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President's Message

Fall has started and I hope the cooler air and water temperatures are getting you excited for the change in seasons. Many of you are gearing up for fall sampling. After the limited sampling of the spring some of you may feel like a bird that is finally allowed to fly. Enjoy it. Field biologists need to be in the field in my opinion. I've done some summer work, but I still look forward to my fall sportfish sampling every year. There is something about being on the water while watching the leaves change that gives us fisheries biologists a special view of creation.

Many of you were able to attend the online 150th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society and picked up some useful information and contacts. Online meetings have their challenges, but they are certainly better than not having a meeting at all. I would urge you to plug in to these opportunities as you can. Those of you who are still office bound may find these meetings a refreshing change. I am listening to an AFS presentation about Largemouth Bass as I'm writing this.

Some, but not all, of the craziness of 2020 is becoming more manageable. I hope all of you are doing whatever it takes to make yourselves feel comfortable during this time. Just a reminder—we are a fisheries family. Please remember that and if you need us, reach out.

Be safe and keep up the good work,
Ben

Submitted by Ben Ricks, NCAFS President

Save the Date — NCAFS 2021 Virtual Annual Meeting

**From the comfort of your own home
February 15–16, 2021**

Considering health risks, uncertainty in COVID-19 infection rates this coming winter, CDC prevention guidelines, and common agency/organization travel restrictions, the planning and arrangements committee agreed that 2021 annual meeting will be conducted virtually. Details regarding meeting organization, format, and abstract submission are being developed.



Submitted by Ryan Heise, NCAFS President-Elect

Treasurer's Report

Balances as of September 24, 2020:

NCAFS Wells Fargo Checking Account: \$8,753.80
RRCC Wells Fargo Saving Account: \$7,123.32
Edward Jones Ichthus (Student) Fund: \$27,907.93
Edward Jones General Fund: \$60,494.15

In other news—due to COVID-19 and the virtual nature of the Annual AFS Meeting this year, no graduate student travel grants were awarded. However, we are continuing with our small grants program. If you have a project in need of funding, we would like to encourage you to apply! To apply, please fill out and submit an [application](#) to Ben Ricks (ben.ricks@ncwildlife.org) by November 1, 2020. We will review all applications at the same time, and you will receive notification of your application status within 30 days of the deadline.

For questions regarding finances, donations/awards, or procedures, please contact Kelsey Roberts at kelsey.roberts@ncwildlife.org.

Submitted by Kelsey Roberts, NCAFS Secretary/Treasurer

Mentoring Committee—An Opportunity to Support the Next Generation of Fisheries Professionals

Mentoring is an in-depth process that always involves communication and is relationship-based, but its precise definition is more than challenging. Consider that the researchers in this discipline have found that there are more than 50 definitions currently in use!

Despite these challenges, the glass half-full view suggests that opportunities and templates abound for our NCAFS ad hoc committee to consider. With so many mentoring definitions and options, our opportunities to connect and mentor rising students and professionals at all levels are numerous. Undoubtedly, each of you were mentored or have served as a mentor at some point in your career. Our goal for the Mentoring Committee is to identify and document those mentoring techniques and approaches that have been successful and incorporate them into a mentoring resource for our Chapter members as well as students to connect in a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

I spoke with Dr. Joel Snodgrass, president-elect and southeast region representative of the National Association of University Fish and Wildlife Programs ([NAUFWP](#)) and learned of plans to re-energize that group. We discussed the importance of networking among natural resource organizations, universities, and professional societies and enhancement and extensions to those connections. NAUFWP advises that they “represent, strengthen, and advocate for all college and university programs educating fish and wildlife conservation and management professionals. We network, garner support and partner for the advancement of the profession.”

Our committee also learned about the National American Wildlife Technology Association ([NAWTA](#)). NAWTA is the accrediting organization for Wildlife & Fisheries Technology programs across North America. NAWTA accreditation standards ensure that graduates of accredited institutions possess the requisite job-ready skills sought by employers to meet the increasing diverse needs of society and the profession of wildlife and fisheries science and management. [Haywood Community College](#) is the only accredited institution of this organization in North Carolina. Again, perhaps there are Chapter members who represent these types of programs that may be accredited and that would connect within this network.

