

# What does a Sturgeon look like?



The Lake Sturgeon has a distinctive 'beard' just ahead of its prominent sucker mouth. It can be muddy brown to green/blue in colour with bony plates rather than scales and has large pectoral fins.

# The Sturgeon Are Back...Just!

The Friends of the Spanish River recently held a “Lake Sturgeon Fish Art Contest” for the school children who live along the Lower Spanish River. There were many creative entries including this one by grade five student Taylor Seminiuk of A.B. Ellis Public School in Espanola, Ontario. This “First Place” junior grade school winning art work was so well done that we decided to use it as an example of what a Lake Sturgeon looks like.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation Community and the Friends of the Spanish River have been monitoring the Lake Sturgeon in the Lower Spanish River over healthy population concerns.

Lake Sturgeon were one of four fish species significantly impacted by historic degradation of the Lower Spanish River.

They were listed as a “Species of Concern” in the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for this area. Numbers of Lake Sturgeon in the Spanish River are very likely well below historic numbers but given the rarity of the species, data on the status of Lake Sturgeon is difficult to obtain. Recent assessment netting indicates that there is a good range of age classes present, including a good number of young or juvenile fish. Documentation of recent recruitment to the population is a very good sign.

Throughout the Great Lakes basin, Lake Sturgeon has recently been updated from a species of “special concern” to “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. The recreational and commercial fisheries have been closed in the Great Lakes watershed, including the Spanish River, to reflect the new designation.

Sturgeon have often been described as “living dinosaurs” because of their prehistoric appearance. They have existed on the

earth for at least 200 million years, back to a time when the dinosaurs roamed the earth, and have changed very little since that time.

Lake Sturgeon are Ontario’s largest and longest living species of freshwater fish. They can grow to lengths of 2.5 metres (over eight feet) and weigh a staggering 150 kilograms (330 pounds) and live up to 100 years or more. The females begin spawning between 15 and 25 years old and only spawn once every five to nine years.

Its long life span, slow growth and relatively slow reproduction rates plus increased demand for caviar worldwide make the Lake Sturgeon vulnerable to overharvest.

Details of the Lake Sturgeon monitoring program are posted on the Friends of the Spanish River website at:

**[www.FriendsOfTheSpanishRiver.ca](http://www.FriendsOfTheSpanishRiver.ca)**