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THE COMMUNICATOR

NEWS FROM THE NEBRASKA COOPERATIVE FISH & WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT

Volume 7, Issue 2

November 2011

New and Changing Faces

We welcome **Noelle Chaine**, **Kent Fricke**, **Danielle Haak**, **Caroline Jezierski**, **Jessica Laskowski**, **Lindsey Messinger**, **Shana Sundstrom** and **Kelly Turek** to the Coop Unit.

Craig Allen is advising three new Ph.D. students. **Noelle Chaine** is an IGERT student who is working on a comparative analysis of an adaptive management program of the Rio Grande River and the Platte River. Noelle is also working on the incorporation of adaptive management into legacy planning and optimizing resilience. **Kent Fricke** is working on adaptive management for the Nebraska Natural Legacy. **Shana Sundstrom** is working on the relationship between resilience, biodiversity and scale incorporating networking theory into understanding resilience.

Ph.D. student **Danielle Haak** is an IGERT student focusing on understanding ways to deal with invasive species, such as zebra mussels, once they have become established. Danielle is advised by Kevin Pope.

Master's student, **Jessica Laskowski**, is working on ring-necked pheasant population dynamics: assessing behavioral and life history responses to management actions. Jessica is advised by Joseph Fontaine.

Lindsey Messinger and **Kelly Turek** are currently research technicians with plans of becoming graduate students. Lindsey is working on ring-necked pheasant population dynamics: assessing behavioral and life history responses to management actions. Kelly is working on influence of trout stocking on tier I/II fishes (species of concern) in Nebraska waterways.

Caroline Jezierski is the new Nebraska wind and wildlife coordinator. Prior to joining the Coop Unit, Caroline worked throughout the west, from Baja to Alaska, as a field technician, a biologist, and a naturalist. Caroline received her master's degree from University of Alaska, Fairbanks. ❖

Research Highlight

Population Assessment of Channel Catfish in Nebraska's Reservoirs

GOALS: This project determined the effects of habitat and stocking variability on channel catfish populations in Nebraska's lentic systems, and evaluated the utility of tandem-set hoop nets as a standard gear for sampling channel catfish in Nebraska.

CURRENT STATUS: Channel catfish are present in three primary Nebraska lentic ecosystems: sand/gravel pits, flood control reservoirs, and irrigation/power generation reservoirs. Water bodies were classified for this study as not stocked, infrequently stocked, or frequently stocked with channel catfish. Channel catfish populations were surveyed in 36 water bodies representative of each ecosystem type and stocking strategy. Catfish were sampled using baited, tandem-set hoop nets, a sampling technique recently developed to assess channel catfish populations in small impoundments.

Results of the catfish surveys showed that ecosystem type influenced channel catfish population response to stocking activity. Infrequent and frequent stocking increased abundance of channel catfish in flood control populations, but only frequent stocking increased abundance in sand/gravel pit populations. Additionally, condition of channel catfish was

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relatively poor in sand/gravel pits that were stocked when compared with those that were not stocked, but condition of channel catfish in flood control reservoirs was not impacted by stocking activity. Finally, populations in irrigation/power generation reservoirs were not influenced by stocking activity.

Tandem-set hoop nets were found to be more efficient than experimental gill nets, the NGPC standard collection gear, at sampling channel catfish in Nebraska's lentic systems (i.e., more fish could be sampled with fewer nets), though catch rates from this study did not approach those recorded in previous evaluations of the gear. Catch rates from a single survey were often insufficient to estimate standard population indices. Survey results also indicated that size structure of captured fish and catch rates varied within the sampling season in repeated surveys at individual water bodies

This project will be completed in December 2011. It has provided valuable insight for evaluating current stocking practices employed by NGPC and for conducting future surveys of channel catfish populations.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Lindsey Chizinski

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Kevin Pope

FUNDING: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration, project F-177-R. ❖

Graduate Student News

Congratulations to Dustin Martin for being selected by the School of Natural Resources Graduate Committee for the \$500 School of Natural Resources Doctoral Meritorious Graduate Student Award for his research and professional contributions in the area of angler participation.

Kristine Nemecek received an Honorable Mention, Viewer's Choice Poster Competition at the Water for Food Conference in May.

