



Current Events



The Newsletter of the Arkansas Stream Team

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News from Region III (Gulf Coastal Plain) Stream Team Coordinator, Ben Thesing...

Pictures and article submitted by Ben Thesing, Region III Stream Team Coordinator.



▲ The Fisheries Division of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission "welcomes" the new Region III Stream Team Coordinator, Ben Thesing.

Growing up in southeastern Minnesota near the Mississippi River I have always been tied closely with water. For those of you not familiar with the northern portion of the United States, this is where the borders of Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin all come together. The region is unique to much of the Midwest, and is known as "The Driftless Area" from the last **Glaciation time period** that veered from this area; sparing it from the flattening effects of massive sheets of ice, and leaving the valleys and bluffs I grew up around.

My parents moved approximately 10 miles outside of La Crescent, Minnesota when I was very young, so I didn't experience much else other than country living. Most of my time was spent out exploring the woods with my older brother, Brian, and trying to bring home every critter we could find. These summer adventures were intermixed with winter, where my father would drive his truck **ON** the Mississippi River to take us ice fishing in the makeshift shanty fishing villages. I never truly appreciated this activity until later in life when I realized how much more convenient (and comfortable) it was to sit in a heated cabin and fish, rather than sitting on a 5-gallon bucket **outside** on the ice!

I graduated from La Crescent High School, and jumped across the river to the University of Wisconsin La Crosse to pursue a Bachelor's of Science degree in Environmental Science and Biology, focusing on water resources along with ecology. I worked many odd jobs throughout my college career such as a fork-lift operator, grocery clerk, and short-order cook, just to name a few. Soon after I graduated from the University of La Crosse Wisconsin, I applied for every job under the sun that remotely coincided with my education. After a long search, I had a phone interview with the Ecological Conservation Organization based out of Little Rock. Never having been to Arkansas, I pulled up a *Wikipedia* page and thought, "So, that's where the Ozarks are, and what are these 'Oh-a-cheeta' (spelled: Ouachita) mountains all about?" The interview went great; I came down for an in-person interview, and moved to Arkansas two weeks later.

The mainstay of my new job consisted of collecting water samples to test for non-point source pollution. So, I got to drive around to every corner of the state to scoop water samples out of rivers. I also got to work on a multitude of projects, from trail construction to various stewardship projects. I soon realized how diverse and extraordinary Arkansas truly is, and why it is one of the South's best kept secrets. Unfortunately, the organization came on hard times; but, luckily, it was just the motivation I needed to continue my education.

I started at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) in Conway in the Master's of Science biology program. I changed course (from water), and decided to study one of my favorite critters...the noble salamander. I tried to think of a project that would, once again, allow me to be outside in the beautiful areas of the state; all the while, contributing to the scientific world. My thesis: "Phylogeny and Ecological Niche Model of the Southern Redback Salamander, *Plethodon serratus*" mainly involved population genetic work and computer-based modeling with this species for conservation purposes. I know what you're thinking, and it's probably along the same line expressed by my parents, "Salamander genetics! What kind of job can you get with that?" Most of my course work involved ecology, conservation, and, "Yes," you guessed it...WATER!

It was last August when I finished up my degree. And, to think, I have now been in Arkansas for nearly five years...and, I have no intention of leaving anytime soon. I'm looking forward to my new position with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission as the Region III Stream Team Coordinator, and hope to develop understanding and awareness of the water resources in the area. In addition, I hope to help restore some of the degraded streams, and help landowners better understand the ecology of the water environments they have on their properties.

Please don't hesitate to give me a call with any questions, or if you want to know more about me and my adventures in *The Natural State*.

