



Hook, Line, and Sinker

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The Official Newsletter of The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen

More About Sturgeons

By *Chris Kavanaugh*

As a follow-up to the article that appeared in last month's newsletter I'd like to report on Dr. Bellig's identification of the fish and talk a little more about sturgeons.

I received confirmation from Dr. Bellig that in fact the fish caught at the SCCMR rally was a lake sturgeon. Dr. Bellig reports, "No doubt, it is a lake sturgeon. First documented specimen from the Minnesota River...it does look emaciated."

The record of the fish is being entered into the DNR Natural Heritage Database. I provided specifics about the fish, length, weight, date caught and location, to them following Dr. Bellig's identification.

Of the two sturgeon species found in Minnesota (shovelnose and lake), the shovelnose sturgeon is much more common. Below is some information about the distribution, biology, and life history of each species.

Shovelnose sturgeon are listed as a "species of special concern" in Minnesota because it is extremely uncommon in Minnesota and has unique or highly specific habitat requirements. They are a migratory species native to the Mississippi River drainage and found in Minnesota in the Mississippi River north to St. Anthony Falls, in the St. Croix River north to Taylor Falls, and in the Minnesota River north to Granite Falls. Shovelnose sturgeon seldom exceed a length of 30 inches and a weight of 5 pounds. This sturgeon is found in the open channels of large rivers and is very tolerant of turbid (cloudy) water. They feed primarily on aquatic insects, sucking them off the bottom through their mouth. They spawn for the first time when they are 5 to 7 years old.

The lake sturgeon is also listed as "species of special concern" in Minnesota. This species is even more uncommon today than the shovelnose sturgeon, although that has not always been the case. Lake sturgeon are found throughout Minnesota with the exception of the extreme southwest corner of the state that drains to the Missouri River. The lake sturgeon was once very common and commercially fished in the Rainy

River and the St. Louis River. Today, only remnant populations exist. There are very few confirmed records of this species since the turn of the century. Lake sturgeon is capable of exceeding 300 pounds and reaching a length of over 8 feet. They are found in large, moderately clear rivers and lakes. They migrate up tributary streams to spawn. Age at first spawning is reported to be around 20 years and it is thought they spawn only once every three to seven years. The oldest recorded lake sturgeon was 152 years old.

Both species of sturgeon have been negatively affected by siltation, pollution and dams that block migration to spawning areas. Sturgeons are remarkable creatures and warrant our protection even though they have little commercial or sport value in Minnesota. I think there could be a strong argument about the sport value of these fish, I think there were a lot of people that enjoyed the battle they saw when this particular fish was caught.

The record of this fish being caught has generated a lot of discussion and excitement about the Minnesota River.

Fishing Roundtable

I had the opportunity to attend this year's Fishing Roundtable, which was held in St Cloud the weekend of January 7th and 8th. I was a little worried when Scott first asked me to go. I didn't think I would fit in with all of the important people who would be there. Well, I was totally wrong. Ron Lindner of In-Fisherman and Ron Schara from the Tribune were as friendly as could be. We even sat down together for lunch one afternoon. Rod Sando, DNR Commissioner, also joined us. It was a real learning experience to be in the room with these people who know so much about fish and fishing, even though most of them are not as well known as Lindner and Schara. It

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was an enjoyable experience, and hopefully we will have accomplished something that will benefit the future of sportfishing in the state of Minnesota.

Editorial-Mike Deinken

You may have just driven four hours to your vacation spot. Maybe it was only fifteen minutes to your favorite local lake. In either case it was something that you had been looking forward to. You jump into the boat and motor to your favorite fishing spot and settle back to relax and enjoy the great outdoors. Out of the blue, and forsaking the rest of the lake, another angler pulls into the very spot you have been casting to. I know quite a few of us have experienced this very situation. What do you do? Is there anything you can do? If you ask them politely to move, it most likely will do no good. This type of person thinks he has the right to fish wherever and whenever they feel like. Arguing with them will only cause frustration, mostly on your part. This is a problem that started when these anglers were very young. It is a question of courtesy and ethics. Something these people never learned. This is the same person who will take more than his limit of fish just because they are biting and he figures it is his due. These people don't realize they are doing something wrong because they were never taught how to be courteous, or the difference between right and wrong. It is a little bit late to start now, as age seems to insulate their brains from the real world.

Is there a solution to this problem? About all I can think of is to teach our children the right way to act in the outdoors. It is not just something that we should be doing in the home. It is time for our children to be taught about this in school. The time for teaching our young about catch and release fishing, and only taking what you can use is now, before it is too late. If we wait any longer, the only place our children will learn anything about fishing will be from books, because the real thing will no longer exist. As for the people with slobbish, unethical behavior, all we can hope for is to outlive them. At this stage of the game they are not likely to change.



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From The President

Well our Membership Drive was a success. Sixteen new members have joined us and the jacket went to Don "Juan" Thorn for 9 new members.

There are many environmental laws being tested and enacted as I write this. 1994 will indeed be interesting to see what direction we are headed. It will all be played out in our media, what they report and how they report it will undoubtedly shape the future of how our natural resources are dealt with.

