

# Historical Distribution of Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) in the Lake Michigan Basin

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## Abstract

As part of an attempt to reconstruct the original distribution and relative abundance of lake sturgeon in tributaries to Lake Michigan, we surveyed old newspapers (mid-1800s to early 1900s) and other documents for accounts of sturgeon captured by sport and commercial fishers. We also reviewed the zooarcheological literature for records of sturgeon remains from prehistoric sites. We are especially interested in reports of sturgeon from sites to which they no longer have access because of the construction of dams that have blocked upstream spawning migrations. Over 200 records that can be plotted with some degree of accuracy were obtained. Resulting maps reveal a somewhat broader distribution than previously published maps based on museum specimens, but there were few unequivocal reports of sturgeon from reaches above dams in cases where they were not already known to have occurred in those reaches. This may be due in part to the fact that dams were constructed in many regions prior to the first printing of newspapers. Based on what has been published, the zooarcheological record seems more complete for the Michigan portion of the basin.

## Procedural Notes

 Historical records of sturgeon could sometimes be plotted with high accuracy if they referred to known features such as dams.

 Some records could be plotted only with low accuracy (e.g., a reference to a sturgeon caught at a particular town or village).

 Historical records of sturgeon caught in lakes were arbitrarily plotted 3 km from shore unless precise locality descriptions were provided.

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