

National Water (and Fish) Monitoring Day 2002

Jan Jeffrey Hoover

U. S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Waterways Experiment Station,
3909 Halls Ferry Road, Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199, hooverj@wes.army.mil



quatic habitats and the denizens that dwell in them achieved special recognition in 1972. During that year, passage of the Clean Water Act and creation of the North American Native Fishes Association took place. Thirty years later, the American Clean Water Association (ACWA) proclaimed 2002 as the official Year of Clean Water and 18 October as National Water Monitoring Day. NANFA members in several states celebrated this and our own anniversary by joining in a nationwide water quality study and by conducting surveys of local fish communities.

Water quality data were taken according to protocol described at the ACWF Year of Clean Water website (<http://www.yearofcleanwater.org/events/volunteer.htm>). Sampling locations were registered online by each volunteer who clicked on an easy-to-use map of the United States, zooming in on the sites to be sampled, and then typing some simple locality information. Volunteers purchased water quality test kits that enabled them to measure water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and water clarity at their study sites. Cost was only \$16.50, and the kits provided 50 measurements of each parameter and were easy to use. Best of all, kits were not required. Data could be collected using alternative gear, such as aquarium thermometers and pH test kits or water quality probes. Partial data (1-3 of the 4 parameters) were acceptable. Although it was encouraged, it was not mandatory to collect data on National Water Monitoring Day. Data were accepted if taken anytime during the period 12 October through 27 October. The ACWA estimates that more than 75,000 participants were involved and almost 3800 sites were surveyed.

NANFA members in Arkansas, Ohio, and Mississippi were among those participants. Bill Hoppe (AR) worked two

locations on Sugar Loaf Creek East (one of them, the bridge to an old ghost town). He sampled following a period of extremely high, turbid water, but reports that the fish community typically includes southern redbelly dace, duskystripe shiner, logperch, orangthroat darter, rainbow darter, and banded sculpin. Bill registered with the Arkansas Stream Team and hopes to organize a streamside cleanup.

Ohio members Eric Massengill, Nick Zarlinga, and Todd Crail sampled Beaver Creek and the Maumee River in Ohio (<http://www.farmertodd.com/NANFA/101902Maumee/>). They found abundant spotfin shiner, bluntnose minnow, and logperch, and documented stonecat at three of the four locations sampled. Todd, working a dipnet at Providence Dam in Grand Rapids, collected (and was spined by) his very first tadpole madtom.

Jack Killgore (MS) and the pupils from Jacob's Ladder School in Vicksburg visited Rocky Springs near the historic Natchez Trace. While there, Jack instructed the students on techniques for fish watching and fish identification. The clear waters of this small stream allowed everyone to observe stonerollers and redbelly darters that dominated the community.


Also in Mississippi, Tyler Strange (LA), Martin Moore (MS), and I sampled Tallahalla Creek and White Oak Creek, both tributaries to Bayou Pierre (http://www.nanfa.org/NANFAregions/miss/monitoring_day/monitoring_day.htm). We collected brindled madtom, bluntface and longnose shiners, creek chubsucker, and redbelly darters for the native fish aquarium at Clinton Community Nature Center. Our most memorable find, however, was several specimens of the endemic (and endangered) bayou darter.

A summary report of National Water Monitoring Day 2002 is scheduled for release later this year, but efforts are

underway to make this an annual event. Plans have been made for National Water Monitoring Day 2003 possibly allowing an expanded "monitoring window" from mid-September through mid-October (E. Moyer, ACWF, pers. comm.). Protocol will be very similar to that of last year and the ACWF will maintain the database. Long-term benefits of such a program are the establishment of baseline water quality conditions for the nation and the ability to pinpoint areas with significant changes. Short-term benefits include opportunities for ecology outreach and education through the collaboration of government agencies, environmental groups, civic organizations, schools, and concerned private individuals.

NANFA members, because of their own interests and

expertise, have tremendous potential to contribute to this database, to the education and involvement of others (especially young people), and to the documentation of fish communities across the country. It behooves each of us to stay informed (via the ACWA websites, and the NANFA e-mail list) and to participate in this important program. Also, it's a good excuse to hit the water, do some collecting, and encourage others to get interested and involved with our native fishes.

So, later this year, as the days of summer cool, and that pulse of young-of-year fishes swells the populations in the waters nearby, take some time out to record some data, collect some fish, and commemorate the 31st anniversary of the Clean Water Act and NANFA. —

Cheap and Easy Shipping Boxes

B. G. Granier

608 Maureen Dr., Baker, LA 70714, bgkajun@worldnet.att.net

If you're like me, you're always looking for a good and cheap method of shipping fish, plants, and other assorted critters. Well, then, listen up: The U.S. Postal Service's Postal Store is the place for you. Visit them at:

<http://shop.usps.com>

Register (or log in if you're an existing customer), and then go shopping for items like Priority Mail boxes, stamps, shipping labels, insurance forms, packaging tape, and more. Of course, the stamps aren't free, but most of the other supplies are. Order 25 Priority Mail boxes measuring 7" x 7" x 6", and they will be shipped to you free of charge, in "collapsed" form in a larger box. To use the boxes, you simply expand the box and tape the bottom seam and you're ready to go.

You will need some type of insulation to line the inside of the box. Use either fiberglass batting material or the rigid foam sheets sold at home improvement centers. For about \$8, I bought a 4' x 8' x 1/2" sheet of Dow board, which is an insulating Styrofoam sandwiched between two layers of clear plastic sheathing. This may sound like a lot of money, but if cut properly, one 4' x 8" sheet will be sufficient for quite a few boxes. Cut the sheets with a simple razor blade or a utility knife into the following dimensions:

- 2 pieces 5" x 6"
- 2 pieces 5" x 7"
- 2 pieces 7" x 7"

The two 7" x 7" pieces form the bottom and top of the box, while the two 5" x 6" and the two 5" x 7" form the sides of the box. It will make a really tight box when inserted into the empty cardboard container. To prove how strong it is, I stood on it with my 200-pound self and couldn't crush the box, even though I tried. I even danced an Irish jig on it and still didn't faze it!

The inside dimensions of the insulated box are just 5" x 5" x 6", so small plastic bags are required. Since I ship a lot of small fishes such as *Heterandria formosa* and *Elassoma zonatum*, I only need small bags. I have used Kordon's "Breathing Bags" in the 4" x 8" size for years. I simply form a "bubble" of water once the fish are in the bag by squeezing out all air bubbles, then I knot or rubber-band the top of the bag. There's no need to double-bag the animals. Just keep the bags from touching each other by wrapping each bag in a couple layers of newspaper before placing them into the box.

If you doubt the capability of these bags, I can attest to the fact that I received a shipment of a dozen three-spine sticklebacks from across the deserts of the Southwest via a United Parcel Service truck. The fish were en route for seven days and only two or three fish were DOA.

I'll quit boring you with details. Now you can go to the USPS site and order your "cheap'n'easy" shipping supplies. And don't forget to visit your home improvement center, too.