

# CONNECTICUT RIVER ATLANTIC SALMON COMMISSION

## Connecticut River

# Shortnose Sturgeon

*The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission and its member agencies are working with partners to restore Atlantic salmon, American shad, and other migratory fish to the Connecticut River basin through fisheries management including hatchery production and release of salmon, harvest management, habitat restoration, fishway construction, dam removal, research and public education.*



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ATLANTIC SALMON  
COMMISSION

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### Shortnose Sturgeon Trivia

- (1) Shortnose sturgeon bodies are covered by (a) scales (b) rough bony plates or scutes (c) smooth scutes (d) bristles
- (2) While sturgeon average 30 years of age, the oldest known female lived to an age of (a) 100 (b) 32 (c) 45 (d) 67
- (3) Threats to the recovery of shortnose sturgeon include (a) overfishing (b) poor water quality (c) dams that obstruct fish passage (d) all of the above
- (4) It is not legal to fish for, keep or kill a sturgeon in the Connecticut River (a) true (b) false
- (5) Male sturgeon spawn every other year once they mature at age (a) 1-2 (b) 3-5 (c) 6-10 (d) 11-14

Trivia Question Answers: (1) b (2) d (3) d (4) a (5) c

## Shortnose Sturgeon Facts: Did You Know?

- Sturgeon do not have scales like other fish, they have more primitive scutes or bony plates covering their bodies;
- They vacuum up dinner, worms, larvae, snails, plants, crayfish, even freshwater mussels, from the stream bottom through a toothless mouth;
- Female sturgeon spawn every few years after they become mature between the ages of 8-12;
- They produce between 40,000 and 200,000 eggs, depending on their size;
- They spawn in the mainstem Connecticut River between Holyoke and Turners Falls in April or May when the river temperature is about 48°F;
- No successful reproduction has been observed among sturgeon found below the Holyoke dam;
- Eggs hatch in a week or two, the young first hide along the stream bottom, then they begin feeding at night - drifting downstream with the current until they find places where flow is slower and safer;
- Sturgeon feed in freshwater and brackish throughout their life if they can move freely;

### Atlantic Sturgeon

Atlantic sturgeon are also native to the Connecticut River. Like shortnose sturgeon, Atlantics evolved with the dinosaurs. They look a lot like shortnose sturgeon but are twice as big as and have smooth scutes. Atlantic sturgeon live in the estuary or ocean and migrate up and down the East Coast. Very few, if any, Atlantic sturgeon have been observed in the Connecticut River in recent years.

### Shortnose Sturgeon Geography

- Shortnose sturgeon range from Canada to Florida;
- There are 2 known populations in the Connecticut River, 1 above the Holyoke Dam and 1 below the dam;

### Status of Shortnose Sturgeon

- Shortnose sturgeon are only one of two federally endangered fish in New England;
- Scientists believe that there are about 1,200 sturgeon in the Connecticut River about 1/3 of which live somewhere between the Holyoke and Turners Falls dams;
- Sturgeon have been found in the Chicopee, Westfield, Deerfield and mainstem Connecticut River;
- Only the fish above Holyoke are reproducing successfully;
- You can be fined \$20,000 for harming or harassing shortnose sturgeon!

Shortnose sturgeon are the smallest sturgeon on the East Coast. Adults are about 2-4 feet in length and weigh about 14 pounds. Please report sightings of sturgeon under 18".