

Emergency Sturgeon Release Boat Kit Program

Nechako White Sturgeon are an endangered population that live in the large lakes and rivers of the Nechako Watershed. Sturgeon caught in a gill net during the Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) fishery can cause death to the fish, as well as damage gill nets and impact the fishery. The Emergency Sturgeon Release Boat Kit Program provides the tools to release a sturgeon safely to increase its chance of survival and to reduce net damage. Participation by fisher families throughout the watershed is a key step to long-term monitoring and recovery of the sturgeon population, and success during the fishery. This project is supported by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Learn more at www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org | Facebook @NWSRI



BEFORE GOING FISHING

ENSURE YOU HAVE BOAT KIT AND A PIT TAG* READER on the boat with you. If you don't have access to a PIT Tag Reader ask your community's Fisheries Monitor for one.

WATCH THE EVERY STURGEON COUNTS VIDEO to get reacquainted with this program and how to use the kit.



REVIEW THE FORM to know what data to collect if a sturgeon is encountered.

WHILE OUT FISHING

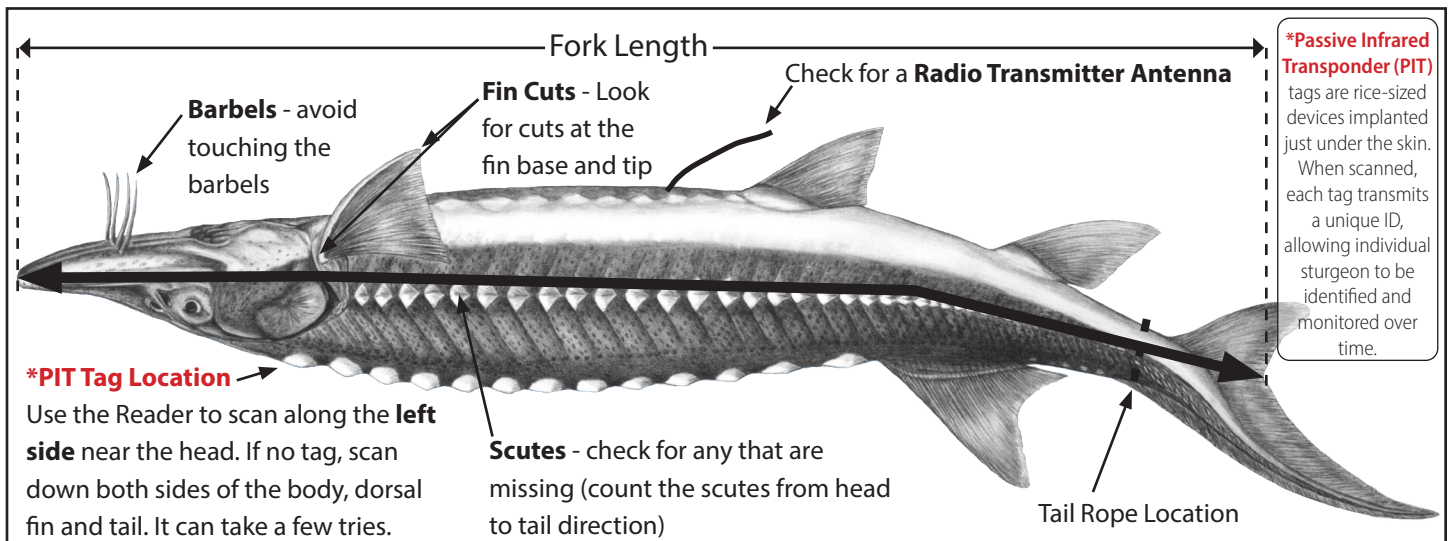
CHECK GILL NETS OFTEN. The longer a sturgeon is stuck in a gill net, the higher the chance the net will be damaged and the sturgeon will die.

CONTACT YOUR FISHERIES MONITOR OR THE NWSRI if you are unsure of how to fill out this form, need training on the kit, need a PIT Tag reader, or need new or replenished kits.

