



Bayou Bartholomew Alliance NEWSLETTER



Summer 2004
Vol. 18.

BBA FOUNDER HONORED

by Eric Brinkman



Dr. Curtis Merrell & Mr. George Pugh of the BBA.
Photo by Dr. Bill Layher

Dr. Curtis Merrell, founder and President of the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance (BBA), was honored by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). On Wednesday, June 9, 2004, the Colonel David Love Chapter met in Monticello to present Dr. Merrell with their American Heritage and Conservation Award. The award is presented to individuals who strive to restore and preserve the natural beauty of the environment. Dr. Merrell was chosen for the award due to his work and efforts toward the restoration of the Bayou Bartholomew in conjunction with the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance. With the help of countless people, the BBA has removed 146 tons of garbage, planted over 1.5 million hardwood seedlings, and opened over 50 logjams to make the stream more navigable. If you would like to help with these efforts please fill out the form on page 2 and mail it to the BBA.

MR. GEORGE PUGH DONATES FIRST EASEMENTS

by Dr. Bill Layher & Eric Brinkman

The Bayou Bartholomew Alliance has received its first conservation easements. Board member, George Pugh enrolled five parcels of land into the Alliance's conservation easement program. These easements permanently preserve approximately 102 acres of land along the Bayou Bartholomew and Holloway Brake, an oxbow of Bayou Bartholomew. The easements were recorded at the Ashley County Courthouse on June 29, 2004. Thank you Mr. Pugh for your dedication to conserving and restoring the Bayou Bartholomew.

Mr. Pugh has helped the Alliance to make the first step in its plan to preserve the riparian zones of the Bayou. By protecting these areas from development and agricultural use, the banks of the stream become more stable and siltation is reduced. The result is a healthier stream with cleaner water, more fish and wildlife habitat, and reduced flood impacts.

Again, this is only the first step in a long process. The Bayou is 359 miles long with lots of acres of riparian zones. But, with the continued dedication and support of landowners like Mr. George Pugh the Bayou Bartholomew will again be what it once was, a beautiful and natural river system.

Mr. Pugh has done much restoration work on his own. A portion of the area included in the easements donated to the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance, he fondly refers to as his "Field of Dreams". We applaud Mr. Pugh's conservation efforts.

YES, I WANT TO HELP!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

Enclosed is a donation to help fund: (donations are tax deductible)

the nature trail

tree seedlings

general operations

newsletter mailing and printing

I would like to volunteer to:

help with cleanups

help remove logjams

Adopt a trail segment (be sure to include the name of your group such as a boy scout troop, 4-H Club, Rotary Club, etc.

Mail to

Bayou Bartholomew Alliance, 7233 Camden Cutoff Rd., Pine Bluff, AR 71603

WE APPRECIATE ALL THAT YOU DO!!!

ANOTHER NEW BOARD MEMBER

by Eric Brinkman

In its March meeting, the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance Board voted to issue an invitation to Marshall Rush to become its newest member. He recently accepted the invitation. This brings the total back up to nine of the ten proposed members.

Marshall originally hails from Lampasas, Texas. He met his wife, Carolyn, while attending college. She went to Texas Woman's University at Denton. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a pre-dental major. The Rush's moved to Arkansas in 1953. Marshall joined the Army shortly thereafter and served for three years. Upon his return, Marshall began farming near Pine Bluff. After 46 years as a farmer, he retired in 2002.

In addition to farming, Marshall was one of the founding stockholders of Pine Bluff Bank, which was founded in 1965. Pine Bluff Bank later became Pine Bluff National Bank. Marshall has served on its board for 36 years and is currently the Chairman of the Board.

Marshall is an avid big game hunter. He has hunted all over the world, including Africa, Asia, and New Zealand. He was also the first American to hunt in China after the Cold War ended. Marshall has an impressive collection of trophies including Grizzly Bear, Musk Ox, a Grand Slam of North American Sheep, Cheetah, Lion, Boar, and Water Buffalo, among others.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can contact the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance by writing, calling, or e-mailing:

Board Members

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Jack Edwards	Elton Kennedy
Robert Mitchell	Gibbs Ferguson
George Pugh	Marshall Rush

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2004 Fish Sampling

by Dr. Bill Layher

We utilize electrofishing (we have a scientific collecting permit) to stun fishes so that we can collect them. Thirteen sites are sampled each year from above Pine Bluff down to near the Louisiana border at Parkdale. Numbers of fishes collected at each site are recorded along with species of fishes. To date, over 117 species of fish have been found in the Bayou making it the second most diverse stream in North America as far as fish are concerned. Fish that are collected are weighed and measured and then released back into the stream.

Wet ground made launching boats and equipment especially hard this summer. High water kept us out of the stream this spring. So we had to wait until late summer to sample most areas. We found good populations of both largemouth and spotted bass throughout the length of the bayou. Some sites had great concentrations of crappie with many going 3/4 of a pound. Most sites continue to see species diversity increasing as work on the bayou continues. Fishes such as river redhorse that were extremely rare in the Bayou 10 years ago are becoming common.

