

Outreach Inspiring Lake Sturgeon Conservation

Currently, Lake Sturgeon are listed as a threatened species in New York. A combination of habitat degradation and overfishing has been implicated in the decline of the ecologically, culturally, and formerly economically important species. Interestingly, in a recent review of Lake Sturgeon status, it was stated that aside from direct threats, the greatest threat to Lake Sturgeon recovery is likely, “the loss of interest on the part of the public and politicians” (*Bruch et al. 2016*). Throughout the Great Lakes region including New York, there are ongoing efforts focused on Lake Sturgeon restoration.

In October 2018, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) received a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund to focus on Lake Sturgeon outreach and education. Lake Sturgeon conservation messaging was developed and delivered in a variety of ways to multiple stakeholders and groups. For example:

- Collaborative efforts with partners included displays at sport and outdoor shows throughout New York highlighting the importance and unique nature of Lake Sturgeon. NYSG organized or co-organized additional targeted events, and a brief video was released along with other social media.
- Events with Lake Sturgeon displays were attended by more than 25,000 people, with hundreds engaged directly by the project’s principal investigator. Collaborations by NYSG, the Aquarium of Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and 4-H reached 56 students in programs that dealt specifically with Lake Sturgeon conservation.
- More than 21,700 people were reached via Facebook and Twitter posts/shares and NYSG website stories referencing the NYSG Lake Sturgeon video.
- Wooden Lake Sturgeon replicas were produced and delivered to project partners that interact with thousands of stakeholders annually.

Project outreach and education efforts will continue in 2020.



Juvenile lake sturgeon prior to being stocked into the Lake Ontario watershed where it may survive to be over 100 years old! Photo: Jesse Lepak, NYSG

New York Sea Grant Lake Sturgeon Video:
<https://seagrantsunysb.edu/articles/r/12914>

Project Partners:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-New York
New York Sturgeon for Tomorrow
U.S. Geological Survey
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division
Disney Conservation Fund

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Environmental Literacy & Workforce Development in New York.

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