

Sturgeon General



Shivaree Weekend Postponed to 2022

After careful consideration, and in light of the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) developments and projections, we have made the difficult decision to **postpone Black Lake Sturgeon Shivaree Weekend from February 5-6, 2021 to February 4-5, 2022.**

Winter 2021 issue

Statewide Sturgeon News	P.1
Membership Renewals	P.2
2020 Field Season Summary	P.3
Chippewa Nature Center	P.4
Burt Lake Preservation Association	P.5
Sturgeon In The Classroom	P.6
2020 Contributions	P.7
Calendar of Events	P.8

The health and safety of our community, volunteers, members, and patrons is our highest priority. Rescheduling this signature event will enable us to provide the experience that our sponsors, contributors, attendees and partners expect and deserve in a safe environment.

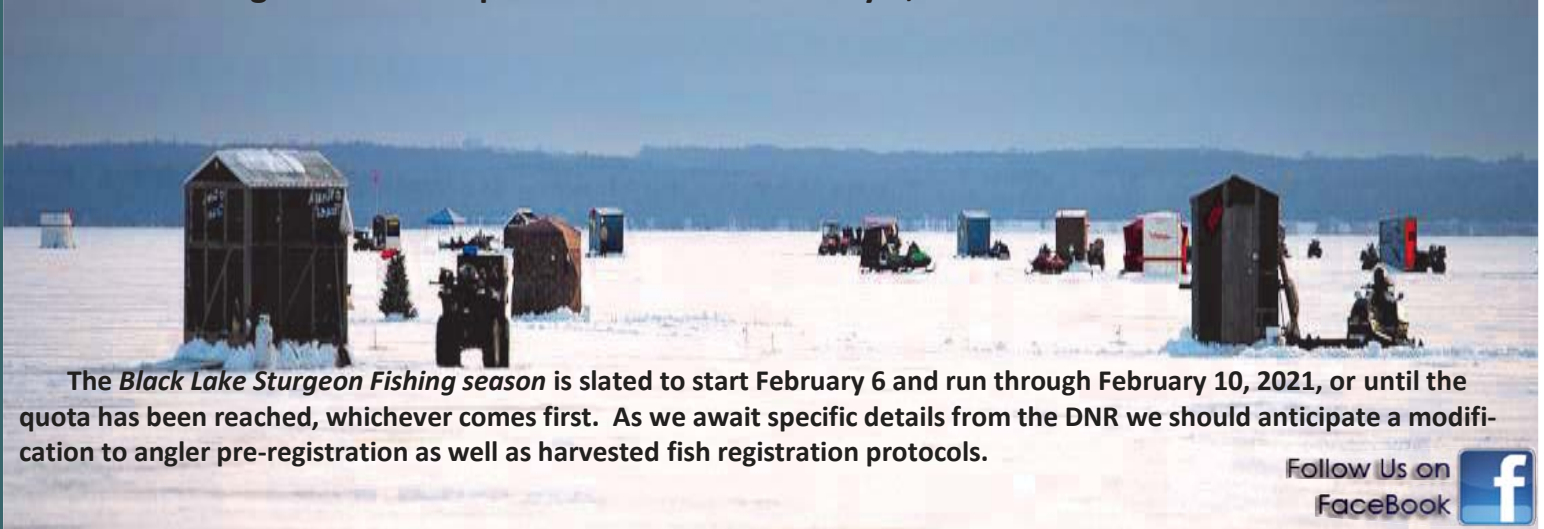
Rescheduling Shivaree will have major negative impact on our fund development potential. **We hope you will consider a tax-deductible contribution** to assist in facilitating our programs going forward. Programs such as:

- Sturgeon Guarding Program
- Purchasing food and equipment for the Hatchery, Rearing and Stocking
- Sturgeon in the Classroom – Statewide Program including Sturgeon on Loan
- Outreach/Education – Stewardship Initiatives
- Tours/Field Trips
- Membership
- Sturgeon Advisory Council




We are sincerely grateful for your past support and we look forward to connecting with you going forward. Until then, stay safe and healthy!

