish species. Today the fish are federally-listed as endangered and efforts are ongoing to bring them back from the brink of extinction. Biologists are beginning to see the return of Colorado pikeminnow in areas where the Stewart brothers fished as children, offering hope that these once popular sportfish could again become abundant throughout the Colorado River system. This is an excellent human-interest story, complete with historic photos. Contact: Debbie Felker, 303-969-7322, ext. 227

Students Help Restore Populations of Ancient Fish. Colorado students are helping to restore populations of endangered razorback suckers and Colorado pikeminnow through a unique education program sponsored by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW). Since 2000, elementary and high school students have raised these fish species in classroom aquariums during the school year and worked with biologists to tag and release them into the river each spring. The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program provides fish from its hatcheries and a small amount of funding to purchase aquariums and other supplies. On a similar note, Page, Arizona, high school students are working with biologists from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to raise endangered razorback suckers in a public golf course pond. The students, some of whom are Navajo Indians, learn about this endangered fish species and help monitor water quality, net and tag the fish and stock them into the river as part of recovery efforts. This story is best covered in April or May when the students remove the fish from the pond to tag and stock them into the river. Craig Springer 505-248-6867 or Debbie Felker, 303-969-7322, ext. 227.

Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region; Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin

Study Outlines Options for Agencies to Slow Asian Carp Invasion. Last fall, a commercial angler made a troubling discovery: a bighead carp, netted in Lake Pepin, less than 100 miles from Minneapolis on the Mississippi River. A short time later, the Service and the Minnesota and Wisconsin departments of natural resources commissioned a study to identify ways to slow or stop the advance of non-native Asian carp—of which the bighead is one species—into the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Large populations of voracious Asian carp can reduce populations of native plants, which are an important staple for native fish, waterfowl and other species. This can affect regional economies that rely on waterfowl hunting, fishing and boating. Also, a commercial fisherman captured a black carp in Horseshoe Lake in southern Illinois. The Service is closely monitoring the waterways in the area, including the Cache River, on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. No additional black carp have been discovered since, but the Service is keeping a vigilant eye out for this invasive species. Contact: Rachel Levin, 612-713-5311.

Divers Look for Elusive Mussel. Service divers, along with U.S. Geological Survey and University of Minnesota researchers, are searching the St. Croix River, which forms a border between Minnesota and Wisconsin, for the endangered winged mapleleaf mussel, one of the rarest mussels in North America. A breakthrough in winged mapleleaf recovery came last year when biologists discovered that both blue catfish and channel catfish are suitable hosts for glochidia of the endangered winged mapleleaf mussel. These findings may soon be applied to artificially propagate winged mapleleaf juveniles for augmentation of existing populations and for reintroduction at Mississippi River basin sites within the species' historic range where populations have long been absent, and may thus help to recover this species from the brink of extinction. Contact: Rachel Levin, 612-713-5311.

Coaster Brook Trout. Fisheries biologists are working to restore this species to some of the Great Lakes, where it was once abundant and widespread. Coaster brook trout are big, colorful, highly sought-after sport fish that hit flies, live and artificial baits. In the mid-1800s, the fishery attracted anglers from around the world; unfortunately, unregulated fishing and habitat loss due to wide-scale logging reduced their numbers substantially. Service biologists, along with colleagues in resource agencies in Canada and the United States have worked to protect remaining populations from overharvesting, rehabilitating spring-fed areas of streams and redesigning or removal of dams that have blocked coaster book trout streams, with good results. Contact: Brian Lubinski, 612-713-5114.

Pallid Sturgeon. The first known reproduction of the pallid sturgeon in the lower Missouri River in 50 years was confirmed by Service biologists in February, 2000. The fish is believed to have a better chance at recovery than previously thought. This species has been listed as endangered since 1990; recent discovery means the Service's work on river habitat has paid off. Contact: Craig Springer 505-248-6867 or Steve Krentz, 701-250-4419.

Paddlefish. They occur in the Mississippi River basin in the mainstream and the major tributaries, from Montana to Mississippi. Paddlefish were once common in central U.S. rivers, but populations have declined due to overharvest, sedimentation and river modifications. Dams have had an adverse effect on paddlefish because they alter traditional habitats and block spawning migration. Collapse of most sturgeon stocks has caused an increased demand for paddlefiish eggs in the expensive caviar trade, which has placed new concern for the species. Hatchery propagation, however, have restored paddlefish to river reaches above some dams. Paddlefish are highly mobile, moving 200 miles in one direction to reproduce. Contact: Craig Springer 505-248-6867, Kerry Graves, 405-384-5463 or Richard Shelton, 601-842-1341.

