

Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*)

Pennsylvania Endangered Fish Species

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G3G4 (vulnerable)

Identification

The lake sturgeon is the second largest of Pennsylvania's sturgeons, reaching seven feet in length. Adults are olive-brown to gray on the back and sides and white below, with dark brown to gray fins. The rows of bony scales on the top and sides are the same color as the body.

Biology-Natural History

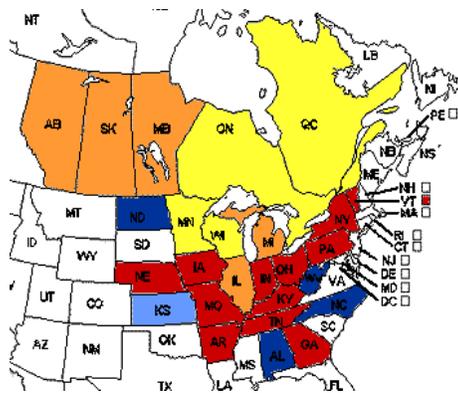
Lake sturgeon spawn for the first time when they're 15 to 20 years of age. Spawning occurs in the swifter portions of streams, or over rocky shorelines of lakes, from early May to late June. The black eggs stick to rocks and logs and hatch within 10 days. The tiny young are nourished by a yolk sac for another 10 to 20 days, then-like adults-they feed on small bottom dwelling animals. Males spawn at 2-to 3-year intervals, females every four to six years. Lake Sturgeon may reach 80 years of age.



Photo Credit: John G. Shedd Aquarium

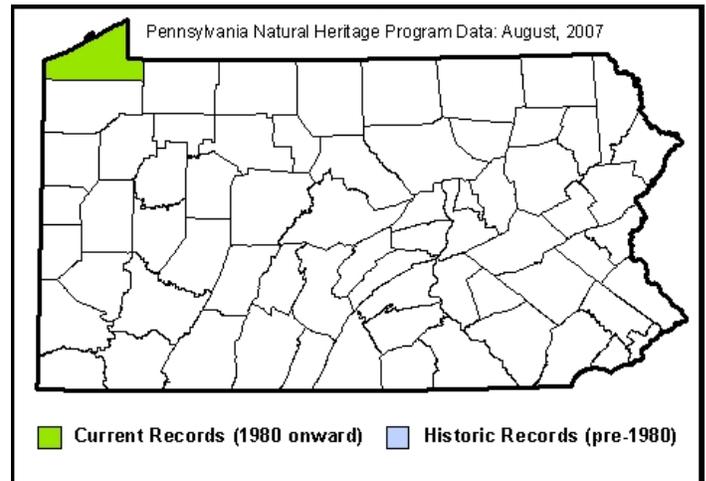
North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



State/Province Status Ranks

- SX – presumed extirpated
- SH – possibly extirpated
- S1 – critically imperiled
- S2 – imperiled
- S3 – vulnerable
- S4 – apparently secure
- S5 – secure
- Not ranked/under review



Habitat

Lake sturgeon live in larger rivers and lakes. In Pennsylvania, they are presently known to occur only in Lake Erie.

Reasons for being Endangered

The pollution of large western Pennsylvania rivers, and the building of locks and dams which prevented upstream movement and spawning, eliminated lake sturgeon from these waters. Over fishing seriously reduced the Lake Erie populations. Slow to mature and reproduce, lake sturgeon are very vulnerable to environmental changes.

Management Practices

Legal harvest of lake sturgeon is prohibited. Pollution abatement is proceeding in portions of Lake Erie and in the large rivers, but dams still block upstream movement of lake sturgeon.

References:

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: August 21, 2007).



Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.

