

St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow



January 2019 Newsletter

Hello Everyone. It is that time again when we like to let you know what we have been up to and what our future plans are. Some of you may be old enough to recall the commercials for Faberge Organics Shampoo in the 1970s in which Heather Locklear tells her two friends about it and they tell two friends and so on and so on. It seems that the same phenomenon has occurred in our local sturgeon fishery. The rate of growth in participation seems to increase every year. Recently on the "Mitten Expedition" website the St. Clair River was included as a bucket list destination for unconventional fishing opportunities in Michigan. Our fishery is unconventional. Nowhere else in Michigan can you find such a great opportunity to land one of the largest fish that swim in the Great Lakes. With increasing participation comes a more widespread appreciation for these magnificent lake sturgeon. There also comes a greater chance that some unscrupulous people may show up to abuse the opportunity. That is why it is so important that those of you who appreciate lake sturgeon the way we do, join us as watchdogs of the resource. Membership in St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon For Tomorrow is inexpensive and you can also buy a t-shirt, hat or hoodie. Also, we invite you to participate or even volunteer in our events. We are always interested in having our members join our board of directors. Please let us know if there is something you would like to see us do; fresh ideas are always welcome.

Looking Back at 2018

As has been the case for the past couple of years St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow staffed the aid station at the 5K turnaround during the PoHo

Hot Cocoa running event held in Port Huron. The 2018 PoHo event may have been the first time in the history of running events that runners had a choice of water or a Bloody Mary. We staff this event to promote our "Run with the Sturgeon" that has occurred in conjunction with the Blue Water Sturgeon Festival. However, due to competition from two other running events the same weekend we have not been able to build participation in the "Run with the Sturgeon" to a level that will sustain the event. As a result, the "Run with the Sturgeon" has been canceled for 2019, so we chose not to participate in the PoHo Hot Cocoa Run this year.



Our Sturgeon in the Classroom Program continued to be a great success thanks to the efforts of vice president, Jeremy Gu. The goal of the Sturgeon in the Classroom program is to build awareness, concern and appreciation for the environment in our younger generations. In 2018-2019, seven schools in Southeast Michigan were selected to participate in the program:

- Shumate Middle School, Gibraltar
- Roberts Elementary School, Shelby Twp.
- Wilson Middle School, Wyandotte
- De La Salle Collegiate, Warren
- Waldon Middle School, Lake Orion
- Bloomfield Hills High School, Bloomfield Twp.
- St. Clair County Community College, Port Huron



We also have several fish that travel to various venues for public education. These fish will be visiting students at schools and also kids at other venues like the Outdoor Adventure Center in the next few months. More information about this exciting program can be found at our website:

<http://www.stclairsturgeon.org/>

Our first outreach event for 2018 found Jeremy Guo spending the morning with enthusiastic 3rd graders at Eisenhower Elementary School in Fraser.



Saturday, February 24th found us down at the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit where families learned that lake sturgeon live beneath the waters of the Detroit River. If you haven't visited the Outdoor Adventure Center, try to get down there to check it out in 2019. It's an amazing place with fantastic educational displays for kids.



Every few years biologists, managers, researchers, students, natural resources law enforcement, commercial and recreational fishers and interested public are invited to participate in a Great Lakes Sturgeon Coordination meeting. St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow was a proud sponsor and presenter at the meeting which took place February 21st and 22nd at the Blue Water Convention Center in Port Huron. The purpose of the meeting is to foster communication and exchange of information relating to the study, management, and restoration of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes basin; and to address selected emerging issues.

Dave Dortman gave a presentation that highlighted the Sturgeon in the Classroom project and our North Channel Sturgeon Classic catch and release tournament. His presentation generated some lively discussion among meeting participants.



Also at this meeting, three recently retired long-time sturgeon researchers were honored. Lloyd Mohr (Ontario MNR), Nancy Auer (Michigan Tech University), and Mike Thomas (Michigan DNR) each received beautiful hand carved wooden sturgeon creations by local artist Tim Brown. Lloyd, Nancy, and Mike had planned and participated in every Coordination Meeting since the first occurred in the 1990's.