Shana Sundstrom was awarded a School of Natural Resources assistantship and a prestigious Othmer Fellowship from UNL. Shana also received a scholarship to attend the New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI) summer program.

PhD. student, Aaron Lotz successfully defended his thesis in August and graduated August 12. ❖

Announcements

Nate Gosch, our first fisheries student to earn his M.S., is now working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Recently he celebrated the birth of his first child, Ella. Nate's wife Kensey delivered Ella on June 29.

Congratulations Nate and Kensey!



Nate and Ella

Congratulations to Ashley Manley, former research technician for the Coop Unit, and her husband, Matthew, who celebrated the birth of their first child, Naomi Grace, born on May 19.



Ashley and Naomi

Graduate student, Carla Bobier and her husband Scott are expecting their first child in May 2012.

We had several newlyweds in the Unit as well during 2011. Congratulations to Dan Uden, Carla (Knight) Bobier, Chris and Lindsey (Richters) Chizinski, and Nick Smeenk!

Save the Date

Save the date, January 17–18, 2012 for the Weed Management Summit at the Ramada Inn, Kearney, NE. Topics covered will include:

- Increase communication concerning weed management in Nebraska
- New weed management strategies
- Weed management area activities
- Cutting-edge weed research
- Weed identification
- Nebraska new weed mapper

Contact Karie Decker, Nebraska Invasive Species Project, invasives@unl.edu, 402-472-3133 or Rich Walters, The Nature Conservancy, rwalters@tnc.org. ❖

Editor, Caryl A. Cashmere

Welcome to the Nebraska Coop Unit newsletter! The newsletter will be distributed two or three times a year.

Questions or newsletter ideas can be directed to ccashmere2@unl.edu, or 418 Hardin Hall, 3310 Holdrege, Lincoln NE 68583-0984.

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is an equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.



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Outreach Activities

In May, invasive species coordinator Karie Decker participated in two radio shows, one in Omaha, NE and one in Chadron, NE where she discussed zebra mussels in Nebraska. Also in May, Karie set up an educational booth at the Zorinsky Lake Clean-up in Omaha, NE as well as at 4th Annual Clean Boat Event at Lewis and Clark Reservoir, NE.

Chris Chizinski, Karie Decker, Alex Engle, Carla Bobier, Natalie Luben, Dustin Martin, and Kevin Pope all attended the Missouri River Outdoor Expo September 17–18 in Ponca State Park, Nebraska where they set up informational booths and an angler fish identification quiz. This family event was designed to introduce and or rekindle individuals' interest in natural resources and outdoor recreation.



Missouri River Expo
Booth
Photo Credit: Karie Decker

Nine Coop Unit students and staff participated in the second annual NaturePalooza hosted by the Nebraska State Museum and UNL's School of Natural Resources. Chris Jorgensen, Lindsey Messinger, and Ryan Stutzman had a booth on birds of Nebraska and their adaptations. Chris Chizinski, Lindsey Chizinski, Amber Fandrich, and Dustin Martin spoke to the children and adults about the science behind fishing and management of lakes. They also discussed the different game fish species in Nebraska and explained how what a fish eats influences how to choose lures to catch them. The group also had models of fish as well as some real fish for the participants to see and touch.



NaturePalooza Fish Booth
Photo credit: Ken Dewey



NaturePalooza Bird Booth
Photo Credit: Ken Dewey

Isaac Mertens and Garrett Hanquist worked the invasive species activity booth which centered on increasing awareness of invasive species. Kids could “Build a Beetle,” construct an Emerald Ash Borer (a nasty invasive insect), and take home an activity book about the beetle. Other activities included an invasive species quiz, a survey, and tons of information available about a whole suite of invasive species.

In October, Caroline Jezierski volunteered at the 4-H National Youth Science Day in which the National Science Experiment was “Wired for Wind.” At this event, youth learned about engineering design, experimental design, physics and renewable energy. Youth were also able to design and build turbine blades. ❖

ANNUAL MEETING

The 2011 annual Coordinating Committee of the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit was held on Thursday, October 6 on the University of Nebraska–Lincoln East Campus. Approximately 33 university and agency guests joined the Coop Unit scientists, staff and students to discuss unit progress and research programs. Presentations were given by nineteen students.

Conferences/Meetings/Workshops

On April 13, Chris Jorgensen and Joseph Fontaine had a poster presentation titled “A hierarchical spatial model of ring-necked pheasant abundance in Nebraska” at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Research Fair.

