

THE 2016 NANFA CONVENTION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

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The week before the convention was hectic. Two speakers dropped out due to communication issues, e.g. missing emails and some miscommunication. Should I panic? No!

On Thursday afternoon, the first day, we set out to the Isinglass River. I hoped to see some of its oddities (Blacknose Shiner, *Notropis heterolepis*, and blue Bullfrogs), but they eluded us. The day was warm and the water was cool and refreshing. Within seconds of entering the water, our first Banded Sunfish (*Enneacanthus obesus*) was netted. I suggested to the group that we work our way down to the riffles. Someone immediately asked me if we have darters in New Hampshire. My honest answer was “Yes we do, two species, but they are not riffle darters.” We did find Longnose Dace (*Rhinichthys cataractae*) there. In the quiet pools and undercut banks working our way up from the riffle we found Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*). After this sampling effort, the group wanted to head to the hotel. They had a long journey, so who can blame them?

Later that evening it was time for the speeches. I gave my introductory speech that I had rattling around in my head for a year. I spoke about how we are a North American organization not a regional one and how representing every region matters. We finally reached all four corners of the US, now we have the rest of the continent to go. From the Aleutians to the Bahamas, from the Panama Canal to the mouth of the Mackenzie. I also mentioned how New Hampshire was at the front line of climate change and how it brings potential danger to the local species and opportunity for discovery of new ones. Afterward Mike Lucas, my co-host, did his part. Then it was on to our special guests, the Fish Nerds, hosts of a fishing podcast (fishnerds.com). They discussed their quest to catch and eat every freshwater fish species found in New Hampshire, how they ate a giant water bug, and conducted interviews with attendees assisted by their West Coast field correspondent, Josh Porter. The podcast is available at www.fishnerds.com. (Photo 1).

After this, NANFA President Fritz Rohde gave another of his scintillating travelogues on his quest for fishes in the Peruvian Amazon and Thailand. We saw slides of everything from Electric Eels to Bettas. He also discussed the difficulties of slogging through muddy roads, camping in tiger habitat, and driving up steep mountain roads.

The next day we split into two groups. One group did tide pooling in Odiorne Point State Park, while the other sampled a tidal creek near the entrance to the park.



Photo 1. The Fish Nerds with Josh Porter (on the right).
(Photo by Lauren Porter)



Photo 2. Ninespine Stickleback. (Photo by Bob Muller)



Photo 3. Redbreast Sunfish. (Photo by Bob Muller)



Photo 4. Sea Lamprey. (Photo by Bob Muller)



Photo 5. Sea Lamprey mouth. (Photo by Bob Muller)

I guess kick netting works regardless of salinity or whether the current is river or tidal.

In the afternoon we headed to the North River. I decided to take a hands-off role in leading and let the group decide on what they wanted to do. Our group soon grew as Mike Lucas had desertion in his ranks. Here we got Redbreast Sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*) (Photo 3), Banded Sunfish, both pickerels, and a huge female Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*). That lamprey (Photos 4, 5) was the most exciting catch and the star of the trip by far. I was also surprised by people being amazed and curious over their first Fallfish (*Semotilus corporalis*). It felt good at seeing people take interest in a common species.

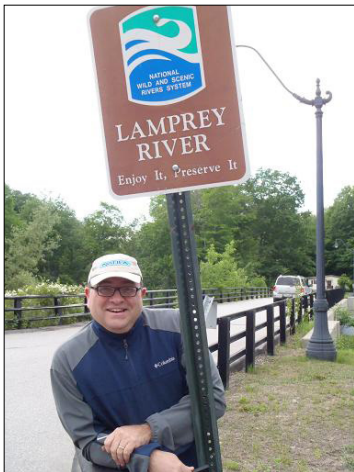


Photo 6. Michael Wolfe at the Lamprey River. (Photo by Casper Cox)



Photo 7. American Eel. (Photo by Bob Muller)

The tidal creek crowd collected at least seven different estuarine species using dip nets and seines; Mummichog (*Fundulus heteroclitus*) were plentiful as were Ninespine Stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*) (Photo 2). The seiners also caught Grubby (*Myoxocephalus aeneus*), Atlantic Tomcod (*Microgadus tomcod*), and even kicked up a Rock Gunnel (*Pholis gunnellus*).

Next we checked out



Photo 8. NANFA prepares to set sail. (Photo by Fritz Rohde)

Casper's spot on the Lamprey River (Photo 6). Here we got a variety of species including a large American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) (Photo 7) and Pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*).

That evening we had two speakers. The first speaker was Dr. Johnathan Davis from Young Harris College in northern Georgia who discussed "Conservation of the Sicklefin Redhorse in Georgia." This undescribed species of *Moxostoma* is endemic to the upper Hiawasse and Little Tennessee rivers. With the help of a NANFA grant, Johnathan and his students have been studying the population in Brass-town Creek. Using two gear types they caught 60 fish in three years using a seine and 66 fish in one year with a fyke net. Genetic samples were taken and sperm was crytopreserved. Fish were aged using a section of the pectoral fin and ranged in age from 7–21 years. Afterwards Bob Muller discussed "The Round Goby Invasion of Great Lakes Tributaries."