Early March found us at Carlson High School in Gibraltar reaching out to over 2000 students during World Wetlands Day. We have been participating in this event for several years. It's always a great opportunity to share our enthusiasm for sturgeon

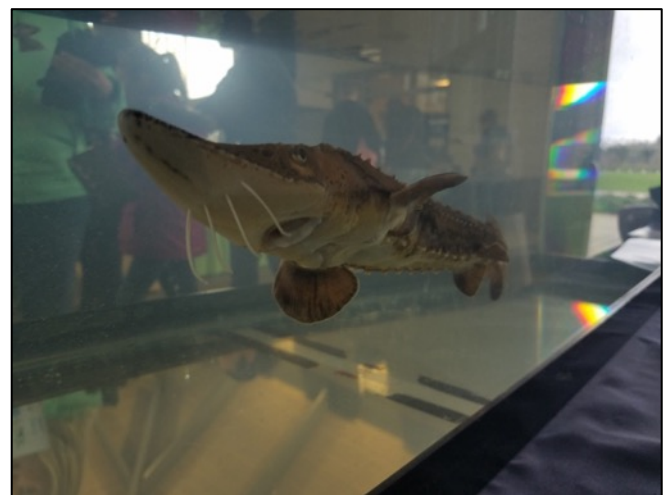
restoration and conservation with a whole bunch of excited kids.



At our February board meeting, we held our annual elections. Here are the results:

- J. Felgenauer - President
- J. Guc - Vice President
- S. Guc - Treasurer
- M. Thomas - Secretary
- D. McChristian - Director
- D. Dortman - Director
- R. Landershier - Director

This small group does much of the heavy lifting for the organization. It is very rewarding. Any member can run for the board. Elections are coming up again in early February 2019. If you are interested in getting more involved in SC-DR Sturgeon for Tomorrow, please contact one of the board members.



April was a busy month. Our preferred venue for our annual membership meeting was under repair due to ice damage earlier in the year. As a result, our yearly membership meeting and elections were postponed until May. In spite of that April brought a flurry of activity. With the new fishing season on April 1st came new sturgeon fishing regulations, including an extended catch and release season on the St. Clair River. Be sure to check current regulations. April 12th we were in St. Clair with our Blue Water Sturgeon Festival partners to begin planning for the 2018 event. On April 21st while Jeremy was back at the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center with our juvenile lake sturgeon, SCDR-SFT member Jerry Pink and his family were representing us at the Belle Isle clean up event. That evening, president Jim Felgenauer and treasurer Steve Guc attended the benefit dinner held for the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge in Wyandotte. April 28th and 29th we returned to the St. Clair County Earth Fair at Goodells where we reached out to nearly 10,000 visitors with our baby lake sturgeon.

Each year we have an annual membership meeting allowing members to get together to share fishing stories and some pizza. Andrew Briggs from the Michigan DNR was our featured speaker at Club Capri in Clay Township on May 17th. Also during the meeting Jeremy Guc received a long deserved annual Director's Award for his initiation and management of our Sturgeon in the Classroom program.



Late May and early June were a busy time with the Blue Water Sturgeon Festival, the “Run with the Sturgeon” and wrapping up our 2017-18 Sturgeon in the Classroom program. The weekend kicks off with educational sturgeon cruises for school students aboard the Huron Lady II in Port Huron. During



these 8 cruises spanning Thursday and Friday Dave Dortman and Don McChristian showed off the now bigger juvenile sturgeon. Students also had an up close encounter with an invasive sea lamprey. The Huron Lady meets with the US Fish and Wildlife Service boat where classes get to see adult lake



sturgeon and get a lesson in sturgeon biology. While waiting for the cruises to board, students are taken on an interpretive tour of the Port Huron river walk.

St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow and the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow join resources to sponsor one full day of these cruises. Brenda Archambo, the sturgeon general and her husband Gil always come down from up north to help with the festivities and to gather up our classroom sturgeon for the trip back north when the sturgeon festival is over.

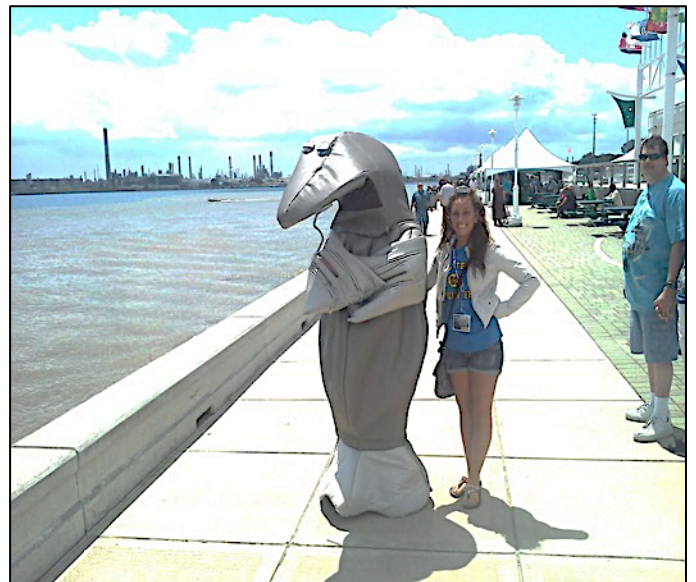
May 31st after a day of cruising we found ourselves enjoying a sturgeon fundraiser at War Water Brewery in St. Clair. A good time was had by all, we raised a few dollars and some patrons got a chance to see a sturgeon up close for the first time. Small lake sturgeon do attract some attention. We even had our own special sturgeon brew.