Shovelnose Sturgeon Reintroduced into Ohio's Scioto River. The Service is assisting the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in reintroducing shovelnose sturgeon into the waters of the upper Ohio River basin. Once common in the upper Ohio River and lower sections of its tributaries, shovelnose disappeared from Ohio in 1957 as a result of habitat loss, dams and pollution. The Service's Carterville Fishery Resources Office provided shovelnose fingerlings to Ohio for stocking in the Scioto, one of Ohio's premier rivers, so that anglers may eventually see these fish on their lines. Contact: Rachel Levin, 612-713-5311.

Service Participating in "Mass Marking" Initiative for Great Lakes Fish. The Service's Green Bay Fishery Office has joined a team of state, tribal, provincial fish managers and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to investigate the use of mass marking on hatchery fish stocked into the Great Lakes. Mass marking involves placing coded wire tags into the snouts of young fish prior to their release into the wild. The codes contained on the tags assist fishery managers in determining the survival, growth, movement and overall performance of hatchery-reared fish. Currently only a fraction of hatchery-reared fish stocked in the Great Lakes receive coded wire tags. Tagging a larger proportion of these fish in a coordinated manner could greatly improve fisheries management and research opportunities--which might mean benefits to anglers in the form of better managed populations of popular native recreational fish. Fisheries management agencies across the Great Lakes basin are interested in this technology and a demonstration project is being scheduled for this summer at the Service's Iron River National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin, and at the Platt River State Fish Hatchery in Michigan. Contact: Rachel Levin, 612-713-5311.

The End of the Rainbow (Trout, that is) at Wisconsin Army Base. Wisconsin's Fort McCoy Army Base and the Genoa National Fish Hatchery worked together to provide a tremendous recreational fishery for rainbow trout on the base this spring. Though the Service and the Department of Army have cooperated closely for years, because of shrinking budgets and changing priorities in the Fisheries Program, the Department of the Army was forced to contract out its fish stocking program. After a few years of being supplied rainbow trout through local fish farms, quality control and a reliable supply of fish every spring was found to be lacking. The Army asked the Service to resume fish production through a reimbursable agreement, and this April the Service distributed more than 14,000 10-inch rainbow trout in five local ponds on the base. Hundreds of outdoor enthusiasts fished for trout on the base in 2003, and hundreds of trout tags are sold through the base's licensing program. Through this cooperative effort between two sister agencies, the Service is meeting its goal of building and fostering partnerships to increase recreational fishing opportunities on federal lands. Contact: Rachel Levin, 612-713-5311.

Study Focuses on Freaky Frogs. The Service is conducting a nationwide survey monitor the abnormalities in frogs on its lands. This study was prompted by the discovery in 1995 by Minnesota school children of frogs with missing or extra limbs. Biologists are checking sites on national wildlife refuges, wetland management districts and other Service lands to see if abnormalities occur. The goal is to check each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System for two years to document the occurrence of abnormal frogs. In the Midwest Region, the study has been carried out on 13 sites, and abnormal frogs have been found at each site; abnormal frogs have been found in every region of the Service. What does it mean? Biologists aren't sure – abnormalities could be the result of a number of factors, including trauma (predation), parasites, exposure to pollution or increased exposure to ultraviolet light. The study continues.

Contact: Georgia Parham, 812-334-4261 x 203.

Cleaning Up. Around the Midwest Region, we're seeing significant progress toward cleaner water and

land through working with partners under the Natural Resources Damage Assessment program, where those responsible for contaminating the environment foot the bill to restore natural resources lost to the public. In Ohio, a restoration plan is in the works for Fields Brook, a tributary of the Ashtabula River that empties into Lake Erie. This former Superfund Site has been cleaned up, and the Service, working with partners, has developed a draft plan to spend $860,000 to restore the fish, wildlife and plants that were affected by PCBs and mercury. The restoration, based on input from the public, could include restoring wetlands, buying land for public use, or creating fish habitat. On Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, major NRDA settlements have brought plans to restore additional sites at Saginaw Bay in Michigan and Fox River and Green Bay in Wisconsin. And we're working hard on a settlement to restore resources on the Grand Calumet River near Chicago. These settlements mean that citizens of the Great Lakes will once again have the use of resources once made unavailable by contaminants, and restoration of those resources will be paid for by those responsible for the contamination. Contact: Georgia Parham, 812-334-4261 x 203.

