

Paddlefish released in east Texas waters

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the help of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Collins Academy released over 2,500 paddlefish in Caddo Lake and the Big Cypress Basin Wednesday. Paddlefish released on Big Cypress 2 years ago are said to be thriving.

"Two years ago when we released the first 47 fish that were implanted with transmitters survival was really high," says Tim Bister, District Fisheries Biologist with TPWD.

27 of the paddlefish released Wednesday have also been fitted with transmitters that can be powered with batteries for about 1 year. The study will be long term since paddlefish don't breed until they are 6 to 8 years old. The first release noted that the fish swam upstream to the dam below Lake O' the Pines. The release on Caddo Lake will determine if they leave the lake in search of a waterway with a current.

Paddlefish went missing from the area after dams were built upstream of the east Texas waterways in 1960. It is the oldest living animal species in north America (300 million years old) and can grow to a length of 7 feet and a weight of 200 pounds.

Paddlefish are on the Texas 'threatened species' list. They diet on plankton and will not bite fishing hooks.