

A/OFRC PROJECT SUMMARY

RED ROCK INDIAN BAND

July 2015

NIPIGON RIVER LAKE STURGEON SPAWNING AND TAGGING STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The Anishinabek/Ontario Fisheries Resource Centre (A/OFRC), in partnership with Red Rock Indian Band, completed Year Three of a three-year Lake Sturgeon Spawning and Tagging Study. This Study took place in Lake Helen / Nipigon River in June 2015.

METHODS

This project involved previously tagged fish and a netting program to capture, tag and release Lake Sturgeon. In addition to radio telemetry, A/OFRC also conducted a netting survey with specially designed large mesh gill nets, to reduce incidental by-catch of non-target species. Over the course of three weeks, over 25,000 feet of



A radio tagged Lake Sturgeon just before being released

nets were laid in both Lake Helen and directly below Alexander Dam.

RESULTS

One new Lake Sturgeon, an immature male weighing 10 lbs (4.5 kg) was captured, radio tagged, and released by Nipigon OMNR. A/OFRC field crews tracked and pinpointed the location of eight of the thirteen Lake Sturgeon currently tagged in the Lake Helen / Nipigon River system. Of these, three were located at various times at the base of Alexander Dam, where they may have been exhibiting spawning

behaviour. The Nipigon OMNR also captured camera footage and visuals of Lake Sturgeon spawning at the base of the Alexander Dam. One fish, tagged as 151.766, was detected moving upriver to the dam, spent about a week in the vicinity of the dam, and the moved back downriver and into the northern end of the lake. Observing this behaviour allowed us to conclude that we had observed the entire spawning run for Lake Sturgeon in this system, an important requirement of this project.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the population of Lake Sturgeon in Lake Helen remains small., however they do seem to be spawning at the base of the Alexander Dam, an encouraging sign for the recovery of the population. The Nipigon River Lake Sturgeon Spawning and Tagging Study conducted in June 2015 was the last year of a three-year effort made by the A/OFRC and the project will be continued by the Nipigon OMNR.



MNRF employees searching for Lake Sturgeon at the Alexander Dam using an underwater video camera in the 2014 Lake Sturgeon Study



Pelicans!



Field crews assessing a captured Lake Sturgeon



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

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