


# GULF STURGEON FACTS



**Sturgeon:** An ancient type of fish, with 5 rows of armor scutes, a cartilaginous skeleton, long snout, suction mouth, no teeth, and 4 barbels.

Photograph of a Gulf sturgeon. The total length of a 5-month old is 313 mm.

**General Information  
Product 71**

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Geological Survey

# GULF STURGEON FACTS

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**Origin?** From the age of dinosaurs, 200 million years ago. Has hardly changed over time.

**Size?** Up to 7.5 feet long, up to 200 pounds in weight. Females get larger than males.

**Age?** Usually to 20-25, rarely to 40-60 years.

**How Many?** About 14,000 in the Suwannee River, probably about 20 percent of original population.

**Food?** Uses suction mouth to vacuum up insect larvae, worms, and other small organisms found in sand. After first 9 months of life, feeds only in saltwater in winter, not while in rivers.

**Habits?** 'Anadromous' – Migrates back and forth between freshwater rivers (Suwannee to Pearl rivers) and saltwater (Gulf of Mexico).

**Habitat?** Prefers unobstructed, sandy areas in mid-river, and deep, dark water. Rests in deep river holding areas from spring to fall.

**Spawns?** Swims over 100 miles upriver in spring. Female deposits over 200,000 eggs on gravel.

**Jumps?** In summer, leaps 6-8 feet into the air and flops. Loud crashing sound may be a group signal.

**Human Threats?** Dams halt upriver spawning run. Excess nutrients promote algal mats, depleting oxygen supply. Speedboats hit and kill jumping sturgeons in rivers during summer.

**Predators?** Alligators and sharks. Eggs, larvae, and baby sturgeons are eaten by many fishes.

**Myths?** Does not inhabit spring-water areas.

**Angling?** Rarely caught. Must be released by law.