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SALINE RIVER STREAM TEAM #260

Article/photograph submitted by: Ed Bacon, Coordinator



The Saline River Stream Team # 260 conducted its annual trash cleanup of the Saline River at Ozment Bluff. Thirteen members of the Saline River Stream Team participated in the cleanup and removed bags of trash and debris from the river. The Saline River Stream Team has completed a water quality study during the past three years. Future research projects will include studies of the biodiversity in the Saline River Watershed and the habitat requirements of aquatic macroinvertebrates and fishes. Citizens interested in information on the Saline River Stream Team and the lower Saline River should contact Ed Bacon, 345 Crestwood, Monticello, AR 71655, Telephone 870-723-4671.



◀ **Saline River Stream Team members (left to right): Robert Fletcher, Karen Fawley, Cynthia Robinson, Marvin Fawley, Courtney Emberton, Morgyn Ellis, Tess Cucurullo, Summer Huddleston, Doug Cagle, Bo Kelley, Kristin Winters, and Lauren Fuller.**

News from Region IV (Ouachita Mountains and Arkansas River Valley) Stream Team Coordinator, Matthew Irvin...

The first quarter of 2013 has been "River/Stream Cleanup Quarter." Many of my *Stream Teams* in the Ouachita Mountain and Arkansas River Valley eco-regions have been doing some spring cleaning on their favorite waters.

Some of my *Stream Teams* creep up into the foothills of the Boston Mountains, but I don't think Dave Evans minds (Region I Stream Team Coordinator). One such team is the *Oark High School Stream Team* #664. Their environmental science teacher received one of our "*Current Event*" newsletters in the mail, and wanted to know what they could do for the creek that runs behind their school. This particular creek is a direct tributary to the Mulberry River. On a topographic map — the creek is labeled Estep Creek, on county and soil maps — it is called Easter Creek. I'm calling it Easter Creek since, at this writing, yesterday was Easter Sunday. Throughout the school day we had 12-to-20 volunteers mound-up the equivalent of two 16-foot trailer loads of junk metal, aluminum cans, nine truck and tractor tires, and other trash.



◀ **Oark
High School
Stream Team.**

We covered approximately 3-tenths of a mile on Easter Creek. In addition, we found a dumpsite on the creek that we planned to finish cleaning the upcoming Friday. The Oark School also asked me to survey 145 linear feet of streambank that is eroding. We hope to get this stretch of streambank stabilized this spring.

A few miles downstream, in the same watershed on the Mulberry River, Brad Wimberly at Turner Bend rounded-up over 100 volunteers on March 2 for the 22nd annual *Mulberry River Cleanup*. The weather was cold, but not cold enough to dampen the enthusiasm of the crew. By breaking into several groups, the volunteers were able to clean close to 30 miles of road: the Cass-Oark Road (from Highway 103 to Highway 23), and Shores Lake Road (from Highway 23 to Shores Lake). Also, all of the access areas such as Redding, Campbell Cemetery, and Wolf Pen were cleaned. Several especially resilient workers got on the Mulberry and cleaned 20-25 miles of shoreline. Two large trailers, provided by the U.S. Forest Service, were filled with bagged trash, tires, et cetera. One participant joked that he hoped this year's cleanup would be cancelled due to lack of trash. Unfortunately, that may never be the case, so it is up to the few to clean up after the many. (Information provided by Brad Wimberly.)



▲ **Some of the trash the volunteers picked up.**

On the same day, in west Conway, the *Central Arkansas Rivers Association Stream Team* battled Tucker Creek. Thirty volunteers included students and professors from the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) employees, Boy Scouts of America, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) employees, members of the American Fisheries Society (AFS), Southwestern Energy Company (SWN) employees, and local residents.

Since this is an urban stream, we found a variety of unwanted items such as action figures, lawn chairs, sports equipment, plastic grocery sacks, Styrofoam cups, a mop, work gloves, shop towels, an umbrella, tires, pieces of a grocery cart, a Halloween costume, and a wallet with a valid driver's license. Forty-one bags of trash and six bags of recyclable materials were collected. Tucker Creek and the associated walking trail is now a much more beautiful place to visit. This creek is home to a variety of ducks, cranes, snakes, fish, turtles, and many more species of wildlife.