In some streams the goby has eliminated the native Mottled Sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*), Greenside Darter (*Etheostoma blennioides*), and Fantail Darter (*E. flabellare*) and readily expands its range after dam removals. But in East Coon Creek they all seem to co-exist; maybe it's habitat related.

Saturday we went out on the R/V Gulf Challenger, a research boat that trawled for fishes and invertebrates off the Isle of Shoals. (Photos 8 and 9) Many were nervous about being on the water and having motion sickness problems. But it turned out that this was the best day since there was no



Photo 9. Genevieve going through the Treasure Chest. (Photo by Lauren Porter)



Photo 10. Josh Porter with his new friend, Larry the Longhorn Sculpin. (Photo by Casper Cox)

wind and the ocean was very calm. The net picked up seven species of fishes: two hakes (*Urophycis* spp.), Longhorn Sculpin (*Myoxocephalus octodecimspinosus*) (Photo 10), Cunner (*Tautoglabrus adspersus*), three species of flounder (Yellowtail, *Limanda ferruginea*, Winter, *Pseudopleuronectes americanus* [Photo 11], and Windowpane, *Scophthalmus aquosus* [Photo 12]), crabs, and lobster (Photo 13).

We also got so many sand dollars that I called the main holding bin “The Treasure Chest.” We only made one tow so the rest of the trip was spent sight-seeing, including



Photo 11. Winter Flounder. (Photo by Brian Zimmerman)



Photo 12. Windowpane Flounder. (Photo by Brian Zimmerman)

stopping to watch Grey and Harbor Seals lounging on the rocks.

Back on shore the Captain showed us pens where Steelhead (Rainbow) Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) were being raised. The water boiled with feeding activity as he tossed in pellet feed. Most of the group left after the feeding, but the three who stayed behind got to see Lumpfish (*Cyclopterus lumpus*), which were being raised to pick sea lice off the trout. (They seemed unable to pick them off themselves though).

We left just before the rain started and got back for the banquet, auction, and speaker. The banquet was a choice of Muddy River Barbecue (pulled pork and barbecue chicken) and New England Lobster Bake (which had lobster, clam chowder, and clams). After everyone ate their meal of choice, we could go back for seconds and choose either.

After the dinner Jerry Shine did a presentation and slide show on “Marine Life in the Northeast.” It was a very interesting and colorful talk with many fantastic underwater photos. There are three reasons there is such rich and abundant marine life in the Northeast: 1) very rocky coast with hard substrate; 2) the water is cold, which promotes growth of plankton; and 3) the hellacious tides, which bring in nutrients. Afterwards our auctioneer extraordinaire, Phil Nixon, squeezed as much money as he could from us. Great job, Phil!

On the last day we went to two different locations: Great Island Common and Ordione Point State Park. We didn’t find many fish, just a few American Sand Lance (*Ammodytes americanus*) and Rock Gunnel. We also got invertebrates such as amphipods, shrimp, crabs, and hermit crabs. The highlight of this day, and arguably the cutest part of the convention, was seeing Common Eiders with their ducklings.

I’d like to thank Fritz Rohde for negotiating collecting permits, Matt De La Vega for vouching for a Northeast convention, and Mike Lucas who went above and beyond the call of duty arranging lodging and meeting rooms, ordering T-shirts, and scheduling trips.

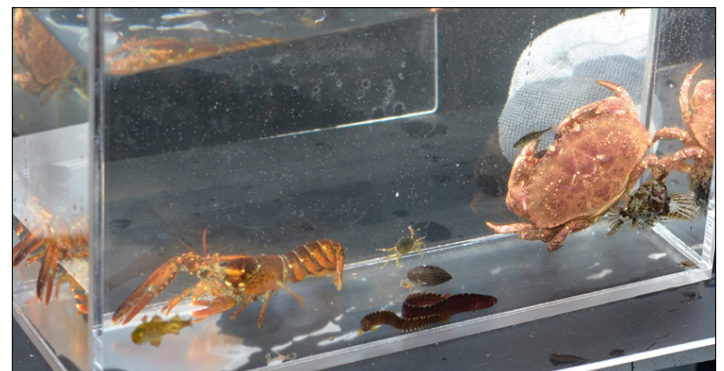


Photo 13. Crabs and lobsters. (Photo by Brian Zimmerman)



Tom and Lanita Watson, eating the traditional Moon Pie.
(Photo by Casper Cox)



Excited Brian and his giant pickerel. (Photo by Julie Zimmerman)



Tidepooling. (Photo by Julie Zimmerman)



Longhorn Sculpin. (Photo by Lauren Porter)



Casper outside the store named after him. (Photo by Phil Nixon)



Bob Muller tiptoeing in the tidal creek. (Photo by Phil Nixon)



A school ofNANFAns in their natural habitat during the 2016 convention in New Hampshire. (Photo by Fritz Rohde)