

Lake Sturgeon Conservation: What Can I Do To Help?

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Juvenile lake sturgeon prior to being stocked into the Lake Ontario watershed where it may survive to be over 100 years old!

Image credit:

Jesse Lepak, NYSG

Lake Sturgeon Are Important

Lake Sturgeon are the largest freshwater fish found in the Great Lakes. They are often called “Living Fossils” because their appearance hasn’t changed for millions of years. Lake Sturgeon can reach 8 feet long, just over 300 pounds and a little more than 150 years old! They are an important component of many indigenous cultures, and they have inspired artwork, research, habitat restoration, and other conservation efforts. Lake Sturgeon are also indicators of the health of the lakes and rivers where they live. Some of the oldest Lake Sturgeon living today could have seen the turn-of-the-century in 1899, which means they have been exposed to human pollution and habitat damage for over 100 years! Lake Sturgeon also serve an important role in food webs as they are one of the few species that can eat invasive zebra and quagga mussels, and they also consume invasive Round Goby.

Lake Sturgeon Can Use Your Help

Lake Sturgeon are highly susceptible to things like over-harvest and degradation or loss of access to their spawning grounds. Lake Sturgeon also need access to the right conditions to spawn successfully, like clean, fast flowing water, exposed cobble and gravel, and relatively few egg predators in the spawning area. This is why protecting Lake Sturgeon also means protecting the habitat that is important to them.

Please tell us what you did to help!



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New York Sea Grant is part of a nationwide network of 34 university-based programs working with coastal communities through the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Sea Grant research and outreach programs promote better understanding, conservation, and use of America's coastal resources. Sea Grant is funded in New York through SUNY and Cornell University and federally through NOAA.

Want to Help Lake Sturgeon?

Here are Some Easy Ways You Can Help at Home:

Raise awareness about Lake Sturgeon:

One of the most significant indirect threats to Lake Sturgeon is a lack of awareness. Lake Sturgeon are found throughout the Great Lakes watershed (Figure at right) and the activities that occur there impact Lake Sturgeon and their habitat. Learning about Lake Sturgeon and sharing what you have learned with friends and family helps others understand how important they are. Here are some things you can try:

- Join a group that supports Lake Sturgeon conservation like NY Sturgeon for Tomorrow www.facebook.com/NY-Sturgeon-For-Tomorrow-221935594534480
- Learn more about Lake Sturgeon www.nyseagrant.org/lakesturgeon
- Tell a friend or your family about Lake Sturgeon and why they are important.

Use water efficiently:

Freshwater is an important resource for the living things on the planet, especially fish like Lake Sturgeon. Minimizing water use and waste will leave clean, fresh water for future generations of sturgeon and people.

- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
- Turn off the water while washing your hands.
- Collect waste or rain water for plants and gardens instead of using fresh water.
- Consider a short shower instead of a bath.
- Consider a short shower instead of a longer one.
- Wash your bike or parents' car with a bucket and sponge instead of using the hose.

New York State Great Lakes Basin



Reduce pollutants and trash entering the environment:

Reducing waste and the materials you use helps keep pollutants out of the air and water. Reducing, reusing, repurposing, and recycling are all ways to directly stop waste and pollution from entering our waterways.

- Picking up, and properly disposing of trash and recycling to prevent it from entering our waterbodies.
- Donate old clothes and/or toys to keep them out of the trash.
- Repurpose packaging and containers to help organize your things.
- Reuse plastic bottles or bags when you can before you recycle them.
- Organize a trash cleanup at home or school.
- Turn off lights/devices/screens when they are not in use.
- Unplug chargers and other equipment with indicator lights when not in use.
- Keep doors closed to limit the heater or air conditioner.
- Walk/bike versus using motor vehicles.

Minimize your energy use:

Lake Sturgeon call the Great Lakes their home, and the demand for energy production, storage, and delivery in the Great Lakes basin has impacted the environment for centuries. States like New York are moving away from using non-renewable energy sources to reduce these impacts. This will take time, and you can help now by reducing the amount of energy you use.

Be creative... think of your own ideas to help support Lake Sturgeon conservation and tell us about it.

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