

THE 2014 NANFA CONVENTION, NORTH CAROLINA

The 2014 Convention, held in western North Carolina in early June, was a resounding success, with 50 attendees from 15 states. The facilities at the North Carolina Forest Service Training Facility at Crossnore were superb and the food was great. Being located right on the Linville River was a bonus.

Wednesday

Folks started arriving mid-day Wednesday for some early collecting and fellowship. That night the 15 early birds were treated to host Fritz Rohde's locally famous Frogmore Stew (aka Low Country Boil). Afterwards the group watched underwater photos and videos provided by Isaac Szabo (AR) and Casper Cox (TN).

Thursday

The plan was to meet NC Wildlife Resources Commission biologists Steve Fraley and T. R. Russ at the French Broad River near Hot Springs around noon for an electrofishing demonstration. Early arrivers decided to collect at the Ivy River near Asheville before heading on to meet the others.

The group was joined by several avid junior biologists from the area. A number of colorful fish were caught but the highlight (or lowlight depending on who you ask) was Meredith Swartmout (VA) getting accidentally zapped by the backpack shocker carried by an unnamed member of the BoD from Kentucky. She was carrying the fish bucket when it



Doug Dame, Nic Martinez, and Brian Zimmerman survey the Linville River at the convention site. (Photo by Joshua Jarvis)



Fritz and his Frogmore stew. (Photo by Casper Cox)



The crew seining the Ivy River and checking out the catch. (Photos by Fritz Rohde)



Greenwood Champ admires a Smallmouth Redhorse (*Moxostoma breviceps*). (Photo by Derek Wheaton)



Steve Fraley and a Longnose Gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*). (Photo by Derek Wheaton)



The Snorkeldopplers: Isaac Szabo, Bryce Gibson, Michael Wolfe, Nic Martinez and Andrew Zimmerman. (left to right) (Photo by Casper Cox)



Robert Nichols, Pat Johnson, Josh Blaylock, and Doug Stuber (left to right) in a tiny Mountain Redbelly Dace (*Chrosomus oreas*) creek. (Photo by Fritz Rohde)



Fieryblack Shiners (*Cyprinella pyrrhomelas*), (Catawaba drainage). (Photo by Derek Wheaton)

happened and while she immediately gave a yelp and fell, she did not drop the bucket. Kudos to her!

This group was late arriving to the French Broad and was surprised to see how many people were already there.

Several got to dip fish with WRC biologists, and Steve Fraley conducted an ID lesson on the various *Moxostoma* they collected. Later, most collected either in nearby Paint Creek or in Spring Creek in Hot Springs before heading to Crossnore. Fritz, Josh Blaylock (KY), and Nic Martinez (TX) hung around to help WRC backpack shock the riffles in the river.

Meanwhile, the Snorkel Team explored several locations up and down Wilson Creek. Although the water was not as perfectly clear as in some years, fish were abundant. Very Bluehead Chubs, horny Stonerollers, aggressive Warpaints, and more were captured by lens and light.

Friday

Four groups headed out in the morning: a New River drainage group, led by Fritz; a Nolichucky drainage group, led by Dustin Smith (SC); a Catawaba drainage group, led by Derek Wheaton (VA) and Brian Zimmerman (OH); and the Snorkeldopplers, led by Casper Cox (TN). The New River