CONTACT THE NWSRI to submit your completed form(s) and photos, and if you have any questions, at info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org.

IF A STURGEON IS IN YOUR GILL NET

1. Put on **gloves** - the scutes are sharp.
2. Gently **secure** the sturgeon, using the tail rope, to keep you and the sturgeon safe from further injury. Turning the sturgeon on its back/ flipping it over helps to calm the sturgeon.
3. Carefully **cut/untangle** the webbing off of the fish. Be careful to:
 - Avoid the sharp scutes, especially on smaller sturgeon.
 - Avoid touching the sturgeon's barbels and gills because they can be easily damaged.
 - Keep the sturgeon in the water if possible as this is critical for its survival.
4. Before it is released back to the water and only if possible and safe for the crew and sturgeon:
 - **Measure or estimate the length**
 - Look for **PIT tag/missing scutes/fin cuts**
 - Take **pictures** of each side of the sturgeon
 - **Observe** how the sturgeon swims away
5. Fill-in the **data form** and send it with photo(s) to info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org.



DATA FORM Emergency Sturgeon Release Boat Kit Program

PLEASE FILL OUT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE - AT MINIMUM THE FIELDS IN RED



Version August 2026

Fisher (optional): _____ Date: _____

Community: _____ Water Body/Location: _____

Fork Length: _____

- ☐ Metre ☐ Feet
☐ Measured ☐ Estimated

Taken from the centre of the curvature of the snout, along the lateral line, to the fork of the tail. **Pull the fabric tape taut but not tight.** The fish's body should not be altered by the tape when measuring.

Photos:

Take photo of EACH side of the sturgeon to show the scutes.

- ☐ Left-side
☐ Right-side

PIT Tag:

- ☐ Yes PIT tag # _____

- ☐ Scanned but no PIT tag found
☐ Did not scan fish (no reader)

Radiotelemetry Antenna:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Couldn't see

Missing Scute(s):

Counting from head to tail.

SCUTE # : _____

- ☐ Right-side ☐ Left-side
☐ No missing scutes
☐ Couldn't see

Fin Cuts:

- ☐ Yes: Where on the fin?
☐ Tip ☐ Base
☐ No fin cuts
☐ Couldn't see

Gear:

- ☐ Gill Net
☐ Other _____

Caught as:

- ☐ Tangled in Net
☐ Rolled in Net
☐ Tangled and Rolled
☐ Other _____

Removal:

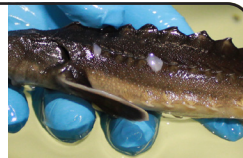
- ☐ Fish escaped on its own
☐ Untangled fish
☐ Cut net
☐ Other _____

Damage to Net:

- ☐ None
☐ Minor
☐ Moderate
☐ Major
☐ Unrepairable

MISSING SCUTES

Check the sides of the sturgeon for missing scutes. Record the **side** and **scute number(s)** counting from head to tail.



FIN CUTS

Look for fin cuts on the **front fins**. Cuts can be at the **tip** or **base** of the fin.



Injury to Sturgeon:

- ☐ None
☐ Minor (eg. net marks)
☐ Moderate
☐ Major (eg. open cuts)
☐ Dead

If the sturgeon is found dead, and less than 1-day dead, please freeze if possible and notify us right away. Biologists will come and collect the dead fish for tissue analysis.

Behaviour on Release:

- ☐ Swam away vigorously
☐ Slow to swim away
☐ Needed to be revived

Other: _____

Comments: eg. cuts, red fins, etc.

Submit: Fill this form by hand, take a photo or scan it and EMAILit (even if incomplete) along with your photos of the fish to the NWSRI at info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org

Alternatively, fill this form online (Google Form) by scanning the QR Code:



HOW TO REVIVE A STURGEON

If the sturgeon is not active, hold the sturgeon in the water, right side up, and move it back and forth to move water across the gills.