Central Arkansas Rivers Association Stream Team and volunteers from several other agencies and organizations help in the Tucker Creek cleanup. ►



Due to drought conditions last summer, many tree and shrub seedlings died that were planted as part of several streambank restoration projects. Thanks to the donation of 200+ container trees and shrubs, a few of those lost seedlings were replanted. Approximately 106 of those seedlings went to Short Mountain Creek in Logan County (see in the photo below). About 45 seedlings went to West Fork Mill Creek in Perry County, and 55 seedlings were planted on Horsehead Creek in Johnson County.



◄ *Short Mountain Creek*

In other business... I attended a 3-day meeting of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society in Conway, and helped judge all of the great presentations by professionals and university students. I was guest speaker for the *Busy Beavers 4-H Club* in Dover one Sunday afternoon. They have a great interest in McCoy Creek in Pope County. I am hoping they will join the *Arkansas Stream Team* soon. I surveyed four separate locations and wrote two streambank stabilization plans that I hope to implement this spring, if funds are available and the creeks don't rise too much.

I also looked at a site in Cleveland County on the Saline River. This property is owned by the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department (AHTD) to do mitigation work. An entire 240-acre tract along the Saline River will be restored to its native habitat!

Until next time, have a great spring and take some time to enjoy a float trip down your favorite river or stream!

**News from Region I
(Ozark Highlands and Boston Mountains)
Stream Team Coordinator, Dave Evans...**

Well, it's finally acting like spring up here in the Ozarks. Daytime high temperatures in the 70's and occasional 80's, followed by daytime highs in the 50's and 60's....you got to love it. The redbuds are starting to flower, and it's time to go pick some of those beautiful and tasty flowers to garnish a salad with. If you've never tried eating redbud flowers, then you should. I think they're best a day or two after they pop open.

In February, a group of 19 folks from, literally, across the state got together up here for a day of tree and shrub planting on Crooked Creek in Boone County, and Adds Creek at Ponca in Newton County. This group spanned the spectrum from college students, to retirees, to young adults and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission employees.

As you may remember, we completed a two-part streambank stabilization project on Crooked Creek near Harmon a couple of summers ago. The following winter, we planted about 500 trees and shrubs at the downstream portion of the site, and then came the 2-year drought that hit this area hard. Quite a few, make that over half, of those plants did not last, despite being watered by the landowner and myself. In February, we replaced the trees and shrubs that had died at the downstream site, and did an initial planting at the upstream site. Hopefully, we will not have another summer like the last two, and the majority of these trees and shrubs will survive.

Beyond the loss of the plants, this stabilization project seems to be working well. The rock vanes are collecting sediment, both up and downstream of themselves. The locked logs are still deflecting the water away from the bank on the lowest section of the lower site. They are also providing still water and overhead cover for several species of fishes and minnows.

After finishing lunch on Crooked Creek, the majority of the folks followed me down to Ponca to plant trees and shrubs at the Ponca Elk Education Center. I must say that this group worked very well, and quickly put all of the plants into the ground. I have since been back to the Elk Center, and it appears that all of the plants have survived. The vast majority of them were already budding out last week, and the warm weather we're supposed to have over the next few days should have more of them breaking dormancy.



◀ *Group of volunteers at the Ponca Elk Education Center.*

Some of the college kids. ►



Two new projects are in the works for streams located near here. Actually, one is a redo of one of the first projects ever installed by the *Stream Team Program* about 15 years ago.

