

Shortnose Sturgeon

Acipenser brevirostrum

STATUS	Special Concern 	Not Listed 
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DRAWING BY DUANE RIEWER

Species Description

The Shortnose Sturgeon is a heavily-armoured, elongated fish with five rows of bony plates (scutes). It can grow to just over 1 m in length. It has four barbels (whisker-like organs) in front of its mouth. Its snout (rostrum) is flattened below and relatively short. It has 19-22 anal fin rays, 19-22 dorsal fin rays, and an extended upper tail lobe. It usually has an olive brown or green back and a white belly, with thick, slippery, leathery skin.

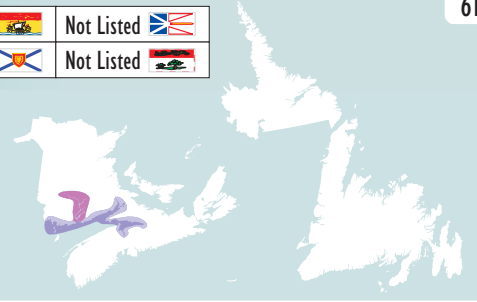


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Found from the Saint John River in New Brunswick south to Florida. In Canada, it is only known to spawn in the lower Saint John River.



Habitat

In the Saint John River, the Shortnose Sturgeon lives in fresh and brackish waters, rarely going out to sea although it has been observed in other estuaries in the Bay of Fundy. Spawning occurs in river sections with a high flow rate and a gravelly or boulder bottom substrate.



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Lower Saint John River



© ALICIA PRAY-LESUE

Bay of Fundy estuary

These bottom-dwellers are often seen by fishers in the Saint John River and other estuaries of the Bay of Fundy, and must be released immediately to avoid harming them.

Interesting Points

- It ranges from the Saint John River in New Brunswick to the St. Johns River in Florida.
- Dinosaurs of the deep: sturgeons are among the oldest of ray-finned fish species, with fossils dating back to over 200 million years ago.
- Shortnose Sturgeons and Atlantic Sturgeons can live to be over 60 years old!



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Fishers can help by reporting Shortnose Sturgeon they accidentally catch and release

Similar Species

Atlantic Sturgeon:

Snout much longer and more tapered; mouth is smaller (<55% of body width); skin rough to the touch; 25-30 anal fin rays and 38-46 dorsal fin rays; often much longer than 1 m; often occurring in the same river habitat, although this species spends much of its life in the sea.



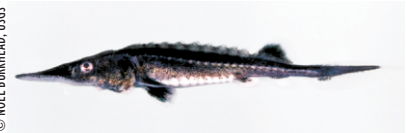
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Threats to Survival

- Accidental catch from Gaspereau and Shad fisheries, which may result in migration abandonment.
- Illegal fishing.
- Habitat alteration due to large dams, which result in turbine-related mortalities and affect availability and quality of spawning habitat.
- Accidental discharges of toxins or other pollutants by industries along the Saint John River.
- Introduction of harmful exotic fish species and diseases.

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Juvenile Shortnose Sturgeon

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Identification by short nose and wide mouth

How You Can Help

For fishers in the Maritime Provinces: follow all fishing regulations established by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as outlined in angling summaries which are available from your provincial government. If you accidentally catch this species in the lower Saint John River, release it immediately and report your sighting! Do not keep any sturgeons (Shortnose or Atlantic) that are less than 120 cm long. Catching sturgeons in June when they are spawning is prohibited.

Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: DFO Species at Risk 1-866-891-0771

Info: www.sararegistry.gc.ca, www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes

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