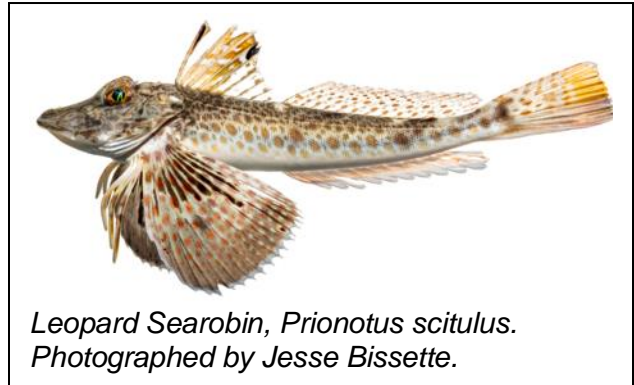
On behalf of the Mentoring Committee, we strongly encourage our Chapter members who are connected to university fish and wildlife conversation programs to become involved with this organization as an opportunity to engage with students and university program connections across the nation. As professors or alumni of these programs, consider reaching out to your respective fish and wildlife program chairs and share the opportunities offered by the two organizations mentioned as we consider these groups allies in supporting our next generation of aquatic resource professionals.

We are all connected. We are a great Chapter of aquatic resource professionals and are ideally positioned to support our next generation of fisheries professionals. Please share your mentoring needs and experiences with the Mentoring Committee. We look forward to serving the Chapter in this committee role.

Submitted by Kevin Dockendorf, NCAFS ad hoc Mentoring Committee Chair

Pandemic-monium – or How We Spent the Summer of 2020

While the COVID-19 virus has not miraculously disappeared this Spring, Summer, or Fall, as we were led to believe, it has given the NCFishes.com Team (Fritz Rohde, Christina Schobernd, Scott Smith, Jesse Bisette, and Bryn Tracy) the golden opportunity to work tirelessly while strictly adhering to social distancing on the [NCFishes.com](https://www.ncfishes.com) website. With a goal to have the website functional by the end of 2020, it now appears that it will be easily met, at least in part. To date, we have published text on more than 1,060 web pages including those of 257 freshwater species and approximately 820 saltwater (marine and estuarine) species and several blog posts. We are now populating the species web pages with photographs we have personally taken or have borrowed from others, but this facet of the web page development will take more time – perhaps it will be completed by the time a vaccine is ready?



*Leopard Searobin, Prionotus scitulus.
Photographed by Jesse Bisette.*



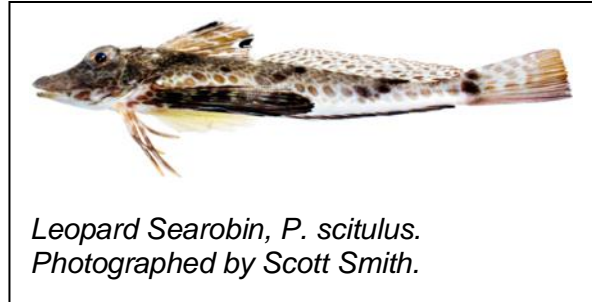
*Striped Searobin, P. evolans. Photographed by
Jesse Bisette.*

We are gradually building our popularity and our brand. Is it possible that we have become overnight Internet Influencers? We have downloaded some website statistics through mid-September and the results are very encouraging. Through the first 20 days of this month (September), we've been averaging about 175 visits per day. Since January 2020, we have had more than 45,000 visits, averaging about 4,000 unique visitors per month. We've had visitors from 87 countries including

Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and as far away as Fiji. Our top five state-side visitors are from North Carolina, Florida, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Texas.

So be sure to bookmark us and check back frequently. It continues to be a work-in-progress and we are adding material to it every day.

Submitted by the NCFishes.com Team



Spotlight on Students and Young Professionals



TD VanMiddlesworth with a Neuse River American Shad.

Just before all the COVID-19 craziness, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) had several new hires. Among the big pickups was Todd "TD" VanMiddlesworth. TD is originally from huge deer country in Illinois. He completed his undergraduate studies from Spoon River College (<http://www.src.edu/>) and Western Illinois University. TD continued his education with a master's degree from Western Illinois University. He studied "rough fish" as part of his graduate research, giving TD a special affinity for species like Bowfin, gar, and Common Carp. Upon completion of his graduate work, TD accepted a position with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries as a biologist conducting commercial fish house sampling programs. He worked there for

three years before the NCWRC offered him a position as the District 2 Assistant Fisheries Biologist. TD's passion for natural resources has been evident in his excellent performance since he started with NCWRC.