The redo project is on Crooked Creek, between the Fred Berry Education Center and Yellville. Work on it will begin as soon as the ground dries out enough to bring in the needed rocks. This project will consist of two rock vanes, several locked logs, and about 700 feet of cedar revetment. The location is similar to that of the Fred Berry and Yellville Park projects. This site is on the inside of a gentle bend, and the outside of the bend is basically a rock bluff. Because of this layout, the water velocities along the site will be relatively low. By using the vanes to deflect flood waters away from the bank at the upper and lower ends, the cedar revetment and locked logs should reduce the resulting slow-flows and allow the deposition of sediment along the eroding bank. Prior to leaving the site, we will pull down (slope) the vertical banks. This coming winter we will be planting willows along the toe of the bank within the cedar revetment. We will also plant shrubs up that portion of the bank that was pulled down.

The other upcoming project is on the Kings River north of Berryville across from Stony Point. This project will involve the installation of two rock vanes, an LPSTP (Longitudinal Peak Stone Toe Protection), an LFSTP (Longitudinal Filled Stone Toe Protection), and the filling of an overflow channel. Due to stream flow levels, this project will probably not get started until sometime in late July or August.

Both of these sites will require the planting of a lot of material...mainly shrubs, and willow, and sycamore cuttings. If you're interested in helping with this portion of either of these projects, please let me know. Any help is always appreciated any time you put in several thousand cuttings and several hundred shrubs.

Hope you all enjoy this spring, and you have a chance to get out and enjoy the beauty that Arkansas has to offer. We truly are lucky to live in a state that has so much natural beauty. Whether you like shooting the rapids on the "Skull Crusher" (Cossatot River), hiking to Hawksbill Crag, slowly floating down Bayou Bartholomew, hiking along the Ozark Highland Trail, fishing any one of the lakes that dot our state, or crawling around in a cave....you should get out there and enjoy "*The Natural State*."

**News from Region II (Delta)
Stream Team Coordinator,
Stephen O'Neal...**

The West Magnet Elementary in Batesville recently received a mini-grant to purchase water quality testing equipment used to monitor stream health on their chosen waterbody, Poke Bayou, which runs through the heart of Batesville. The team was recently featured on the front page of their local newspaper as conducting water analysis, performing litter pickups, and performing macroinvertebrate testing on the bayou. The team has discovered that Poke Bayou has an extremely high level of biological activity and, in fact, has been able to rate the stream as very diverse. In addition, the water chemistry testing equipment will most certainly be able to verify this water quality assessment. The school intends to monitor the water quality of Poke Bayou for years to come, and the mini-grant will help them achieve their goal.



▲ *One group from the West Magnet Visual and Performing Arts - 4th Grade Science Class carefully analyzes the water chemistry parameters to determine if any of the readings are out of the norm—Poke Bayou has superb water quality according to the tests.*



◀ *Vaughanda Bowie and an excited class full of Stream Team students from Batesville takes receipt of a mini-grant check that will go towards the purchase of water quality testing equipment.*

Sometimes the Stream Team paradigm trickles across the border into Missouri. Missouri also has a Stream Team Program, and often the two states will share in the benefits of our mutual team members helping the common resources. I recently received this e-mail from a neighbor to the north:

I am from Missouri, but just over the border from Mammoth Spring. I've spent my share of time around the Spring River. I went on a stream cleanup in Missouri several years ago, and got pretty interested in cleanups, so I formed my own Stream Team in Missouri. I only get involved in litter pickups at this point. I got interested again last fall, and picked up nearly all the access/campgrounds on the Eleven Point in Missouri, some on the Jacks Fork, Current, North Fork, and did a good deal on the Warm Fork of the Spring River. Well, I live closer to the Spring River and South Fork than some of the areas in Missouri, so I should probably join a local Fulton/Sharp County team or just form my own team. I don't wish to officially adopt any streams or accesses; I'm more of a wanderer. It's really more of the matter that I like an excuse to spend some time on the river, other than fishing, and it does some good in the world. I would likely make it around to most of the public areas on the Spring, above Hardy, and South Fork at Salem and Hardy. I looked through a few of the newsletters and noticed there is a Mammoth Spring EAST Lab team from the school there, but are there any other local active teams?

I was out yesterday, so there are already a few less glass bottles by the Spring River.

