

Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*)



Current Status : Threatened

18 out of 23 species of sturgeon all around the world are threatened.

Current Project on Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

Kitigan Zibi is currently working on a Species at Risk project dealing with lake sturgeon. With information that will be gathered throughout the project we are hoping to establish an adequate protection plan as well as gain a better understanding about lake sturgeon habitat and spawning grounds.

During the duration of this project we are going to study sturgeon spawning grounds, migration patterns, and we will also try to characterize their habitat quality. To do this we are going to capture 20 lake sturgeon, place transmitters inside their abdominal cavity and then track them, using telemetry, for 52 weeks.

Presently we are following the migration patterns of 18 mature lake sturgeon. They have utilized all of our study area which includes the Eagle, Hibou, Desert and Gatineau Rivers. Some of them have traveled more than 200 km since May 2006. This project has a high scientific value. It is the first time that lake sturgeon from the Gatineau Valley have been studied.

About the Sturgeon

- Their skeleton is partly bone and partly cartilaginous. It has five rows of bony plates, called scutes, along its back and its sides.
- They have a shark-like tail(upper lobe is larger than lower one).
- They are toothless and are specialized bottom feeders. They have 4 barbells on the bottom of their snout which are used to search for food. They can lunge their lips forward in order to feed.
- Adult sturgeon are dark colored on their backs and sides with a lightly colored belly.
- They are adapted to water temperatures ranging from 3-24 degrees celcius.
- Lake sturgeon can live past the age of 100.

Reproduction

- Females reach sexual maturity at 20-28yrs of age
- Males reach sexual maturity at 18-20 yrs of age
- Females spawn every 4 to 6 yrs
- Males spawn on average every 2 yrs
- Sturgeon start spawning when water temperatures are between 12 and 14 degrees Celsius. [1]
- Sturgeon usually spawn in fast flowing waters found below rapids.[2]

Main Threats

- Over harvesting for meat & caviar
- Poaching
- Destruction of habitat & spawning grounds due to construction of dams
- Habitat contamination caused by chemicals, toxins and fertilizers



References

[1] Lane, J.A., C.B. Portt and C.K. Minns. 1996a. Nursery habitat characteristics of Great Lakes fishes. Can. MS Rpt. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 2338.42 pp.

[2] La Haye M., S. Guenette, et P. Dumont. 1990. Utilisation de la frayere de la riviere Ouareau par l'Esturgeon jaune suite a l'eboulis survenu en mars 1990. Quebec, Ministere du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Peche, Direction regionale de Montreal, Rapport de travaux 06-07.