In TD's spare time he enjoys hiking, fishing, hunting, and fossil hunting. He has gotten particularly good at finding shark teeth in the Tar River basin. Finally, but most importantly, TD lives in Greenville with his wife Madeleine and daughter Eevee. After spending just a short time with TD you will understand that these ladies are his world. TD makes sure they are included in his weekend adventures. We are very fortunate for TD to be part of the fisheries community in North Carolina.

Submitted by Ben Ricks

East Carolina University Student Subunit

[ECU-AFS](#) collaborated with Love a Sea Turtle and ECU ReLeaf to clean up the Town Creek Culvert in Greenville as part of World Water Monitoring Week (September 14-18, 2020). We ended up with 150 lbs of trash! It was a great way to step away from the screen and help out the environment, and ECU-AFS is committed to participate in future monthly clean-ups of the area.

The subunit adapted to the current times by holding a virtual monthly meeting via WebEx on September 25. Attendees were treated to a resume/CV workshop conducted by Dr. Rebecca Asch. The next virtual meeting was scheduled for October 9.



ECU-AFS conducting a stream cleanup with proper PPE and social distancing.

Finally, a recent graduate and one of our advisors have an [article](#) in a special issue of the Marine Ecology Progress Series. The special issue is a product of the AFS Early Life History Section, serving as proceedings from their 2019 conference. The paper uses a time series of weekly abundance of larval fishes surveyed at Beaufort Inlet, NC, which has been ongoing since 1986. The time series data were used to examine whether 10 different species are changing when they enter the estuary. Most species are entering the estuary earlier than in past decades and these changes are related to changes in temperature and wind patterns. This finding is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the area around Beaufort Inlet has not experienced as much warming compared to other coastal areas, but we can still detect the fingerprints of climate change and climate variability on fish behavior. Second, most previous studies examining how seasonality is changing in the ocean have not considered the role of changing

wind patterns, so this is an original aspect of this study.

Submitted by Samantha Dowiarz

Excursions along the South River



Aftermath of stream clearing along the South River. This scene was repeated every couple of hundred yards for miles. October 7, 2019.

Scrolling around Google maps, the trained eye will find two waterbodies named ‘South River’ in North Carolina. The drowned creek called ‘South River’ near the mouth of the Neuse River was not on my mind during the summer of COVID (unlike the hardy anglers flocking to that area for bull drum (AKA Red Drum)). Rather, I was interested in the South River that delineates most of the western border of Sampson County. The South River begins its course northeast of Fayetteville, NC, and flows approximately 180 river kilometers to its confluence with the Black River (Cape Fear River Basin) near the

crossroads of Ivanhoe. The South River is classified as “Outstanding Resource Waters” by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. Additionally, two undescribed species, but both Species of Greatest Conservation Need, Thinlip Chub, *Cyprinella* sp. 1 (*cf. zanema*) and Cape Fear River Broadtail Madtom *Noturus* sp. 2, have been reported from few other streams in North Carolina.

During the fall of 2019, stream clearing operations resulted in significant bank destabilization, sediment deposition, and loss of woody debris. A small silver lining (one I could have gone without) is that previously inaccessible sections of the river were opened to small boat navigation. So it was that April Boggs and I found ourselves on the river this summer. Our primary goal was to collect samples for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission’s statewide Black Bass genetics project. Ancillary to that was our interest in documenting species composition and hopefully finding some rare fishes.



*The now rare Tadpole Madtom *Noturus gyrinus*. Photo by April Boggs.*

By the end of summer, we had conducted boat electrofishing at 11 sites that spanned 141 river kilometers, collecting 583 fish and 32 species along the way. We were especially pleased to see ample sunfish populations in upstream sections of the river. However, Flathead Catfish, *Pylodictus olivaris*, became more prevalent as we went downstream, and we observed a concomitant reduction in the number of larger Redbreast Sunfish, *Lepomis auritus*. Thinlip Chub and Cape Fear Broadtail Madtom were not among our catch, but we did accomplish our goals and added data to an otherwise poorly documented system.



A very healthy Spotted Sunfish, Lepomis punctatus. Photo by April Boggs.



April Boggs wrangles a 30-lb Flathead Catfish from an unlikely place.

