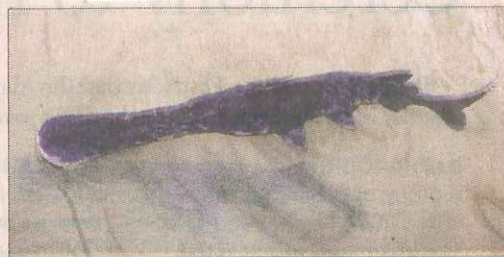


## CADDO LAKE

## Prehistoric species is back



Photos by Sue Ogrocki/The Associated Press

**Texas aquatic biologist** Pete Diaz (left, assisted by Matt Cooper) implants a radio transmitter into a paddlefish. The ancient fish was almost wiped out when natural river flows changed.

## Rare paddlefish now can be electronically tracked

**UNCERTAIN** — In Texas' only naturally formed lake, there used to swim a massive, open-mouthed dinosaur-era fish with a long snout. Now, decades after the paddlefish was almost wiped out, it's coming back to Caddo Lake.

This time, the fish, equipped with implanted transmitters, will be closely tracked by scientists, researchers and students in 20 schools as part of an effort among private, state and federal agencies to revitalize a long-damaged ecosystem by changing the water releases down Big Cypress Bayou from the dam at nearby Lake O' The Pines.

Traditionally, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released water largely to prevent flooding. But it failed to account for the



Staff Graphic

river's natural flows, said Laura Huffman, director of the Nature Conservancy in Texas. The stronger flows, or "spring pulses," signaled to the paddlefish that it was time to migrate to their spawning grounds. When the flows disappeared, so did the paddlefish.

A new agreement with the Corps of Engineers and a local water provider will allow the re-

leases to more closely mimic the watershed's natural flows while also providing flood control. The belief is that will allow the paddlefish, long on the state's list of threatened marine life, to once again flourish, Huffman said.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inserted transmitters into the paddlefish, which can grow to 7 feet long. Three receiving towers along different parts of the watershed will help scientists monitor the fish.

Students, meanwhile, will track them on the Caddo Lake Institute's website. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will track them from small boats in areas of the 26,000-acre lake where there are no receivers.

*Ramit Plushnick-Masti,  
The Associated Press*