I had a very interesting talk with the fisheries supervisor at Waterville, Hugh Vallient. I had spoken to him on the subject of our shallow southern Minnesota lakes and how anglers could get some real pleasure from fishing perch in a "Boom, Bust" management type of situation. Well to his credit he has followed up on our chat and seems to have a plan for several of these lakes that freeze out periodically. I have seen (like many of you) what kind of size these perch and other panfish can get in these lakes because of their fertility. The growth and population can be phenomenal and it's relatively inexpensive. I am quite confident that we could have several lakes close to New Ulm with this type of a situation. It will require some help from us and other groups but together we can see this become a reality. One added feature of this is that it could relieve some of the fishing pressure from some of the other area lakes by providing good bluegill, crappie, and perch fishing. Personally I think we should go for it, how about you. Rest assured Hugh will be invited to talk about this very issue and other questions group members may have regarding fish management at a meeting very soon.

Membership Drive

This year's drive tapered off a bit from last year's. Our first drive brought in twenty-nine new members. This year a total of fifteen new members were signed up. Through-out most of the two month drive it seemed like we were only going to have four or five new members brought in this year. On the last night, at our December meeting, one person came in with eight, most of which he signed up on the way to the meeting. There was some question as to whether or not he really signed these people up. It was suggested that he was just trying to buy his way into our good graces by paying the dues with his own money. After further investigation, it has been verified that he did indeed sign everyone he claims to have. All of the new members were found to have signed of their own free will. So the winner of the club jacket this year is Don Thorn. Let's give him a big hand for a job well done. He will get his new jacket as soon as I remember what I did with the slip of paper that had his coat size of it.



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Clear Lake Update

As of this writing the oxygen at Clear Lake is still very high. There is a lot of snow cover on the lake, which in a way contributes to the loss of oxygen. As the snow cover increases the amount of sunlight that can penetrate the lake decreases, causing plant life to start dying. This in turn uses oxygen instead of producing it. I expect in the next couple of weeks the oxygen level will start to drop. If we are lucky, maybe the aeration system will not have to be started this year.

The fishing this winter has gotten off to a very slow start. There have been some reports of people catching some nice size sunfish, but they also had to spend a lot of time on the ice to get them. If the weather would ever settle for more than just a day or two, I think the fishing would turn on a little better. The ice thickness is fairly respectable, ranging somewhere between twelve and fourteen inches. If you head for an area that no one has fished yet, make sure you check the ice as you go. Snow cover can slow the development of ice. When you head out make sure your careful and check that ice.

The club fish houses are on the lake anyone who would like a key, contact Mike Deinken.

What is Water?

Reprinted from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Good anglers are concerned about the fish's primary need-WATER. You probably don't think much about water even though you use it everyday. Water is very important because there's nothing else like it in the world. Fish are not the only animals that could not live without it. We couldn't live without it and can't afford to take it for granted.

There is a lot of water. It covers about 70 percent of the earth, but only about three percent of it is fresh water. Most of the fresh water, about 75 percent, is in the form of ice. In fact, the frozen areas of the world have as much fresh water as all the world's rivers will carry for the next 1,000 years.

The demand for unpolluted fresh water is increasing because the earth's population is increasing. How much water does the average person use? Here are some answers:

In the home, each person uses about 70 gallons of water a day.

It takes three gallons to flush a toilet.

It takes 15 to 30 gallons to take a bath.

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It takes five gallons for a one-minute shower.
It takes ten gallons to wash dishes.

This is a lot of water, but more than half of the water used in the United States is used by industries. For example, it takes 250 tons of water to make a ton of newspaper and ten gallons to produce one gallon of gasoline. You can see why it is important to conserve water.

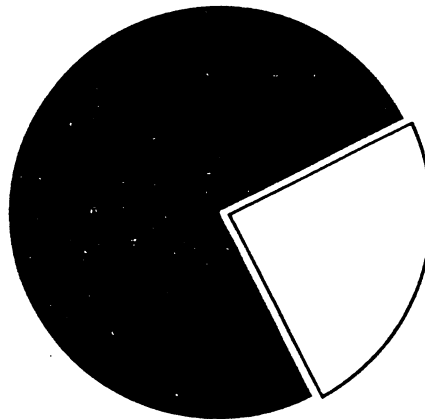
SHARING WATERS

As you have seen, anglers and boaters are not the only ones who use bodies of water and have an effect on fish populations. Industries and power plants use large amounts of water. Communities need water for drinking. Farmers use it to water their crops and livestock. Barges and ships use waterways to bring products to market. Water is also used for waste disposal.

The demands for water use can cause conflicts among those using our water resources. The results are not always good for the fish and not everyone is concerned with fish.

An occasional conflict arises when people want to dam a river for irrigation, for controlling floods, or for the production of electricity. Dams create lakes or reservoirs that are habitat for fish such as largemouth bass and crappie. However, the reservoir destroys several miles of river that might have been prime habitat for trout, smallmouth or rock bass.

Water is too valuable to waste. With so much demand for our water it is important that each of us do our part to conserve it.



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February 24th

Meeting-Club Rooms above Southside Pub

7:30 PM



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