It is unlikely that we'll be able to sample the upstream portions of the South River by boat for some time. Navigating small, coastal systems like the South River is typically hindered by wind-fallen trees. Even in the absence of hurricanes, it takes only a few years for enough trees to fall across the river so as to obscure the efforts of stream clearing. Indeed, the harshest results of trackhoe-induced bank destabilization were not as evident during our excursion, occurring just a few months after the offending actions had occurred. As navigability diminishes, hopefully so too are the negative environmental impacts of the operation.

Submitted by Kyle Rachels

Good Work! – Recent Publications by NCAFS Members

- [Caves, S., J. R. Baumann, and D. S. Stich.](#) 2020. Density-dependent changes in Grass Carp growth and mortality in long-term aquatic plant management. North American Journal of Fisheries Management <https://doi.org/10.1002/nafm.10515>.
- [Doll, J. C., L. Etchison, W. T. Russ, and S. J. Fraley.](#) 2020. Long-term population dynamics and habitat association of the Federally Threatened Spottfin Chub in the Little Tennessee River. Transactions of the American Fisheries Society 149:587-599.
- [Krause, J. R., J. E. Hightower, J. A. Buckel, J. T. Turnure, T. M. Grothues, J. P. Manderson, J. E. Rosendale, and J. P. Pessutti.](#) 2020. Using acoustic telemetry to estimate Weakfish survival rates along the U.S. East Coast. Marine and Coastal Fisheries: Dynamics, Management, and Ecosystem Science 12:241-257.
- [Rulifson, R. A., C. W. Bangley, J. L. Cudney, A. Dell’Apa, K. J. Dunton, M. G. Frisk, M. S. Loeffler, M. T. Balazik, C. Hager, T. Savoy, H. M. Brundage III, and W. C. Post.](#) 2020. Seasonal presence of Atlantic Sturgeon and sharks at Cape Hatteras, a large continental shelf constriction to coastal migration. Marine and Coastal Fisheries: Dynamics, Management, and Ecosystem Science 12:308-321.
- [Runde, B. J., T. Michelot, N. M. Bacheler, K. W. Shertzer, and J. A. Buckel.](#) 2020. Assigning fates in telemetry studies using hidden Markov models: an application to deepwater groupers released with descender devices. North American Journal of Fisheries Management <https://doi.org/10.1002/nafm.10504>.

Submitted by the NCAFS Newsletter Review Team

Stories of Interest

[Restoring Muskellunge habitat in the French Broad River](#)

Amanda Bushon and Scott Loftis discuss conservation efforts

[New North Carolina catfish records](#)

Anglers caught state record Blue and Flathead Catfish in July

[Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River Striped Bass overfished](#)

Stock status due to low recruitment and overfishing

[Lawsuit seeks change in regulation of NC coastal fishing](#)

Joe Albea discusses lawsuit filed against trawlers and NCDMF

[That seafood may not be what you think](#)

Deja-vu all over again

[China implements 10-year fishing moratorium on Yangtze River](#)

Expected to impact 280,000 commercial fishers

[Researchers at Duke University photograph “ultra-black” fish](#)

Studying camouflage in the deep sea

[Scientists in Hungary create Paddlefish x Russian Sturgeon hybrid](#)

Positive results from a negative control

[Snake River dams will not be removed for endangered salmon](#)

Another chapter in the long-running saga between electricity, navigation, and fish

[Geospatial analysis suggests illegal fishing in Galapagos EEZ](#)

One of the biggest non-COVID, non-political stories in August

[Fishing rights enter Brexit discussions](#)

One-quarter of French catch comes from British waters

Submitted by the NCAFS Newsletter Review Team

Call to Action!

If you want to contribute, have a story idea or would like us to include something in next quarter's newsletter, e-mail Kyle Rachels kyle.rachels@ncwildlife.org or give him a call at 252-548-4938. Also, if you want to become more involved with one of the many great NCAFS committees then please check the link below for information about each one, contacts, etc., <http://nc.fisheries.org/who-we-are/committees/>

Valuable Links

The [American Fisheries Society Home Page](#) offers a wealth of links to assist you in your fishy endeavors. Information on ordering AFS books, annual meetings, chapter links and joining the AFS can be found there.

This and [archived NCAFS newsletters](#), along with links, [chapter information](#), and [upcoming meetings](#), can be found on the [NCAFS website](#).

[Click to view dates & deadlines](#)

UPCOMING MEETINGS
In Fisheries & Ecology