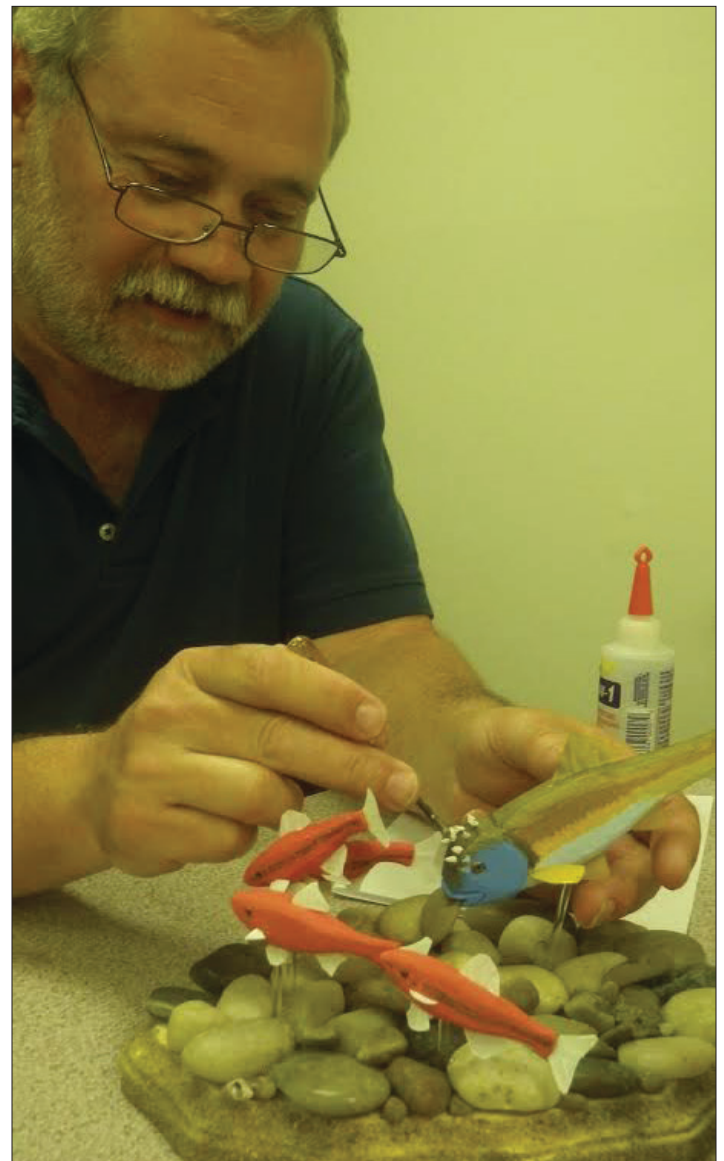
Team Nolichucky. (Photo by Sarah Robinson)

group visited Cranberry Creek, which had possessed many beautiful and highly colored shiners when sampled at the 2007 Convention. Alas, not so in 2014. They kept working upstream in hopes of finding something interesting, to no

avail. While ascending a steep hill, however, they came across a tiny creek loaded with Mountain Redbelly Dace (*Chrosomus oreas*).

Casper led an expanded group of snorkelers to the New River drainage. Three Top Creek was cold and full of dace; Blacknose, Mountain Redbelly, and Rosyside. Sculpin and Fantail Darters and a few Kanawha Darters were also observed. Driving up and over the mountain and back down into Boone brought the group to the South Fork of the New River, with chub mounds and one very sociable chub that made quick friends with Texas Nic.

That evening we had the “banquet,” which this year was different than most. The facility had a LARGE charcoal grill where we cooked steaks. After dinner, Phil Nixon was once again a fantastic auctioneer and squeezed all he could from us. The Board of Directors made Fritz a NANFA Fellow and presented him with a sculpture prepared by Michael Wolfe (GA).



Preparing the “banquet” (Photo by Doug Stuber); Phil Nixon, auctioneer (Photo by Josh Jarvis); Mike Lucas and one of his creations. (Photo by Casper Cox).



Team Matt: Matt DeLaVega, Mike Lucas, Seth DeLaVega, Josh and Lauren Porter, and Keith Hudgins (from top) (Photo by Josh Jarvis)



Team Dustin seining the North Toe River: Erica and Andrew Lyons, Scott Carlson, Eileen Clark, and Frank O'Neill (Photo by Fritz Rohde)



Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus a. alleganiensis*), South Toe River. (Photo by Isaac Szabo)

Saturday

About half the group participated in the first ever Collecting Challenge. Team leaders Dustin Smith and Matt DeLaVega (OH), chose their teams and headed off to collect at the same three streams but in reverse order. Fish were not very abundant but the two groups worked valiantly. Team Dustin won by a margin of four species and are now proud owners of convention t-shirts with "2014 Seine Masters" emblazoned

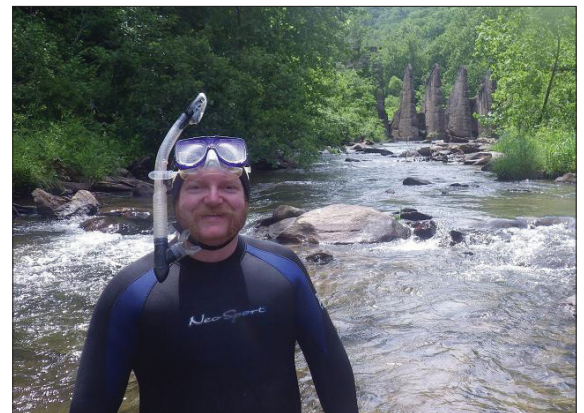
on the back. Members of the winning team included Scott Carlson (IA), Donald and Eileen Clark (FL), Andrew and Erica Lyons (NC), Robert Nichols (SC), Frank O'Neil (NC), Fritz, and Brian Zimmerman (OH). Derek and Kon Schmidt (MN) led most of the others back to the Nolichucky and South Toe rivers where they were very successful.