Black Lake Sturgeon Season Opener Slated For February 6, 2021



The *Black Lake Sturgeon Fishing season* is slated to start February 6 and run through February 10, 2021, or until the quota has been reached, whichever comes first. As we await specific details from the DNR we should anticipate a modification to angler pre-registration as well as harvested fish registration protocols.

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Sturgeon General Newsletter
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Annual Membership Renewal

We need your help now, more than ever to continue our work to secure a brighter future for the iconic lake Sturgeon.

Your membership investment and contribution is the lifeblood of this organization and aids in the implementation of the many important programs initiated through Sturgeon For Tomorrow.

Meaningful work is ongoing through Sturgeon in the Classroom, investing funds in the hatchery for rearing and stocking lake sturgeon throughout the Cheboygan River Watershed, Sturgeon Guarding Program, Guided Tours, Outreach and Education, Collaborative Research, Habitat improvements/monitoring, advocacy as well as supporting the development of the highly successful Sturgeon on Loan program.

Use the included **blue membership renewal envelope** or you can renew online using PayPal at:

www.sturgeonfortomorrow.org/membership.php



If your address is printed on a green label on this newsletter, your membership is valid through December 2021.

TESTIMONIAL

I love SFT! I know of no other calling more admirable than a human caring for our fellow beings. Thank you so much. To know that these fantastic creatures are treasured by your organization gives me great joy.
- John E.

President's message...

We are definitely living during an extraordinary period in history. Please know our hearts and thoughts are with many of you who have been deeply impacted by Covid-19.

Even through a global pandemic, our work continues. As you read through the pages of this newsletter, you will see our resilience has kept many of our programs functioning, even though modified.

Our mission today is as important as ever. Through grassroots education, engagement, mobilization, stewardship and advocacy, Sturgeon For Tomorrow will continue to ensure lake sturgeon are safeguarded

and prioritized. Our work isn't possible without your support and together we are having a measurable impact. With your generosity and commitment, we can continue our movement to restore and rehabilitate our iconic lake sturgeon.

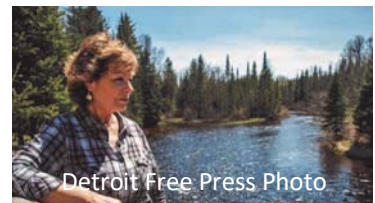
I hope you will explore the work we do and join us in our efforts to ensure future generations continue to engage in our conservation heritage. And, I hope during these times, more than ever, you invest time in the outdoors as it will restore your soul. Fred Bear said, "Go afield with a good attitude, with respect for the wildlife you hunt and for the forest and fields in which you walk. Immerse yourself in the outdoor

experience. It will cleanse your soul and make you a better person." So true!!

Thank you so much for your sustained support and for doing your part for the sturgeon.

Onward and Upward.

Better times are coming!!



Detroit Free Press Photo

Brenda Archambo

2020 Lake Sturgeon Research and Stocking Summary

By Doug Larson, Research Assistant I

Michigan DNR - Michigan State University

The 2020 Black Lake research season began on May 5th when Michigan State University (MSU) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) researchers captured 17 adult Lake Sturgeon ascending the Upper Black River. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) data suggests that Lake Sturgeon Adults were in the river on April 27th, 2020, however, due to complications with staffing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, MSU was only able to monitor remotely until 5 May 2020.

A total of 140 adult Lake Sturgeon were captured during the spawning season, of which 23 were captured for the first time (16.43%). Of the first time captures, two fish showed signs of hatchery origin. The largest single day capture was on May 6th, where the crew sampled 42 fish. The largest fish captured this year was a 5.9-foot female that weighed 90.10 pounds. Gametes were collected from spawning Lake Sturgeon and transported to the Streamside Rearing Facility for fertilization and rearing. In total, 1,190 unique individual Lake Sturgeon have been captured in the Upper Black River since 2001.

