

PADDLEFISH DESCRIPTION

Common in Big Cypress and Caddo Lake until the mid-1900s, paddlefish are now rarely found here or in any other Texas rivers.

Scientific Name: *Polyodon spathula*

Texas Status: Threatened

Length: up to 7 feet long

Weight: up to 200 pounds

Lifespan: up to 30 years

Feeding Habits:

- filter feeder
- paddle acts as sensory device detecting food in water
- gills capture plankton as it swims open-mouthed

Physical Characteristics:

- smooth, tough, shark-like skin
- skeleton made entirely of cartilage, except jaw bone

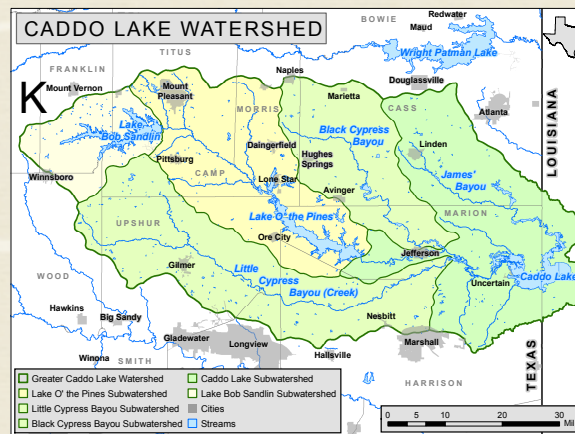
Reproduction and Care of Young:

- paddlefish spawn in spring during periods of high water flow
- females lay eggs on submerged gravel and cobble bars
- young hatch and drift down stream to deeper, slow water pools



PROJECT PARTNERS

- Northeast Texas Municipal Water District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Collins Academy
- The Jeffersonian Institute
- The Nature Conservancy



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PROJECT PADDLEFISH

Project History

Since 2004, Caddo Lake Institute (CLI) and its partners have led an effort to restore freshwater flows in Big Cypress and Caddo Lake to improve habitat for fish and wildlife and possibly create favorable conditions for reintroduction of paddlefish into the watershed. This work has led to recommendations for water release patterns for Lake O' The Pines to improve that habitat. As a result, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District agreed to provide, as an experiment, the recommended release patterns to support paddlefish reintroduction. Concurrently, paddlefish spawning beds were constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Release and Monitoring

In early 2014, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fisheries biologists will release a limited number of paddlefish into Caddo Lake and Big Cypress. The 2-3 foot-long paddlefish will be implanted with radio transmitters and released in multiple locations in the watershed. Each transmitter will have an identifying number, so each fish can be tracked by radio towers strategically placed along Big Cypress and Caddo Lake. With this technology, the public can follow paddlefish movement on the CLI website.

CADDO LAKE PADDLEFISH EXPERIMENT

The partnership will release a limited number of paddlefish in early 2014 to determine if the recommended water flow regime will support the Project's plan for a watershed-wide reintroduction of paddlefish in the near future.

Paddlefish were once a common species in Big Cypress and Caddo Lake, but after changes to the watershed, including construction of Lake O' The Pines dam in 1959, the fish began to disappear. Unknowingly, a project meant to serve people with flood control, water supply, and recreation limited water flows needed for paddlefish and other fish species.

Paddlefish Project partners are working to insure water availability for people, paddlefish, and the many other fish and wildlife species supported by the Caddo Lake watershed.

After seven years of research on water flow regimes and an agreement with partners for experimental release patterns from Lake O' The Pines, public and private partners will continue the investigation by releasing paddlefish into the watershed in 2014. If these release patterns provide favorable habitat and spawning conditions for the paddlefish, a watershed-scale reintroduction of the fish will be justified.

The Paddlefish Project is not only important to the ecological productivity of Caddo Lake and Big Cypress, but also the region's economy base, quality of life, and understanding of watershed systems. The project would not be possible without support from its partners and people like you.

Please be part of the project's success by supporting paddlefish with a tax-deductible donation: <http://www.caddolakeinstitute.us/donate.html>



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For more information about the Paddlefish Project, please visit: www.caddolakeinstitute.us