The Snorkelers found a campground with easy access to the South Toe River. Greenfin and Gilt darters and Blotch-side Logperch were found. Whitetail Shiners were observed spawning. And there were plenty of other bass and trout and chubs and shiners to be seen. But perhaps the highlight was an Eastern Hellbender that posed for a few memorable shots.

Sunday

Some headed directly home in the morning while others collected along the way. About 15 decided to remain for another night and either snorkeled or went looking, successfully, for Tangerine Darters (*Percina aurantiaca*). Well, Brian was successful with his little dip net while Dustin, Fritz, and others tried unsuccessfully with the backpack shocker.

The Snorkel group went to the Cane River and an old demolished dam site. They were rewarded with great views above and below the surface. Large tuberculate



Snorkeling the Cane River: a happy Andrew Zimmerman (left) and Keith Hudgins. (Photos by Casper Cox)



Snorkeling photos taken by Isaac Szabo during the convention (clockwise from top left). Cane River: Striped Shiner, River Chub building a nest, Whitetail Shiners. South Toe River: Blotchside Logperch, Gilt Darter, Greenfin Darter. Wilson Creek: Bluehead Chubs. Three Top Creek: Appalachia Darter.

Striped Shiners and Warpaints and working River Chubs were on display.

That evening the group traveled up and down US 221 looking for an open restaurant, finally finding an Italian one in Pineola. Joshua Jarvis (NH) entertained us with word associations and jokes. A great evening of fellowship.

Monday

One final breakfast at Famous Louise's Rockhouse Restaurant by Casper, Fritz, and Michael then it was over. Final numbers are available yet, but the convention raised approximately \$5700 for NANFA's grant programs. Thank you everyone!

FRITZ ROHDE NAMED NANFA FELLOW

During the 2014 NANFA Annual Convention in North Carolina, the Board of Directors (BoD) honored NANFA President Fritz Rohde with the title of NANFA Fellow, thus making Fritz the 8th member bestowed with this title. This honorary title is presented to those who, in the opinion of the Board, merit high distinction by virtue of furthering the purposes of the Association. The presentation was made by former BoD member and South Carolina Regional Representative Dustin Smith, and commemorated by a beautiful wooden carving of both male and female *Elassoma okatie* and the as-yet undescribed "broadtail" madtom (two fish which Fritz either described or is in the process of describing) created by NANFA BoD member and Regional Representative Coordinator (among other things), Michael Wolfe.

Fritz has been the President of the Association for the past 7 years. Under his leadership, he has brought the Association through turmoil regarding the publication of *American Currents*. He took on Co-editorship, along with fellow Fellow Konrad Schmidt, during which time the publication became full color and available electronically. He instituted the Technical Committee which guided the website and forum migration to an independent server and is in the process of developing an updated website, among other things.

Fritz is the only NANFA member to have hosted, or co-hosted, more than one Annual Conventions. He hosted, or co-hosted, both the 2007 Convention in Greensboro, NC, and the 2014 Convention in Western North Carolina, and he was heavily involved with both the 2004 Convention in Columbia, SC, and the 2011 Convention in Roanoke, VA.

Fritz utilizes his role as a fisheries professional to act as a liaison between NANFA and other fisheries professionals



Fritz and Michael Wolfe outside Famous Louise's. (Photo by Casper Cox)

and professional organizations. He makes every effort to recommend interaction between the two groups, which has led to routine cooperative ventures, not the least of which is the publication of the three volume *Freshwater Fishes of North America*.

Fritz's greatest contribution to the Association has to be his willingness to act as mentor to newcomers and younger people interested in fishes. He has made considerable efforts over the years to be as inclusive as possible while patiently training and sharing his love for our native fishes. Fritz embodies all that is good in NANFA, supporting the mission of NANFA through his efforts to educate, create opportunities for fellowship, and promote conservation, and the Association is proud to have him among the NANFA Fellows.