

For Release: IMMEDIATE

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**DURING SPAWNING SEASON, DEC WARNS ANGLERS TO BE AWARE
OF LAKE STURGEON WHICH ARE A THREATENED SPECIES**

With spring underway, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today reminded anglers to be aware of spawning lake sturgeon in tributaries of the Great Lakes, Finger Lakes and Oneida Lake. Lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*), which are especially active at this time, are a threatened species in New York – meaning there is no open season for the fish and possession is prohibited.

Last year, DEC received numerous reports of lake sturgeon caught by anglers in the Upper Niagara River near Buffalo Harbor. Anglers who unintentionally hook a sturgeon should follow these practices to ensure that the fish are returned to the water unharmed:

- Avoid bringing the fish into the boat if possible.
- Use pliers to remove the hook; sturgeon are almost always hooked in the mouth.
- Always support the fish horizontally. Do not hold sturgeon in a vertical position by their head, gills, or tails -- even for taking photographs.
- Never touch their eyes or gills.
- Minimize their time out of the water.

Anglers should use caution when handling the fish as they have sharp scaly plates called scutes on their backs. Gloves or a damp towel should be used to avoid injury.

Anglers are more likely to encounter sturgeon during the spring when the fish gather to spawn on clean gravel shoals and in stream rapids.

Lake sturgeon were once abundant in New York, but commercial fishing, dam building and habitat loss decimated populations. DEC's protection and stocking efforts have helped the species begin to recover. Since 1996, lake sturgeon have been periodically stocked by DEC into Black Lake, Cayuga Lake, the Genesee River, Oneida Lake, the Oswegatchie River, Raquette River, St. Lawrence River, and St. Regis River. They can also be found in Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the Seneca, Niagara and Oswego Rivers, among other waterbodies.

(MORE)

Sturgeon are often tagged as part of ongoing research efforts by state and federal agencies. If a tagged sturgeon is found, reporting instructions are on the tag or one can contact a regional DEC office for assistance. More information on lake sturgeon in New York and other threatened or endangered fish can be found on the DEC web site at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26035.html>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7008.html>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26045.html>

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