

Ecological Services

Take a Bite of our Turtle Survey



Biologists with the Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office and Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge worked with the Army Corps of Engineers during the week of May 13 to survey alligator snapping turtle populations and demographics at the Refuge. All animals were measured, weighed, sexed and uniquely marked using PIT tags (microchips) and shell notches.

We are working with the Corps to find solutions to alligator snapping turtle mortalities near the Graham-Burke Pumping Station, Elaine, Arkansas.

Bars for the Bats: Protecting Arkansas Caves

Staff from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Cave Research Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service worked with our staff this Spring to build bat friendly gates on Norfolk and Wolf Creek Caves. Norfolk Bat Cave is home to summer gray bats and tricolored bats and had over a decade of human disturbance as well as extensive vandalism. Wolf Creek Cave is home to Indiana bats and gets routine use by multiple other endangered species. Social media attention led to significant increases in recreational use of the area increasing human disturbance of the colony at Wolf Creek Cave.



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Boosting Arkansas Fatmucket Population in Saline



We worked with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and stocked 375 Arkansas fatmucket in the Alum Fork Saline River on May 20. On May 31, we stocked 300 Arkansas fatmucket in the Middle Fork Saline River. Arkansas fatmucket rely on bass to complete their life cycle, and females use a minnow-like lure to attract host fish. When a bass attacks the mussel's lure, the female releases larvae called glochidia that attach to the fish's gills. Once larvae mature into juveniles, they drop off the bass without harming the fish. If the mussels drop into suitable habitat, they will burrow into the bottom of the river where they will grow and reproduce. The primary threat to Arkansas fatmucket in the Saline River headwaters is habitat degradation. It is primarily from sedimentation and water quality degradation stemming from a variety of land uses. Mussels provide benefits to streams by filtering water and helping stabilize substrate at the river's bottom.



Our New Field Supervisor

Jason Hight is scheduled to begin his role on July 1 as our new Field Supervisor. Jason was born in Arkansas. He moved to Florida to attend graduate school. Before joining the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jason served as Director of Conservation Planning Services for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#). Connect with our Regional accounts on social media: [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [Flickr](#), and [YouTube](#).