In addition to raising eggs in the hatchery, wild larval Lake Sturgeon were captured as they drifted downstream. Previous research conducted by MSU and MDNR found that wild larvae represent the highest quality genetic source stock, so MSU and MDNR make an effort to fulfill all stocking quotas with fish captured in the wild, where possible. This year, larval drift sampling began on May 26th and continued sparsely until June 7th. Due to staffing restrictions, only 5 nights could be sampled in 2020. Researchers captured 13,919 wild dispersing larvae at Site D but were not able to rear for stocking.

Due to staffing restrictions due to COVID-19, only 100 fall fingerling sturgeon were stocked in 2020. A small number of fish retained for a graduate research project were able to be allocated to Sturgeon in the Classroom so that the program could proceed in 2020. Thanks to a partnership with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), those fish were delivered to the LTBB Hatchery on 24 July 2020. During the fall juvenile Lake Sturgeon assessment, we captured 10 fish across 4 nights.

Researchers conducted a mark-recapture assessment across four transects from the mouth of the river to Red Bridge nightly from dusk until completion during the week of August 2nd, 2020. Two fish were recaptured across three recapture nights. Efforts to derive a population estimate for 2020 are ongoing.

Research efforts in 2020 focused on factors contributing to reproductive success; particularly those that can be quantified by data collected from Radio Frequency Identification



MSU personnel sampling lake sturgeon adults while adhering to COVID-19 social distancing and mask wearing protocols.

(RFID) antennas placed throughout the Upper Black River including migratory strategy, inter-annual migratory trade-offs and sperm quality. This work resulted in a publication in the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences.

Additionally, 2020 marked the continuation of a project evaluating the factors contributing to olfactory imprinting by age-0 Lake Sturgeon. Graduate Student Jake Kimmel raised a small number of Lake Sturgeon under differing water combinations (ground water, Black River Water) to differentiate when Age-0 Lake Sturgeon imprint on their natal water. Additionally, Jake monitored the changes in amino acid consistency in the Upper Black River as this has shown to differentiate imprinting in salmonid smolts. Analysis of that data is ongoing.

Continuing research through MSU includes: the selective properties of female lake sturgeon ovarian fluid; downstream outmigration of drifting Lake Sturgeon and the consequences for recruitment; behavioral plasticity as a function of intra-species reproductive competition and its consequences for current and future reproduction; the interaction of predatory and herbaceous macroinvertebrates, fungi, antibiotics and lake sturgeon eggs; and feeding efficiency of Lake Sturgeon in the hatchery.

Despite challenges faced due to the ongoing pandemic, MSU was able to salvage the survey work for 2020. While we captured a limited number of adults, we were still able to monitor the entire adult run using RFID. Additionally, we were able to complete the entire juvenile survey, and managed to salvage the Sturgeon in the Classroom program.

CNC is Hosting a Lake Sturgeon



In September 2020, **Chippewa Nature Center (CNC)** in Midland was invited to participate in the Sturgeon on Loan (SOL) program, a partnership between the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). CNC's young lake sturgeon arrived in mid-October, and is from the Black Lake watershed in northern Michigan. CNC has special permits enabling it to have the sturgeon, and will host it at least through summer 2021.

Staff will care for the sturgeon until it is released as part of the plan to restore the Michigan lake sturgeon population. The fish will be part of the sturgeon re-introduction program in the Saginaw Bay watershed and released in the Tittabawassee River. Historically, sturgeon were also found in the Pine and Chippewa rivers in Midland. Biologists tagged the sturgeon, allowing researchers to track its location and monitor its growth and health once it is released.