Thanks

Tom Caldwell



◀ *Tom Caldwell, a Missouri resident, slips into Arkansas on occasion to pickup litter. Stewardship is a boundary-less paradigm that we can all share.*

A massive tree-planting effort was undertaken close to the Missouri stateline on a warm, winter day in northern Randolph County. Over a quarter-mile of riparian area was planted by the *Maynard High School Stream Team*. Nearly 1,500 trees and bottomland shrubs were planted by the team in just under three hours. This team really knows how to pick ‘em up and put ‘em down! They moved so quickly, we couldn’t capture their efforts on camera! Actually, the pictures were all blurry—the camera, a mechanical device subject to failure, did. BUT, suffice it to say, the team had a great time helping to revitalize the riparian zone, which tops off a huge project that had 10 upstream-angled rock vanes and a half-dozen Bendway weirs to help redirect the erosive forces of the Current River, and to create much needed fisheries habitat in this section of the river. Fisheries information was collected before the project was initiated, and sampling will occur this summer to determine how well the game and non-game species have responded to the new habitat—it is expected that this effort will quantifiably improve the fish community. And, that’s what the *Stream Team Program* is all about—making things better!

The 80+ students from Maynard High School were working so quickly the camera could not capture a clear image! The enthusiastic crew rapidly planted nearly 1,500 trees in under three hours! ►



Article/photographs submitted by: George Lauster, Coordinator
Central Arkansas Master Naturalists Stream Team



On a sunny and warm afternoon on January 27, the *Central Arkansas Master Naturalists Stream Team* conducted their quarterly sampling of the Little Maumelle River at Pinnacle Mountain State Park. Jay Justice, Bill Toland, George Lauster and NIT (Naturalist-in-Training) Frank Meeks sampled the high-flow, rocky sampling site and the low-flow, muddy site. They also inventoried the number of downed trees in the stream. There was ample evidence of the winter ice storm along the Kingfisher Trail and both river sides. Flooding since the storm, approximately two weeks prior, has pushed the woody debris into piles at the feet of the trees that are still standing. The trees that fell along the riverside are a natural part of the river cycle, and provide important habitats and surfaces for all parts of the food web. Overall, a great example of an active flood plain and how difficult it is to pinpoint the exact edge of a river. Generally, we only see it within its usual channel, but sometimes it may be 200 yards north in the parking lot! We found a rare free-living caddisfly during the survey, with its deeply incised thorax plates and dual claws at the end of its abdomen. This particular caddisfly is very sensitive to low oxygen conditions and other pollution, indicating this beautiful stretch of stream is still as healthy as ever. We were aided in our survey by several families hiking the trail. Over the seven-year activities of our Stream Team, we have introduced hundreds of family and school children to this "invisible" part of the food web, and it never fails to excite. Thanks to everyone who came out. The next sampling on the Little Maumelle will be in April. In March, we will be sampling our other site, the Clark Wetland at the Clinton Library, as part of the Naturalist-in-Training class of 2013.



Finishing up on the Little Maumelle River.



Post-storm debris on the Little Maumelle River.

Stream Team Name: _____

Activity Sheet

Stream Team #: _____

[illegible]

The Process of Becoming a STREAM TEAM...

1. Express an interest and request more information.

Send your name, address, and phone number to:

ARKANSAS STREAM TEAM PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

2. Sign up. You will receive the newsletter and be counted among Arkansas' *STREAM TEAM* members. This will also get you in the network of those wanting to help out Arkansas' waterways.

3. Adopt a stream. To become more involved in the program you can adopt a stream. Select a stream that you and/or your group are particularly concerned about. For example - the creek on your land, your favorite fishing hole, or the stream you drive over everyday going to work or school.

A. Inventory your stream with help from the *STREAM TEAM* coordinators.

B. Decide what you want to do---trash pickup, habitat improvement, water quality monitoring, and/or whatever is of interest to you or your group!



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MAIL TO: