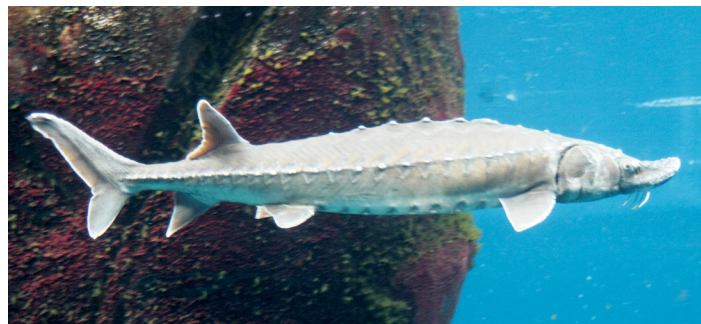


# Atlantic Sturgeon

*Acipenser oxyrinchus* (Maritimes Population)



© MONTREAL BIODOME

## Species Description

The Atlantic Sturgeon is a heavily-armoured, elongated fish with five rows of bony plates (scutes). It can grow to over 4 m in length. It has four barbels (whisker-like organs) in front of its mouth. Its snout (rostrum) is flattened below and relatively long. It has 25-30 anal fin rays, 38-46 dorsal fin rays, and an extended upper tail lobe. It usually has a brassy-tan to brown green back and a white belly, with thick, rough, leathery skin.



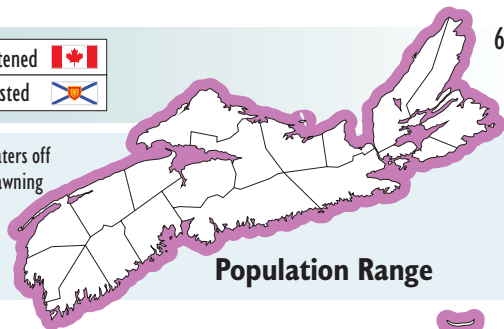
© DUANE RAY

## STATUS

Threatened 

Not Listed 

Occurs throughout the waters off Nova Scotia, although spawning has not been confirmed. Found from Ungava Bay (off Hudson Strait) south to Florida.



**Population Range**

67

## Habitat

Lives in rivers, estuaries, bays and in the ocean. Juveniles occur in large freshwater rivers and travel to the ocean to mature in saltwater. Adults return to freshwater to spawn in river sections with a high flow rate, a gravelly or rocky bottom substrate, and below waterfalls in deep pools over hard-surfaced substrates. Spawning is known to occur in the Saint John River in New Brunswick and the St. Lawrence River in Quebec.



© LAURA BITTNER, FELKER

Lower Saint John River



© MINE DADSWELL

Sturgeon outside a weir in the Bay of Fundy

These bottom-dwelling fish are often seen by fishers along the coast or in larger rivers or estuaries.

## Interesting Points

- The largest reported Atlantic Sturgeon was caught in the Saint John River in 1924, and was 4.6 m long and weighed 365 kg (over 800 lbs)!
- It has been under a fishing moratorium in the USA since 1998. In Canada, a small commercial fishery still occurs in the Saint John River.
- Atlantic Sturgeon live on a diet of crustaceans, worms, and mollusks and can live over 60 years!



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Adult weighing 330 pounds and 2 m in length



© MIKE DADSWELL

Sturgeon research

Atlantic Shortnose



Snouts and mouths

© NOEL DUBREUIL, USGS



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Juvenile Shortnose Sturgeon

## Threats to Survival

- Overexploitation from commercial fishing historically lowered Atlantic Sturgeon populations.
- Habitat alteration due to large dams, which result in turbine-related mortalities and affect availability and quality of spawning habitat.
- Bycatch in gaspereau and shad fisheries.
- Toxins or other pollutants that significantly reduce river water quality.
- Introduction of harmful exotic fish species and diseases.



© RYAN SCANTON

Sturgeon killed by dam turbine

## How You Can Help

Fishers can follow all fishing regulations established by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. If you catch this species, release any specimen less than 120 cm carefully and immediately. The fishing season is closed in June to protect this species during spawning. Report sightings to Acadia University (contact below) and report tagged fish to the address on the tag.



© ALAIN BELLIVEAU

Release any sturgeon shorter than 120 cm

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** DFO Species at Risk 1-866-891-0771 or [xmarsara@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:xmarsara@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

**Info:** [www.sararegistry.gc.ca](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca), [www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes)

**Sighting Reports:** [www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings), [mike.dadswell@acadiau.ca](mailto:mike.dadswell@acadiau.ca)

**Stewardship:** Report tagged sturgeon to the address on the tag (yellow- Acadia, white- UNB) 68