Sturgeon for Tomorrow – Black Lake Chapter has been coordinating the Sturgeon In The Classroom (SITC) project since 2013, and the Michigan DNR Fisheries Division has been facilitating the statewide program since 2015, including classroom education plans. SITC aims to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation for Michigan's state threatened lake sturgeon. The effort to restore the Saginaw Bay sturgeon population began in the 1990s with habitat resto-

ration efforts, dam removals and education. The rehabilitation of Lake Sturgeon in the Saginaw River watershed plan prescribes the stocking of up to 2000 Lake Sturgeon (~5 inches) into four Saginaw River tributaries through at least 2028. Each year, up to 500 Lake Sturgeon will be stocked into the Tittabawassee, Flint, Shiawassee and Cass rivers. The first stocking event occurred in 2018. More information about the Saginaw Bay sturgeon restoration effort can be found at www.saginawbaysturgeon.org.

Jenn Kirts, CNC director of programs, shares, "We are very excited to share this special fish with our visitors. We are thrilled to be involved in the conservation of sturgeon, a species native to our area, through the Sturgeon in the Classroom program."

Locally, CNC worked with Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) to arrange to host the sturgeon. WIN also provided a \$1,000 Action Grant to help develop a full exhibit around the sturgeon and its story. Additional support for the SITC program is provided by Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Michigan Sea Grant, The Conservation Fund, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State University and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Questions regarding CNC hosting the sturgeon should be directed to Jenn Kirts, Director of Programs, at 989-631-0830 or jkirts@chippewanaturecenter.org.

House Bill 4018 dies in the Senate Committee on Natural Resources

On January 9, 2019 State Representative Sue Allor (R) District 106 introduced House Bill 4018. HB 4018 is designed to increase fines for poaching lake sturgeon. Sturgeon for Tomorrow and multiple stakeholders collaborated throughout 2019 to get the bill through several House Committees and pass out of the full House on September 3, 2019.

On September 4, 2019 the bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources. Michigan State Senator Edward McBroom (R) 38th District and Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources wasted nearly 16 months and would not take up HB4018 on the Committee Agenda. We called and emailed Senator McBroom as well as all committee members, and nope!

We are unsure at this time if, when or how we will take up this issue going forward.

Sturgeon For Tomorrow Scholarships Available to Area Graduates

The Sturgeon For Tomorrow (SFT) Fisheries, Wildlife or Natural Resources Scholarships in the amount of \$1000 each is being offered to 2021 high school graduates of Cheboygan Area High School, Inland Lakes High School and Onaway High School. Students may contact their school guidance office for an application.

The SFT Fisheries, Wildlife or Natural Resources Scholarship was established to promote the mission of Sturgeon For Tomorrow, "to assist fisheries managers in the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon." Scholarships were designed to provide tangible encouragement and public recognition for academic achievement or community service students with a course of study in the field of Fisheries, Wildlife or Natural Resources conservation. The goal of these scholarships is to further the objectives of SFT by rewarding and promoting the education and development of future fisheries professionals.

The application deadline is March 15. For more information and to download a scholarship application, log onto www.sturgeonfortomorrow.org or call 231-625-2776

Burt Lake Preservation Association - Help Us Catch This Lake Sturgeon

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

We have an opportunity to acquire a 32-foot Sturgeon sculpture from Moran Ironworks. We would put this sculpture on the corner of M68 and South Straits Highway at the Indian River sign. This would be a great enhancement to the recent street scape project. This Sturgeon will become a major attraction in downtown. We will have a kiosk at the site to help educate the visitors about the Lake Sturgeon. This prehistoric "dinosaur" lives in Burt Lake and is one of the best examples of the canary in the coal mine indicators on how incredible the water quality of Burt Lake really is. A number of other organizations have already expressed excitement about participating in this project, making it truly a community collaboration.

Please consider a gift to support this project. We are looking to raise \$20,000 in private funding from our members and the community. Moran has over \$50,000 cost in this sculpture and will "donate" the \$30,000 in excess cost. They will also deliver the sculpture and set it in place. And the \$20,000 we pay Moran goes into their foundation and eventually is also given to social causes. As always, your gift will be tax deductible.