Jason DeBoer, Kristine Nemec, and Kevin Pope attended and presented a poster at the 3rd Annual Water for Food Conference, May 1–5. Jason and Kevin’s poster was titled “Water and walleye and corn: A conundrum in an arid landscape.” Kristine’s poster was titled “Food for thought for water for food: Integrating a resilient systems-based approach.”

Chris Jorgensen and Joseph Fontaine gave a presentation titled “Multi-scaled assessment of avian response to habitat attributes in a grassland ecosystem” at the Playa Lakes Joint Venture Scientific Advisory Team Meeting in June at Fort Robinson State Park in Crawford, NE.

July 17–20, Craig Allen attended the Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Besides being a panel member, Craig gave a presentation titled “Adaptive management for ecosystem services.”

“Comparison of three models to estimate population size of largemouth bass” was the presentation that Jason DeBoer and Kevin Pope gave at the Joint American Fisheries Society Technical Committees summer meeting in Dubuque, IA, July 26–29.

Dustin Martin and Kevin Pope attended the 6th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Berlin, Germany. Dustin and Kevin gave several presentations: “Angler choice of terminal tackle and water depth,” “Maintaining resilience of regional fisheries through management of anglers,” as well as a poster presentation titled “Scale influences predictions of angler effort from online fishing forum activity.” Kevin gave a presentation titled “Google insights for search in fisheries.”

Michelle Hellman attended and presented at the 96th annual Ecological Society of America Conference, August 7–12 in Austin, TX. Michelle’s presentation was titled “Detection and occupancy of anuran adults and tadpoles in wetland restorations.”

Sam Wilson attended the Wildlife’s Society Central Mountains and Plains Section Annual Conference in Gering, NE and gave a presentation titled “River otter home range and habitat use in the Platte River.”

October 13, Dan Uden attended the Climate, Water and Ecosystems—Shaping the Great Plains symposium in Lincoln, NE. Dan’s poster was titled “Climate change and biofuel production impacts on Rainwater Basin wetlands, migratory waterfowl, and grassland birds.”

Craig Allen, Karie Decker, Joseph Fontaine and Caroline Jezierski attended The Wildlife Society Conference in Waikoloa, HI, November 5-10. Craig gave an invited presentation titled "Assessing and managing resilience in social-ecological systems." Karie’s presentation was titled “Gap and Anti-Gap—Spatial Distribution of Native and Non-native Ant Species Richness in Florida.”

On November 29, Caryl Cashmere and Valerie Egger organized and presented a workshop with Jolene Foster (Natural Resources Business) for the staff and students of UNL’s School of Natural Resources. The workshop informed participants of the UNL processes and requirements while travelling on UNL business and for preparing and submitting travel vouchers. The objective was to improve the quality of vouchers submitted and to ultimately get travelers a prompt reimbursement of their expenses.

About twenty NE Coop Unit students and staff will attend the Annual Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Des Moines, IA, December 4–7. The focus this year is “Reconnecting People with Natural Resources.”

Semester in Austria

Ph.D. student Kristine Nemeč is spending September 25 to December 15 in Europe as part of the international component of her National Science Foundation Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT). She and four other IGERT students are being hosted by Dr. Jan Sendzimir of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Laxenburg, Austria.

The group is travelling to several European rivers including the Tisza River in Hungary, the Oder River in Poland, the Danube River and several of its tributaries in Austria, and the Guadiana River in Spain. The group is using information gathered from these trips, which included visits with scientists and stakeholders, to write a paper comparing river management in the Platte River watershed within Nebraska and the Guadiana River watershed within Spain in the context of adaptive management and resilience.



During her time in Europe, Kristine is also collaborating with another IGERT student, Joana Chan, on a qualitative case study on community gardens in Vienna, Austria. The purpose of the study is to understand the social-ecological

resilience of ecologically and culturally diverse community gardens. Kristine and Joana are interviewing gardeners and garden coordinators at three community gardens in Vienna about their gardening practices and the history of the gardens, which will be used as the basis for a paper. ❖

Our Mission

Train graduate students for professional careers in natural resources research and management

Conduct research that will create new information useful for management of natural resources

Provide technical assistance to cooperators

OUR COOPERATORS