College students who helped with sampling this summer included Aria Ralston (Brigham Young University), Mark Tanner (BYU), and Georgia Bailey (SEARK, Pine Bluff), all summer employees of Layher Bio-Logics RTEC, Inc. Derrick Grant (UAPB) and Bonnie Earlywine (UCA, Conway) who were Arkansas Game and Fish Commission summer interns, came down to help us for a day.



“My Precious”
Derrick Gant poses with a large Bowfin near Pinebergen.



“Please, keep all hands and feet inside the boat.”
Clifton Jackson, Aria Ralston, and Bonnie Earlywine shock fish near Pinebergen (left).

“Chain Gang”
Mark Tanner, Aria Ralston, Eric Brinkman, and Georgia Bailey fill a holding tank before sampling (bottom right).



Workin’ Hard or Hardly Workin’?
Aria Ralston (red) and Mark Tanner look on as Eric Brinkman and Georgia Bailey collect data (above).



Common Bream Species



Redspotted sunfish (*Lepomis miniatus*)



Redear sunfish (*Lepomis microlophus*)



Longear sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*)



Orangespotted sunfish (*Lepomis humilis*)



Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)



Warmouth (*Lepomis gulosus*)



Green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*)

Photos by Dr. Bill Layher

Creature Close-Up: Bream

by Eric Brinkman

One of my favorite childhood memories involves fishing for “bream”. I was about 10 years old and staying with my grandparents for the summer. I liked to fish, so my granny dropped me off at her nearest neighbor’s, Mrs. Boatwright, and told me to come back to the house when I got through. Its about half a mile through the pasture. Now my grandparents have ponds all over their ranch, but all the grandkids knew Mrs. Boatwright’s pond had the best fishing. I fished for a few hours and headed home. I was never more proud than when I showed granny the stringer full of three inch bluegill that I had caught all by myself. The only thing she had to say was, “next time maybe you should let the small ones grow a little more, they’re too hard to clean”. She cleaned them for me anyway.

Stories like mine have made “bream” fishing a part of southern culture. Almost every southern citizen has a similar story. A trip to a local farm pond is usually every child's first fishing trip. And that first little fish on the end of a pole makes most children grin from ear to ear. Some people call them panfish, others bream, many more call them perch. Whatever you call them it all refers to some species of the Sunfish family. However, contrary to common misconceptions these fish are not a single species nor are they Perch (members of the family *Percidae*). Perch (a.k.a. darters) are small, slender fish that usually inhabit streams. Species that are collectively called “bream” are members of the family *Centrarchidae* (Sunfish), a relatively large family which also includes the black basses (Largemouth, Spotted or Kentucky, Smallmouth) and crappies.

“Bream” are a very adaptive group with representatives inhabiting almost every stream, river, lake, and pond in the eastern half of the United States and parts of Canada. There are ten species of “bream” found in Arkansas. All occur in the Bayou Bartholomew. Several of these species require a trained eye to distinguish and even then it can be difficult. This and color variations during breeding seasons are probably the reasons many people lump them all together. The problem is also compounded by the groups ability to hybridize. Bluegill and Longear sunfish are notorious for crossing with each other and other species. This results in a fish that looks a little bit like each parent, but not completely like either one. Pictures of some of the more common species are on page 4. However, most are pictures of breeding males so they are more colorful than the females of the same species. If you are truly interested in identifying fish invest in a field guide or textbook of freshwater fishes. Fishes of Arkansas put out by the University of Arkansas Press is an excellent textbook of the species that occur in Arkansas.

“Bream” are also very important to the ecosystems in which they occur. They usually compose a significant portion of the fish found in a water body. They provide a food base for many birds, snakes, aquatic mammals like raccoons, mink and otter, and predatory fish like bass, sauger, catfish, and bowfin (grinnell). Besides being a food source themselves, bream eat many of the aquatic creatures that would not otherwise be eaten. They eat small crayfish, snails, larval and adult insects, worms, and small fish. Without sunfish the nutrients which comprise these creatures would be tied up in a form that is less usable to their predators (i.e. humans), unless you don’t mind eating worms or insects.

Help keep the “bream” fishing tradition alive. Take your children or someone else’s fishing, especially on the Bayou. Share with them your experiences and knowledge of its beauty and environment and maybe someday they will grow to love and protect it too. And next time you catch a “bream” try to determine what kind it is. It will make the experience more educational and rewarding.

BBA Website

The BBA has a website!

Visit the website at www.accessarkansas.org/bba/

Maps, pictures, teaching modules for science classes, past newsletters, and upcoming events are all posted. We hope to expand the materials at the site. Please let us know your thoughts and ideas. Drop in! We'd love to hear from you.

If you have old photos or stories about the bayou, send them to us and we will try to put them in our newsletter. We can return photos.



The Only Way To Fish (See Page 3)

Photo by: Dr. Bill Layher

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