Expediting Grassland Easements. The Service's Midwest and Mountain-Prairie regions are involved in a unique program that streamlines the acquisition of grassland and wetland easements by proving a simple method for determining payments for minimally restrictive wetlands and grassland easements. The policy provides the Service with a new tool in its Small Wetland Acquisition Program and provides important habitat to waterfowl and other grassland species in the prairie pothole region. The Prairie Pothole Region has historically produces millions of ducks including mallards, teal, canvasbacks and other waterfowl. Private landowners benefit by not having to suffer through overly lengthy appraisal processes, and the Service benefits by acquiring easements for new Waterfowl Production Areas. Contact: Scott Flaherty, 612-713-5309

Restoring the Prairie. When the health of northwest hardwood forests and Florida everglades were in peril, the public responded. On a similar scale, vanishing tallgrass prairie and water quality issues in western Minnesota and northwest Iowa are energizing The Service and its partners to rescue this at-risk ecosystem. Contact: Scott Flaherty, 612-713-5309.

A Grand Excursion though a Grand Refuge. From June 25 to July 5, a flotilla of riverboats and steamboats will follow the route of the 1854 Grand Excursion from Rock Island, Ill. to St. Paul, Minn. Hundreds of boats and thousands of visitors will be steaming through units of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge. How does a place "where wildlife comes first" prepare for this wave of boat and visitor traffic? How has the landscape changed since president Millard Fillmore traveled up the Mississippi in 1854? Established in 1924, the refuge is home to 306 bird species, 57 mammals and 134 different species of fish. Fifty percent of North America's canvasback ducks stop here during migrations to rest and feed. Demands of development, recreation and river navigation are presenting present day challenged to this refuge, which is smack in the middle of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Contact: Scott Flaherty, 612-713-5309.

Wildlife Trunks Help Students Learn About Environment. About 375 fourth-grade teachers across North Dakota are having an easier time teaching their students about the environment these days, thanks to trunks full of wildlife-related items distributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The trunks

include pelts, replica animal skulls, wings, rubber tracks and an educator's guide that complement the North Dakota studies curriculum. Updates are planned after evaluation by both teachers and students. Contact: Jackie Jacobson at 701-442-5474, ext. 17.

Southeast Region; Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Conserving the robust redhorse: In 1869, naturalist Edward Cope observed a rotund, or robust, fish in North Carolina's Yadkin River. Inexplicably, knowledge of the fish's existence disappeared for over a century. Deforestation and decades of erosion silted over gravel beds needed for the fish's reproduction. This species, now known as the robust redhorse, was not seen again until 1991, when it was rediscovered in Georgia's Oconee River. Although water quality within its range has improved, new threats are posed by hydroelectric dams. As a means to conserve the robust redhorse before it needs Endangered Species Act protection, Georgia Power decided to make use of an innovative new tool, the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances, or CCAA." Through the Robust Redhorse CCAA, Georgia Power is working with the Service, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee to introduce this fish into another Georgia river, the Ocmulgee. Georgia DNR contributions to the robust redhorse recovery effort include collecting brood fish, setting up temporary hatcheries, sampling, harvesting, tagging, and monitoring. Beyond the Ocmulgee, Georgia Power supports propagation efforts in other state rivers and additional research into robust redhorse status and life history. Contact: Arnold Rakes, 404-679-7374.

Southwest Region; Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Gila Trout. On the endangered species list, this species is improving, thanks to intervention by fisheries and could be upgraded soon from Endangered to Threatened. Could also be a candidate for limited recreational fishing, which would be a boon to anglers and a help to Arizona Fish & Game, if it helps increase license sales. Contact: Ronnie Maes / Gary Carmichael, 505-387-6022. Also, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, in cooperation with the US Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Service, is planning to remove non-native fish from Fossil Creek, in the Coconino National Forest. This is an opportunity to re-populate many miles of stream with native fishes, including the native sport fish round-tail chub, some times called the Verde trout. The partnership is planning to construct seven new fish barriers and renovate three existing barriers on streams in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in eastern Arizona. The barriers will prevent non-native trout from entering into native Apache and Gila trout habitat. After the barriers are constructed, all non-native fish species will be removed from above the barriers and the stream will be re-stocked with native fish including the Apache and Gila trout. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909.

