

## **Budding Fisheries Professionals Get Engaged with the University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society**

Almost two years have passed since the University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society was established in January 2016. The subunit includes student members from the University of Toledo and Bowling Green University and continues to expand in both student membership and community involvement. The fall semester of 2017 has been particularly event filled with monthly meetings, outreach, a fish fry, a river clean up, and a few excursions.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our second annual fish fry in conjunction with the Lake Erie Center's public seminar series. A big thanks to the Lake Erie Center staff for once again providing us the space and opportunity to host the dinner! At the event, students of the subunit provided a public dinner of fried Lake Erie perch and walleye, homemade sides and desserts, prior to Dr. Chris Mayer's seminar on the tributaries of Western Basin Lake Erie. As part of the dinner, a 50-50 raffle and t-shirt sales were held. Proceeds of the raffle and sales will support subunit activities and sponsor professional development opportunities for members. This past summer we were able to provide a travel scholarship for one member to attend the International Great Lakes Research Conference (IAGLR) in Detroit, Michigan. Moving forward, we hope to be able to expand these opportunities to more members.

A few weeks later, on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the club hosted the fourth Ottawa River clean up. With help from numerous University of Toledo students, we removed trash from the floodplain downriver of campus. This event helps improve the aesthetics of the river, reduces the amount of trash the gets flushed into Lake Erie, and provides an opportunity to show university students the value of the Ottawa River. In only a few hours time, a group of 25 students was able to remove over 20 bags of trash and a few larger items.

Several new events were also held this semester. In September, several members assisted in a mussel relocation organized by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the City of Fremont. The aim of the effort was to prevent native mussels from becoming stranding in the former impoundment of the Ballville Dam, after the much anticipated removal process began. Subunit members helped were able to move a portion of the thousands of mussels that were ultimately relocated.

The subunit was also fortunate to participate in an educational outreach event, where 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from Cleveland's Urban Community School visited Old Woman Creek to gain hands on experience in aquatic ecology. Subunit members along with graduate student from Bowling Green State University assisted Old Woman Creek staff with many of the day's educational activities, including a food web challenge, invertebrate identification, and processing of live fish. A special thanks to Kristi Arend and the Old Woman Creek staff for inviting us to participate!

The student subunit strives to be an active member of the fisheries community and provide professional development for its membership. Since its establishment, the University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society has grown and begun take on many rewarding challenges. We are grateful for all the opportunities that have come our way and most of all, we are looking forward to continuing this momentum into 2018!



**Figure 1:** The trail of a unionid mussel attempting to follow receding water levels in the draining impoundment of the Ballville Dam impoundment on the Sandusky River. The dam removal process began in early September 2017, reconnecting upstream reaches to migrating fishes. Members of the University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society helped relocate mussels that became stranded in the former impoundment.



**Figure 2:** University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society members (left to right: Jenna Behrmann, Maddie Tomczak, Jason Fischer, and Jacob Nester) pose with native mussels they helped relocate from the former Ballville Dam impoundment on the Sandusky River.





**Figure 3:** Zach Amidon (front and center) walks Urban Middle School students through a food web exercise demonstrating species interactions in Lake Erie.



**Figure 4:** Chris Kemp (back right) helps Urban Middle School students identify aquatic organisms under the microscope. Specimens were collected from the Old Woman Creek Estuary.





Figure 5: University of Toledo Student Subunit of the Ohio Chapter of the American Fisheries Society members (left to right: Ami Fofana, Lea Westerhold, and Jason Fischer) showoff items removed from the Ottawa River this fall. This year's river clean-up took place just downriver of the University of Toledo's campus.