



Alivia Zimmerman's sculpin.
(Photo by Julie Zimmerman)



Man eats gar. Some questions are best left unasked.
And unanswered. (Photo by Michael Wolfe)



Cardinal Shiner (*Luxilus cardinalis*).
(Photo by Doug Stuber)

THE NANFA 2015 CONVENTION: AN OKLAHOMA PERSPECTIVE

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NANFA has traditionally had little presence in Oklahoma and to be honest when we announced to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) that they would be helping host the 2015 convention, they were a little surprised, mainly because no one with ODWC had ever heard of NANFA. We did our best to explain that NANFA is a diverse group of “fish guys and girls” and a mix of professionals, academics, hobbyist, and general fish enthusiasts, but it was still a little hard for most of the ODWC folks to picture and they had little idea what to expect.

That said, any doubts about what NANFA was all about, quickly evaporated on the banks of the Illinois River during the first day. As soon as the otolith and pharyngeal teeth demos were over, the group seriously impressed the ODWC folk with their fish sampling and ID skills. It was immediately apparent that NANFAns know their fish! Furthermore, it was a very welcome breath of fresh air for the Oklahoma guys to get to talk with people who are passionate about fish. It seemed like every conversation they had resulted in learning something new about the taxonomy or distribution of fish. So often our fish biologist attend professional meetings where they make a lot of good contacts and get to talk fish, but don't actually take anything home with them. The 2015 convention was a definite exception and in addition to the benefits already mentioned, the ODWC benefitted in many other ways.

For example, through a conversation with a NANFA member, ODWC research biologist Clayton Porter learned methods to age fish utilizing the cleithrum and is in the pro-

cess of developing a photo guide that will be distributed to all of the ODWC's fish division. In addition, we collected several young-of-year White Suckers (*Catostomus commersonii*) (thanks to Konrad) which was a first for our agency and more Bluntnose Shiners (*Cyprinella camurum*) in the Spring River than in all of the ODWC's previous sampling combined. But perhaps the greatest find of the convention was Brian Zimmerman and Evan Poellinger's discovery of Golden Topminnows (*Fundulus chrysotus*) in a slough of the Arkansas River. This marked a significant range extension for a very rare and localized species in Oklahoma and the state's first record within the Arkansas River drainage. The important thing to note in each of these instances is that they wouldn't have happened without the NANFA convention. Put simply, they were the result of having knowledgeable people in our streams who knew what they were looking for.

The ODWC is working hard to change the way people look at streams and native fish, and I can't think of any group who better supports these goals. All of the ODWC attendees benefited from the convention and I will be surprised if we don't see several ODWC faces at future conventions. Furthermore, I think the NANFA convention probably had a bigger impact on the ODWC that most NANFAns realize, which I believe is best reflected by the fact that Oklahoma's Assistant Chief of Fisheries recently attended an annual division meeting wearing a NANFA shirt. This may not seem like much, but it says a lot about how the views of the ODWC (and Oklahoman's in general) are changing and how groups like NANFA are influencing them.