

# Hawkins named outstanding researcher of the year

Colorado State University (CSU) Research Associate John Hawkins was named 2010 Outstanding Researcher of the Year by the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Upper Colorado Program). John is one of the foremost experts on native and endangered fishes in the Colorado River System, with a focus on the fishes of the Yampa River, one of the last free-flowing rivers in the American West.

John's career began in 1979 as a volunteer with CSU's Larval Fish Laboratory in Fort Collins, Colo., and continued for several years seasonally with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. During that time, he and other researchers worked to uncover the life history of Colorado pikeminnow. That early work serves as a benchmark that describes the river system prior to the major changes brought about by predatory, nonnative fish species and provides a basis for management actions to recover endangered fishes in the Yampa River Basin.

"We used John's data to help us determine the number of nonnative fishes we needed to target for removal to reduce their threat to the endangered fishes," said Upper Colorado Program Director Tom Chart.

John has observed many ecological changes in the Yampa River ecosystem, including a trend toward fewer native fishes and increased numbers of nonnative fishes. "The Yampa River Basin has a strong presence in my heart," he said. "The landscape, natural resources and the people of that valley are very special to me. I think that good science will help us understand how these fishes make a living and my hope is that we can use that knowledge to provide good stewardship to ensure that these species exist for future generations."

John's research, while varied, has focused on information that contributes directly to the recovery of the endangered fishes. He has studied Colorado pikeminnow and humpback



DON TUTTLE, III, CSU LARVAL FISH LAB

RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR JOHN HAWKINS

chub migration and early life history, fish community structure in the Yampa and Little Snake rivers, fish age and growth, the effects of nonnative fishes on native fish communities, and management techniques that reduce the impact of nonnative fishes. His research findings are published in numerous technical reports and publications.

Since 1983, John has been a research associate with CSU's Larval Fish Laboratory, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology. He earned a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's degree in fishery and wildlife biology from CSU.

Past Researcher of the Year recipients Bob Burdick and Ed Wick co-presented this year's award.

"I've worked with John early in both of our careers on the Yampa River and have been professionally acquainted with him for about 30 years," Bob said. "There is no question in my mind that he has exceeded the standard of a longstanding commitment in assisting to recover endangered Colorado River fishes and contributing significantly to the knowledge of their life history and ecological needs."

In accepting the award, John acknowledged that he is fortunate that his life's work has taken place on one of the most scenic and amazing rivers in the West. "As pleasant as that is," he said, "the true rewards of my career are working with outstanding individuals who are dedicated to recovering these rare and special fish." 🐟