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**DEC ADVISES ANGLERS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LAKE STURGEON IN THE GREAT LAKES AND ONEIDA LAKE**

Anglers should be aware of spawning lake sturgeon in tributaries of the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, Finger Lakes and Oneida Lake, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today advised.

“The return of lake sturgeon to spawn in New York state’s tributaries reflects well on efforts by DEC and our partners to restore this valuable native species,” said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. “These fish have been part of New York’s natural landscape for thousands of years and through sound management they will remain here for future generations to enjoy. It’s extremely important that anglers fishing these waters are aware of the presence of spawning sturgeon and take all measures to avoid catching them.”

Last season, DEC staff received numerous reports of lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) caught by anglers around the state. Lake sturgeon are listed as a threatened species in New York; therefore, there is no open season for the fish and possession is prohibited. Anglers who unintentionally hook one should follow these practices to ensure the fish is returned to the water unharmed:

- Avoid bringing the fish into the boat if possible.
- Use pliers to remove the hook; sturgeon are almost always hooked in the mouth.
- Always support the fish horizontally. Do not hold sturgeon in a vertical position by their head, gills or tails, even for taking pictures.
- Never touch their eyes or gills.
- Minimize their time out of the water.

Anglers are much more likely to encounter sturgeon in May and June when the fish gather to spawn on clean gravel, cobble shoals and in stream rapids.

Lake sturgeon populations are recovering as a result of protection and stocking efforts by DEC and partners. Since 1994, lake sturgeon have been periodically stocked by DEC into Black Lake, Cayuga Lake, the Genesee River, Oneida Lake, the Oswegatchie River, Raquette River, St. Lawrence River, and St. Regis River. Lake sturgeon are often tagged as part of ongoing studies conducted by state or federal agencies and their partners. If a tagged sturgeon is found, it’s important to follow the reporting instructions on the tag or contact a regional DEC office for assistance.

**(MORE)**

Lake sturgeon are an ancient fish that first appeared during the Upper Cretaceous period 136 million years ago when dinosaurs still walked the earth. Lake sturgeon are one of three species of sturgeon native to New York, the others being shortnose sturgeon and Atlantic sturgeon. Lake sturgeon are native to the Mississippi River Basin, Great Lakes Basin and Hudson Bay region of North America. They are the largest fish native to the Great Lakes, growing up to seven or more feet in length and weighing up to 300 pounds. Male sturgeon live as long as 55 years and females live as long as 80 to 150 years.

Lake sturgeon were once abundant in New York, but commercial fishing, dam building and habitat loss decimated populations. Today they can still be found in Lake Erie, Niagara River, Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence River, Genesee River, Grasse River, Oswegatchie River, Black Lake, Lake Champlain, Cayuga Lake, Oneida Lake, Oneida River, Seneca River, Oswego River and Cayuga Canal.

For further information visit the links on the DEC website:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26035.html>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7008.html>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26045.html>

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