Research and Education

Atlantic and Shortnose Sturgeon Research

Atlantic Sturgeon

The Protected Resources Division (PRD) is responsible for the conservation and management of a number of species groups, including shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon. One of the key components of the sturgeon conservation and management program is scientific research. PRD actively coordinates and collaborates with academic institutions, other state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry groups (e.g., fishermen, hydropower operators), to implement scientific research projects benefiting protected species conservation and recovery.

Implanting Acoustic Telemetry Tags

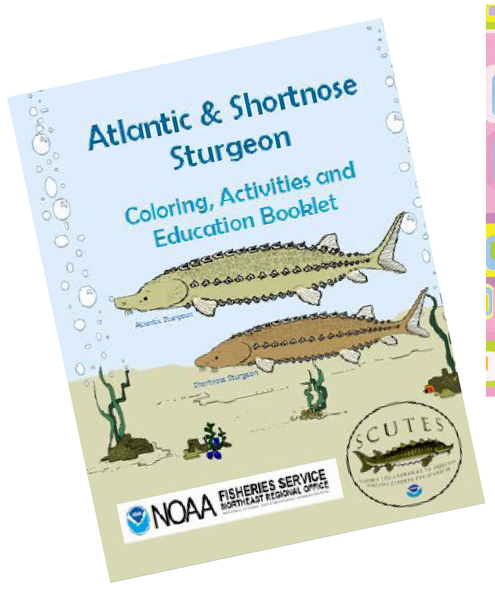
Currently, sturgeon research is being conducted on a variety of topic areas including: population and habitat monitoring, abundance estimates, tagging and tracking, genetic analyses, and threat reduction (e.g., hydropower, fisheries by-catch, poor water quality). There continue to be significant gaps in our understanding of basic sturgeon life history, population dynamics, habitat use, and threats facing the species. As such, PRD has identified sturgeon research needs and priorities to support ongoing management and recovery programs. Sturgeon research priorities can be found at:

http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/Protected/research/.

Education

SCUTES (Students Collaborating to Undertake Tracking Efforts for Sturgeon) is an educational outreach initiative through PRD that is bringing together elementary and high school students and teachers, sturgeon researchers and NOAA Fisheries Service to learn more about the movements, behavior and threats to Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon along the East Coast of the United States.

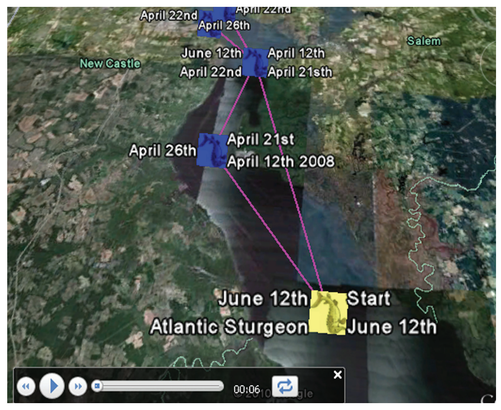
Acoustic Telemetry Tag



Thank you letter from a participating elementary class in Maine after an informative and fun visit from a SCUTES researcher (above right). SCUTES activity book cover (left).

SCUTES researchers are tagging Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon with pop-up satellite archival tags (PSAT) as well as acoustic telemetry tags to track their movements up and down the coast.

Atlantic sturgeon tagged with a PSAT



Screenshot of tracker program

SCUTES is web-based, and the site provides sturgeon information, lesson plans, games, and a tracker program that illustrates the migrations of the SCUTES Atlantic sturgeon.

SCUTES Program Goals:

- To promote a collaborative partnership among researchers, schools, and organizations to increase outreach and education efforts, and lead to greater public engagement and involvement in sturgeon conservation
- Collect biological information on live fish providing much needed information
- Identify sturgeon movements, habitat preferences, and migration patterns through acoustic telemetry and Pop-up Satellite Archival Tag (PSAT) data