

A/OFRC PROJECT UPDATE

RED ROCK INDIAN BAND

November 2015

FALL LAKE STURGEON TAGGING STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The Anishinabek/Ontario Fisheries Resource Centre (A/OFRC) in partnership with the Red Rock Indian Band and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) completed a Fall Lake Sturgeon Tagging Study in Lake Helen. This is the third year of this study, with previous fall studies occurring in 2010 and 2012. This study took place from October 14—22, 2015.

METHODS

Gill nets were placed in areas known Lake Sturgeon gather, and/or where Elders and community members observed Lake Sturgeon. These areas were shallow (< 15 m) and in areas with unique water flow, or areas where the substrate permitted a high abundance of invertebrates and additional food sources. Nets were set perpendicular to shore,



OMNRF Staff performing an internal radio-tag surgery on a newly captured Lake Sturgeon



Douglas John and Jolene Cotte holding a newly captured Lake Sturgeon

where bottom contours were moderately sloped. Lake Sturgeon were PIT tagged, FLOY tagged, and measured for fork length, total length, girth and weight. All fish were radio-tagged by the OMNRF and released. Telemetry occurred for five Lake Sturgeon by manual telemetry sweeps of the lake. UTM coordinates and depth were recorded for each detection.

RESULTS

This year's study was successful in capturing two new Lake Sturgeon and one recaptured Lake Sturgeon from a 2012 study. The new Lake Sturgeon had lengths of 1279 mm and 1223 mm, and weights of 1250 g and 10800 g, respectively. The recaptured Lake Sturgeon from 2012 had grown 14 mm in total length. In addition to Lake Sturgeon, large mesh gill nets also captured Walleye (2), Common Carp (6) and Burbot (1).

All sport fish were measured and live released. Fork lengths were recorded for bycatch.

CONCLUSION

Radio telemetry has given some insight into the movements of Lake Sturgeon within Lake Helen. Lake Sturgeon were all detected in shallow waters (<15 m) and along some deep sloping areas. One Lake Sturgeon was observed swimming near the surface by crews as they were conducting manual telemetry. Therefore, although depths were recorded, Lake Sturgeon may be suspended in the water column for feeding or travelling purposes. Additionally, some Lake Sturgeon were again tracked in the shallows of Southern Lake Helen and Steamboat Bay. These areas are important feeding grounds for Lake Sturgeon with sandy to muddy substrates.

Overall, this year's Fall Lake Sturgeon Tagging Study has provided researchers with two additional Lake Sturgeon to track. In total, 11 Lake Sturgeon have been radio-tagged with the assistance of the A/OFRC. Movements of these Lake Sturgeon will help fill knowledge gaps in this long lived species and give insight into spawning cues and migrations to and from Alexander Dam in the spring.



For more information on this or other fisheries projects please contact:

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