

NECHAKO WHITE STURGEON IN FRASER LAKE

Prehistoric Fish



Dwelling in the waters of the Nechako Watershed is a survivor from the age of the dinosaurs – White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*). This magnificent animal has existed relatively unchanged for millions of years. It is likely that White Sturgeon arrived to the Nechako Watershed from the Upper Columbia River system when the two were connected over 10,000 years ago after the last ice-age.

We know today that the White Sturgeon in the Nechako Watershed

inhabit lakes, such as Stuart Lake, and that adults congregate to spawn in the Nechako River at Vanderhoof.

Research to date indicates the Upper Fraser Designation Unit (DU) of White Sturgeon (Upper Fraser, Middle Fraser and Nechako River populations) is genetically distinct from other populations and within that DU. Researchers continue their work to determine the bottlenecks to survival, life history patterns, and habitat needs of Nechako River White Sturgeon.



Sturgeon Habitat in Fraser Lake

Looking out over Fraser Lake from Beaumont Park, you can't see them, but Nechako White Sturgeon are inhabiting the waters. Fraser Lake empties into the Nechako River via the Nautley River, north of Beaumont Park. Sturgeon have been recorded at depths of 9 m during the summer in Fraser Lake, and occasionally have been accidentally caught during the First Nation Food, Social and Ceremonial salmon fishery. Sturgeon eat adult salmon, which migrate through Fraser Lake in the late summer and fall.



Sturgeon FACTS!

- they live to 100 years old and can grow over 3 m in length
- the 'heterocercal' shaped tail (larger top than bottom) tells us they are strong swimmers
- their flat head and 4 barbels mean they are primarily bottom feeders
- they have a cartilaginous skeleton
- they do not have scales, but rows of scutes (armour) that are used for protection

nechakowhitesturgeon.org

Sturgeon Recovery

The Federal Species at Risk Act lists Nechako White Sturgeon as an endangered species. The Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI) works toward sturgeon recovery.

Ways to support recovery!

- *keep the water and shores of Fraser Lake clean.*
- *learn more about Nechako White Sturgeon by visiting the NWSRI website.*
- *donate to the NWSRI!*
- *visit the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre in Vanderhoof.*



Please tell us if you see a sturgeon!

Reporting sightings or accidental catches of sturgeon helps researchers understand the population, and supports recovery. Please make reports to info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org. It is **illegal** to kill or keep any part of a sturgeon.