

NANFA Illinois-Indiana Chapter Enjoys Fantastic Fall Outing

Elmer A. Guerri

8401 N. Lakewood Pl., W. Terre Haute, IN 47885-9344
Eaguerri@aol.com

Twenty Illinois-Indiana Regional Chapter members, along with three guests from the newly formed Michigan Regional Chapter, enjoyed an exciting and crisp fall weekend sampling the swollen waters in the two-state area.

On Saturday, October 7, we collected in Indiana's Big Raccoon Creek, downstream from Raccoon Lake/Hardin Reservoir, at the Bridgeton Covered Bridge. Member Brant Fisher of the Indiana DNR joined the group and prepared a species report based upon the 32 species the group collected in three hours from the falls below the bridge and the stretch of the creek just downstream of the falls. The results were compared with results of two 1995 IDNR Fish Management Reports (69 species each), both of which came from extensive surveys taken both above and below the Reservoir. The Bridgeton stretch of the creek is below the Reservoir.

The Saturday collecting trip was topped off by an outdoor-open-fire-black-kettle-ham-and-jowl-bacon-and-beans dinner, with four kinds of corn bread made from freshly ground Bridgeton Mill meal and sugar-drenched Indiana apple dumplings prepared by Blanche Case of Bridgeton Village. Mill owner Mike Roe hosted us on the Mill's wooden deck patio elevated in the treetops overlooking the entire stretch of the falls. We toured the Bridgeton Mill, family owned and operated since 1823. Meal was ground during the tour and lots of goodies were purchased for future enjoyment.

A public aquarium was set up along with a NANFA display and photography tank. Local television stations conducted interviews with Dr. Larry Page and Brant Fisher, and several youngsters and fall festival visitors were afforded the opportunity to see a magnificent collection of colorful darters and other native fishes collected from the stream.

Two fantastic talks were also a part of the festivities.

Following an all-you-can-eat Italian dinner at Natalie's Italian Cuisine in Centenary, Indiana, we were entertained by Charlie Grimes of Indianapolis. Charlie delivered his humorous and enthusiastic "I-have-been-collecting-since-I-was-four" program, one of the most lively presentations ever for an Illinois-Indiana Regional Chapter meeting.

Member Ron Humbert provided the Saturday evening finale with an exciting slide show based upon his extensive experiences in collecting and studying turtles. He surprised us by introducing by introducing five of his little friends, which he had secretly maintained in a small dog carrier for the entire weekend. It was another great presentation.

The Illinois-Indiana Regional Chapter presented a "Thank you" commemorative plaque to Dr. Larry Page in appreciation for all that he has done for our members. Larry has been the "stream captain" for every field trip of our Chapter for the past 3-4 years. His mini-seminars and "streamside seine seminars" have been a vital part of our Chapter's success. Larry has plans to retire some time in 2001 from his position with the Illinois Natural History Survey, but he greatly relieved our anxiety when he announced his intent to do his best to continue to be a part of future Chapter activities. Thanks, Larry, for all that you have done for NANFA!

The weekend concluded with a discussion of four potential sites for 2001 collecting trips and meetings. It was the kind of weekend that made all of us realize what we had gained from the Regional Chapter program. It also reminded us that the treasures we collected weren't the beautiful creatures wriggling in our seines. The *real* treasures were the friendships made among the folks grouped around those seines, clinging cordage and cork, making memories to last a lifetime.

It was a great way to end year 2000. 🍂