Apache Trout. Several trout species currently listed as threatened or endangered were once important game fish, and may be again before long if recovery projects continue to show success. The Apache trout in Arizona is poised to become the first fish ever to be delisted as a recovered species, thanks to partnerships with anglers and the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-

6909 or Stewart Jacks at 928-367-1953, ext. 20.

Turkeys Return to Pueblo Lands. It has been more than four decades since any member of Santa Ana Pueblo has heard the soft sounds of turkey wings beating the air as the birds settle into the bosque for the night. The first ever tribal wildlife grant was awarded to Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico to establish a self-sustaining population of Merriam's wild turkey within the Pueblo's restored bosque (riverine forest) along the Rio Grande just north of Albuquerque. A grant of $210,301. was awarded on March 11. Less than a week later six turkeys were released on Pueblo lands with the promise of several more to come. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909

Banding Mottled Ducks. Using airboats and spotlights, biologists spend their summer nights and early mornings capturing and banding mottled ducks on the Gulf Coast of Texas. These secretive waterfowl do not migrate, preferring to spend their entire lives in the coastal marsh. Recent population declines in this indicator species have prompted extensive investigation into factors possibly causing the loss of these birds. Investigations into the reproduction and survival of mottled ducks should provide guidance for future management of the birds. By rounding up and banding adults and young, biologists gather information on survival, movements, and habitat use in an attempt to piece together an understanding of this unique bird. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909

Pintails Have an Uncertain Future. Unlike other waterfowl populations, pintail populations have not exhibited recent high numbers, causing concern across North America. The Central Flyway is important to the continental population of pintails as birds funnel through the middle part of the United States from Hudson Bay to Alaska to winter in the playa wetlands of northwest Texas. Extensive investigation during the past 3 years using conventional and satellite telemetry has provided a peek into the dynamics of these majestic birds. Playa wetlands provide an outstanding wintering area for pintails as evident by the survival rates higher than other wintering regions. The native habitats in the playas provide preferred cover and food for pintails enabling birds migrating from this region to reach their breeding grounds and successfully nest. For more information, contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909

Oryx Depredation Hunts. Each year the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge holds an oryx depredation hunt in New Mexico. Oryx are an African antelope introduced into the Tularosa Basin of New Mexico in the late 1960's by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. They have become a large problem on the Refuge and are impacting refuge habitats and native species. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909

Washita Refuge Hosts Annual Youth Deer Hunt. The Washita National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma hosts approximately 28 youths from across the state on a hunt for antlerless white-tailed deer in late October. Young hunters, aged 12 to 15, converge on the refuge on a Friday afternoon to participate in the 2 day hunt. Success is high, with a total of 46 deer harvested by the participants last year. Each hunter was given the option of taking up to 2 deer during the hunt, and most elected to do so, resulting in the extremely high success rate. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909.

Arizona Fishery Resources Office - San Carlos Lake Survey Results. Arizona's San Carlos Lake has a storied past of producing big bass. Those yarns usually start with "I remember when . . ." Lament no more - the good old days are the here and now. Recent largemouth bass population electrofishing surveys done by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Arizona Fishery Resources Office (AZFRO) and the San Carlos Apache Recreation & Wildlife Department Game Rangers show that bass anglers should have no reason to yearn for yesterday. Three nights of electrofishing surveys on San Carlos Lake turned up 1,000 largemouth bass, not by any means all the bass that live in the lake. On average, these fish are big: 18 inches long and three pounds. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909

Conservation Depends on Partners. The Service works with private partners to fund an increase in native riparian habitat in the historic floodplain of the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Non-native vegetation, such as Russian olive, Chinese elm, and K-2 grass,is replaced with native riparian trees, shrubs and grasses, such as cottonwood, willow, New Mexico olive, wolfberry, currant, and grasses such as bluestem and grama. Native vegetation will enhance habitat for migratory birds, and riparian dependent species. Since riparian habitat in the Southwest has declined significantly, these projects will especially benefit declining wildlife species. Each year the projects change. One year the Service funded bat houses, participating in a community project to provide bat habitat and to reduce the need to spray insecticide to control mosquitos. Contact: Elizabeth Slown, 505-248-6909.

Alligator Gar. A huge, prized recreational fish because of its size, this is the 2nd largest freshwater fish. Habitat problems have caused its decline, but the Service is working to help the species avoid slipping into extinction. Good opportunities with this one for dramatic action photos. Contact: Kerry Graves, Brent Bristow, 580-384-5710.