

Tagging Hudson Sturgeon

Every spring, Atlantic sturgeon return to the Hudson River from their overwintering grounds in the coastal Atlantic Ocean. Large juvenile sturgeon arrive in search of food in the river's plentiful benthic foraging habitats, while even larger, mature adult sturgeon travel to the spawning grounds in the tidal freshwater portion of the river to ensure the arrival of the next generation. Accustomed to the depths of their ocean home, Atlantic sturgeon spend much of their time in the deep channels and holes of the Hudson and rarely wander into the shallow, off-channel habitats. The bottom of the river channel is 30 feet deep at its shallowest and plunges to more than 200 feet deep near West Point with many areas deeper than 100 feet.

Through years of acoustic telemetry tagging, tracking, and monitoring, we know that sturgeon reside in the deeper waters of the river, but where they swim in the water column is largely a mystery. Because Atlantic sturgeon are benthic foragers, feeding on small fish, crustaceans, worms, insect larvae, and other invertebrate prey that live on and in the river bottom, we know that sturgeon spend at least some of the time at the bottom of the



Field biologists collecting Atlantic sturgeon for data tagging. Work conducted pursuant to NMFS Sturgeon Research permit no. 20340 to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.



river. But how much time do they spend there and how much time do they spend in the mid-water column and at the surface?

As part of the construction of the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, sturgeon biologists from AKRF Inc., an environmental consulting firm based in New York City, are working on behalf of the New York State Thruway Authority to answer these questions.

Working in collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and field biologists from Normandeau Associates, Inc., sturgeon biologists caught and tagged 10 large juvenile Atlantic sturgeon during the summer of 2017. The tags, which transmit valuable data about the sturgeon and the river, were designed to detach from the sturgeon and rise to the water's surface. While a Hudson River boater recently found and turned in one of the data tags, nine are still at large. Researchers are asking boaters to be on the lookout for the tags, which may still be adrift on the river, but may have washed ashore and are lying beneath vegetation or debris along the shoreline. The tags are likely to be found between Newburgh Bay and the Battery, but may have been carried as far as the beaches of Long Island and Staten Island, or even further depending on where the sturgeon was when the tag detached.

Boaters who find a data tag are asked to contact Dr. Justin Krebs at AKRF via email at jkrebs@akrf.com or by calling (646) 388-9662.

WANTED!

If found, please contact Dr. Justin Krebs, AKRF, Inc. jkrebs@akrf.com (646) 388-9662

Sturgeon Researchers are Looking for Data Tags in the Hudson River

