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## GOING COLLECTING ON HORSEBACK

by John Ben Williams, Carthage, Texas

Every summer, I look forward to August and September. After a dry summer, the creeks are low and the dip-netting is high. Always looking for a new species to add to my collection, I begin to plan my next trip up the creek, with a dip net.

To begin with, a scouting trip is made up the creek in hopes of spotting that prized catch. To get a better view and cover more ground, I always saddle up one of the horses. Carefully watching the water for any signs of movement, I make my way up the creek, taking note of the most productive-looking locations.

Then, back at the house, I begin to get together the materials needed to make the collecting trip a day or two later a productive one. These materials include dip nets of varying length and size, a couple of buckets, a jug of water, and plenty of provisions.

Upon arriving at the creek, it's time to decide on the best method of collecting the fish from each location. One way is to chase the fish

around the water hole, catching one or two, and muddying the water so badly that you can't see them anymore. They all you can do is to dip wildly into the muddied water hoping to get lucky. This can be very frustrating.

Sometimes the water hole will have a neck on one end or the other where the water gets narrower and shallower. This neck can be closed off a few feet from the main water hole with a chunk of wood. Then the fish can be herded into the small neck and trapped there for easy dip-netting, and the chunk of wood removed after the dip-netting is completed.

Another method--a favorite of mine--is to take a friend along. It is far more enjoyable to collect native fishes with a friend; also, with two dip nets, there are bound to be more fishes collected. Besides that, you can introduce a fellow aquarist to the wonderful world of native fishes. Who knows, maybe that friend will see the light and come on over to our side, and realize the enjoyment and beauty of our own native underwater world.

When dipping the fish out of the water and putting them into a bucket, other debris can and will get into the bucket and cloud the water. This makes it impossible to see the fish and check on their progress. That is why I use two buckets--one for the dip-netting and one for the transporting home.

East Texas abounds with rivers, creeks, and small streams, each filled with a large variety of native fishes. This in turn makes it a great place for a native-fish enthusiast--a great place for a trip "up the creek, with a dip net."