

Wick named first recipient of outstanding researcher of the year award



Ed Wick volunteers to help with research projects related to endangered fish recovery, including a nonnative fish removal and Colorado pikeminnow young-of-the-year abundance study in backwater habitat along the Green River in 2009.

**F**ew individuals have been, or continue to be, as strong an advocate for recovery as Biologist Ed Wick. From a researcher's perspective, his name is practically synonymous with the study of endangered fishes and their habitats in the Upper Colorado River Basin. For this reason, the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program named him the first recipient of the program's Outstanding Researcher of the Year Award in 1999.

Ed's work with endangered fishes began in 1975 as a student at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colo. There he cooperated in a baseline survey of fishes in the Yampa and White rivers in western Colorado. As an employee of the Colorado Division of Wildlife and CSU's Larval Fish Laboratory from 1977 to 1985, that initial effort expanded into an endangered fish monitoring program including the Gunnison and Colorado rivers, with emphasis on early life stages. His research findings were crucial to investigations of larval fish taxonomy and biology.

When the Recovery Program was being established in the late 1980s, little was known about the distribution, life history and biology of endangered and other native fish in the Upper Basin. Ed's dedication and determination were instrumental in developing that knowledge.

In 1980, when Colorado pikeminnow spawning areas were still unknown, Ed and other researchers sampled 50 miles of the Yampa River within Dinosaur National Monument and located Colorado pikeminnow larvae in lower Yampa Canyon.

In 1981, Ed joined a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service team that tracked radio-telemetered Colorado pikeminnow in several rivers of the Green River Basin. Just before the Fourth of July holiday, most of the telemetered fish had moved and could not be found. The

only location not searched was Yampa Canyon. Ed insisted on the need to locate these fish and was the only researcher willing to raft through the canyon during the holiday to look for them. As it turned out, Ed and his oarsman found the missing fish and located the spawning site in Yampa Canyon.

Ed helped define the existence, distribution and abundance of larval razorback sucker in the Middle and Lower Green rivers. He is also involved in geomorphological investigations that may shed light on reproductive success at the primary razorback sucker spawning site in the Middle Green River.

While Ed's work ethic is respected by most researchers, it is embraced by few, for it is well known that those who went into the field with Ed, rarely made it back before dark. His tireless devotion to, and enthusiasm for, the Colorado River ecosystem and its endangered fishes has been the source for many positive and innovative actions of the Recovery Program.

"Although Ed has published several important research papers, his greatest contribution to the recovery effort are his ideas that stem from an intimate knowledge of the fish and the habitats they occupy," said Recovery Program Instream Flow Coordinator Bob Muth who presented the award. "Ed was among the first to recognize the importance of floodplain habitat to both young and adult razorback sucker."

This recognition led to the Recovery Program's initial efforts to acquire and restore those floodplain habitats in the early 1990s.

"Ed's sincere commitment to the recovery of the big-river fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin has always been a top priority," said Recovery Program Director Henry Maddux. "For his tireless and unceasing advocacy on behalf of the fish and all he has contributed to their recovery, we recognize and thank him."