



Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Matters

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Desert Pupfish



Closure of Lake Pleasant Eagle Breeding Area Ends

PHOENIX - Boaters and anglers can enjoy Lake Pleasant even more, starting on Friday afternoon, March 31, when the closure of the eagle breeding area at the lake ends. As soon as the buoys currently blocking off the area are removed, people will legally be able to use the section for recreation.

Every year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department closes about 21 bald eagle breeding areas during the winter and spring, in order to help protect the birds' efforts to produce young. Human activities and low-flying planes can disrupt breeding attempts. This year, the closure at Lake Pleasant, which is about 30 miles north of downtown Phoenix, is ending earlier than expected.

"The pair of bald eagles at Lake Pleasant never laid eggs, even though normal courtship and nest-building activities were observed," says James Driscoll, head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Bald Eagle Management Program. "We are unsure of the exact reason why these eagles did not reproduce this year. They had been portraying all of the behaviors of a pair that was ready to reproduce."

Closures remain in effect at several other locations in Arizona, including sites along the Salt, Verde, San Carlos and Little Colorado rivers; at several lakes; and at Tonto Creek, until June 30. The Lake Pleasant breeding area will close again on Dec. 15 for the next breeding season.

Endangered Fish Take Helicopter Ride to New Homes.

PHOENIX - About 400 endangered desert pupfish are in new homes today, courtesy of biologists' hard work and rides in coolers dangling from a huge net underneath a helicopter. On Friday, biologists from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Arizona Bureau of Land Management hiked into Lousy Canyon and Larry Canyon at the Agua Fria National Monument to meet the helicopter, which swung down the fish-filled coolers in a net. Then, the biologists moved the endangered fish from the coolers into buckets for a short trip to areas where they can thrive, about 40 miles north of Phoenix.



"This was a sophisticated effort to move these desert pupfish, a species which only lives in Arizona, southern California and northern Mexico," says Jeremy Voeltz, an Arizona Game and Fish Department fish biologist. "We did it because we're trying to create new populations of desert pupfish in areas of the range where they used to be plentiful but have since died out."

A helicopter carries a net with coolers full of desert pupfish to the Agua Fria National Monument.

Pollution, human changes to the environment and the introduction of competing exotic fish species in Arizona have caused the desert pupfish's habitat to shrink. Several organizations have been involved in breeding more of the fish so that new areas can be populated. In this case, hundreds of fish were bred at a property owned by The Nature Conservancy along the San Pedro River.

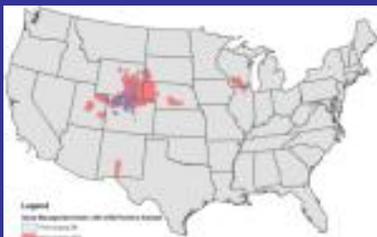
"University of Arizona students netted about 400 desert pupfish out of The Nature Conservancy pond on Thursday," says Doug Duncan, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologist. "Friday, the fish were handed off to Bureau of Reclamation pilots who transported them by helicopter to an area as close to the new stocking sites as possible."

Finally, the fish were placed into buckets for a short hike by biologists to their new canyon homes. Historically, the desert pupfish lived in the Gila River basin and the San Pedro, Salt and lower Colorado rivers in Arizona.

The desert pupfish is a 1- to 2-inch long fish that lives in shallow waters. It has a smooth, rounded body with dark stripes down the sides. Males are blue on top, with yellow to orange sides and fins. Females and their young have tan- or olive-colored backs and silver sides.



Chronic Wasting Disease



No CWD Found in Deer and Elk Testing

The Arizona Game and Fish Department reports lab results found no chronic wasting disease (CWD) in any of the nearly 2,500 hunter-harvested deer and elk tested from the fall 2005 hunt season.

CWD is a neurological disease that does not affect humans but is fatal to deer and elk. The disease has not yet been found in Arizona but has been detected in several other states, including three that border Arizona: Colorado, Utah and New Mexico.

"We're very encouraged by these results, but we'll continue to remain vigilant with an aggressive testing program," says Jim deVos, research branch chief for the Game and Fish Department. "If CWD does show up in Arizona, early detection will better allow us to launch efforts to prevent



its spread."

The department has tested more than 6,000 deer and elk since beginning its surveillance program in 1998. Most samples are from hunter-harvested animals taken during the hunt season. Hunters who donate samples are notified of the test results within six to eight weeks.

"Hunters play a crucial role in our testing process through their participation," says deVos. "For example, this year our goal was to get about 1,600 samples, but we ended up receiving nearly 2,500."

Of the samples tested, 1,540 were deer and 926 were elk.

CWD was first discovered in captive deer in Colorado in the 1960s. It has since spread to both captive and wild deer and elk in 11 states and two Canadian provinces. It belongs to a family of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), which attack the brain and turn it into a sponge-like material. Other TSEs are mad cow disease in cattle, scrapie in sheep, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans.

No evidence has been found to indicate that CWD affects humans, according to both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will continue to work in close coordination with other state and federal agencies to monitor for CWD.

For more information on CWD, visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Web site at azgfd.gov/cwd; the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance Web site at cwd-info.org; or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at cdc.gov (use the search feature for chronic wasting disease).

April Events



April Dates and Events

April 7, 2006 6-9 p.m.

Arizona Game and Fish Department Kingman Region Wildlife Fair

The fair, free to the public, will feature live wildlife, wildlife displays, hands-on activities, and free giveaways such as posters, booklets, and brochures. In addition, many of the department's regional personnel will be in attendance to answer questions and provide general information. The fair will be held at Mingus Union High School in Cottonwood.

April 27-30, 2006 All day, each day

Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival

Held at Dead Horse Ranch State Park in Cottonwood, AZ. Check out birdyverde.org or contact 928.282.2202 for registration information.



Exciting field trips, workshops, exhibitors, sales, and special programs all four days. Keynote reception features Rick Wright speaking on the early Arizona Naturalists. Birding's cultural heritage honored with "10,000 Years of Birding" petroglyph artwork featured on the event's t-shirt and event programs. Bird by bike, bronco, canoe or train. Visit Out of Africa or take a geology hike. From the Verde Valley to Prescott, Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon to spot California Condors, there's lots to do at this award winning annual event.

For additional information about *Wildlife Matters* Legislative Publication contact:

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Department Staff have contributed to this publication in the form of articles and photographs.

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