

Great Plains Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office News

FUN FIELD FINDS

Field season opens up the possibility to see some truly unique things. In this edition of our newsletter, we highlight some of our more interesting field finds.

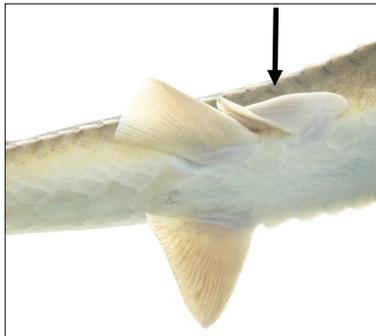
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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“Fin”nomenal variability



Shovelnose sturgeon can exhibit drastically different coloration. The shovelnose sturgeon on the right displays typical coloration, but coloration can be lighter or darker, such as this individual on the left.



This shovelnose sturgeon, from the Missouri River below Gavins Point Dam, has an extra pelvic fin! It is currently on display at the Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery Aquarium. Photo by Sam Stukel.



Occasionally we find fish that have been injured and healed. This shovelnose sturgeon had a snout deformity, but seemed to be doing well otherwise.

Remnants of the past

You never know what you'll find in nets dragged on the bottom of the Missouri River. Elk and bison skulls from our nets remind us that these species roamed the Great Plains not so long ago.



Everything eats

During our routine sampling, we interrupt organisms during their daily routine. This pallid sturgeon (lower left) was caught with a channel catfish hanging from its mouth. A largemouth bass (lower right) had almost finished swallowing a yellow perch. Invertebrates need to eat, too. When identifying samples under the microscope, we happened onto this stonefly larvae with a caddisfly larvae halfway down its throat.



Aquatics least wanted



Electrofishing surveys can turn up some interesting finds. A common goldfish was caught at one of our sample lakes. Goldie was likely a former pet that was illegally released into the lake.



The invasive zebra mussel has an amazing ability to use any hard substrate as habitat. We found one individual attached to a floy tag on a shovelnose sturgeon (left). The right picture shows how hundreds of zebra mussels transformed our 1/4 inch thick rope into a 2 inch thick rope!

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