Please send your check to the BLPA office and add "Sturgeon Sculpture" in the memo line.

Burt Lake Preservation Association
P. O. Box 632
Indian River, MI 49749
231-238-2177
www.blpa.org



Sturgeon in the Classroom continues even with COVID 19

The goal of the Sturgeon in the Classroom program is to instill conservation stewardship. Schools are selected to raise a juvenile sturgeon during the school year, while incorporating hands-on, place-based education to enlighten youth on the importance of conservation and stewardship for the environment.

At the beginning of the school year, students receive a fingerling Lake Sturgeon from Sturgeon for Tomorrow and Michigan Department of Natural Resources to care for throughout the year. Students are responsible for maintaining the tank, testing the water quality, and feeding the Lake Sturgeon. Near the end of the school year, the fish is released. Prior to its release, the sturgeon is implanted with a PIT tag. This tagging allows future students to stay connected to the fish since with each recapture they will be notified with the location and an update of its growth and health. This project is a perfect example of place-based stewardship education since students are learning about their local watershed a threatened fish species while improving local fisheries with the fish's release.

2020-2021 Participating Schools:

- Alcona Elementary School
- Cheboygan Middle School
- Holt High School
- Inland Lakes Schools
- Onaway High School
- Quincy Elementary
- St. Lorenz Lutheran School
- Thunder Bay Jr High
- White Pine Middle School



We accept contributions, memorials and honorariums for special occasions, like birthdays anniversaries and special tributes. THANK YOU on behalf of your loved ones!!

In loving Memory of Ulis Janney

Mary Janney

In loving memory of Darrin E. Tavano

Susan J. Race

In loving memory of

Robert "Bob" Shoemaker

William and Beverly Worden
Beth and Steve Worden

In loving memory of James Deurwearder

Jean Deurwearder
Jason and Stacey Woiderski

In loving memory of

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In loving memory of Carol Freer

Marty and Ellen Jones

In loving memory of Bob Minock

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In loving memory of

Thomas Schell Jr.

Stanley P. Grzemkowski

In loving memory of

Grandpa Sam LaForest

James LaForest and Alexander Hirshfeld

In loving memory of Bob Tomlinson

John Tomlinson

With Sincere Gratitude to our 2020 Contributors!

Sustainers (\$500+)

Don and Nan Blasy
Amy Roy Ferneding
Marty and Ellen Jones
Bradley and Susan Moffatt
Tina Shepard

Leaders (\$100-\$499)

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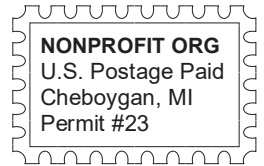
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Thank You

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Dedicated to the future of our sturgeon.

Sturgeon General Volume 22 Issue 1 WINTER 2021

Upcoming Events 2021

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- February**
- 6 Black Lake Sturgeon Season Opens
- 18 Sturgeon Advisory Council Meeting
- March**
- 15 Scholarship Application Deadline
- April**
- Register for Sturgeon Guarding Program
- May**
- Sturgeon Guarding Program—All month
- Guided Sturgeon Viewing Tours
- Research: Netting, tagging and larval sampling
- June-July**
- Hatchery Rearing/Research
- August**
- Sturgeon Hatchery Tours and Release Ceremonies TBD
- September**
- 11 23rd Annual SFT Banquet, Cheboygan
- October - November**
- Sturgeon in the Classroom deliveries

Your Sturgeon For Tomorrow Board of Directors meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm from March through October. We usually meet at the Black Lake Sportsman’s Club, however due to COVID 19, we are Zoom meeting.

*Mark your calendars!
 23rd Annual Banquet
 Saturday, September 11, 2021*

www.sturgeonfortomorrow.org