

shovelnose sturgeon *Scaphirhynchus platorynchus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Actinopterygii

Order: Acipenseriformes

Family: Acipenseridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

A shovelnose sturgeon's average weight is one and one-half to two pounds. The maximum length is about 30 inches, and the maximum weight is about five pounds. Four fringed barbels (whiskerlike projections) are present on the chin near the sucking-type mouth. Bony plates along the back, a forked tail and a flat head in the shape of a shovel are all characteristic traits. The body is brown on the back and sides with a white belly. The skeleton is mainly cartilage.

BEHAVIORS

The shovelnose sturgeon lives on a gravel or sand bottom in the open channels of large rivers. This fish is capable of reproducing when it reaches a length of 20 to 25 inches (age five to seven years). The female deposits about 200,000 eggs over a gravel or rock bottom in the open channel of a large river. Spawning occurs April through June. The shovelnose sturgeon eats insect larvae (particularly flies and caddisflies), using its flexible sucking mouth to pull them in.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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