Saturday the weather was excellent for our annual “Run with the Sturgeon” and the Blue Water Sturgeon Festival that follows. These events attract more than 5,000 people of all ages to see these magnificent fish. There were several ways to see lake sturgeon at the festival. Our classroom fish had been gathered together for the trip north to the Black River where they would be released to live out their lives in the wild. They were on display in our tent in a couple of tanks. People are always impressed by the very defined characteristics of these small fish. US Fish and Wildlife and the Michigan DNR temporarily held adult sturgeon in a touch tank along the shoreline. People were able see and even touch adult lake sturgeon during the day then stay to watch them be released back into the river at the end of the festival. The third way to see sturgeon is aboard the



sturgeon festival cruises. Live video of spawning fish is fed to televisions on the deck of the Huron Lady by divers while it drifts downstream below the Blue Water Bridge.



Sturgeon are a hidden gem of the Great Lakes. Most of the time they are below the surface of the water. Sometimes they can be seen jumping. We believe one of the best ways to interact with these fish is to fish for them. One of our primary goals is to introduce new anglers to the fishery. Toward that end, we held a fun fishing tournament on July 20th. This was opening weekend of the sturgeon season. The entry was \$20.00 per angler with a 100% payout. Winners were chosen by random draw. Each entry got a ticket and each fish caught got a ticket in the drawing. More than 30 anglers participated. Only 4 fish were landed but it was a fun and well received event. We will do it again this year.



On September 17th we played host to 6 members of the DNR sturgeon committee and 2 local biologists for an evening of fishing on the St. Clair River. Though some have had experience handling sturgeon in a scientific setting, it was there first time landing fish on hook and line. They were as excited and impressed as any rookie fishing for sturgeon the first time. Special thanks to the four people that provided the boats for the evening.

We spend most of the summer planning along with our partners, The Pearl Beach Lions Club for one of our major yearly fund raisers, The North Channel

Early September found president Jim Felgenauer making the drive north to Cheboygan for the annual banquet of the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow where he got to hobnob with Sturgeon General Brenda Archambo and conservation hall of famer, Mr Bob Garner among others. Brenda was voted person of the year by Michigan Outdoor News. Congratulations Brenda! Jim returned to southern Michigan with a sponsorship check for the North Channel Sturgeon Classic and a couple of very nice raffle and auction prizes.



Sturgeon Classic. A total of 22 teams fished the event, landing and releasing a total of 58 sturgeon. The first-place cash prize of \$1,500 was won by Team Sgt. Sturgeon and Co. with a 68.5 inch fish. Finn's Sport Fishing took home a total of \$1,000 for the second and third place fish. Three of the fish caught during the tournament had been previously tagged by the Michigan DNR.

On the heels of the North Channel Sturgeon Classic came the first ever lake sturgeon release into the Maumee River in Ohio. Treasurer Steve Guc and Jim Felgenauer made the trip to the Toledo Zoo on



October 6th with a sponsorship check that would allow 10 children to release a baby lake sturgeon into the river. About 3,000 fish were released in total from the Genoa fish hatchery and from the new streamside rearing facility at the river's edge. We also ran into some familiar faces while there. *(Photos courtesy of Toledo Blade).*

During late September and early October we made sure that all of our Sturgeon in the Classroom fish found their way to what will be their new homes until the end of the 2018-19 school year. This can be a logistical challenge as fish pick-up, transport, and delivery has to be coordinated with the schools.

Mike Avery is a strong supporter of sturgeon angling and conservation in Michigan. On October 6th he again played host to Jim Felgenauer on his popular radio show. We appreciate Mike very much. That segment can be heard here:

http://mikeaveryoutdoors.libsyn.com/october-14-hour-3?fbclid=IwAR3obHlcOpKLVdsKvia7R0uGHmrtoSYR-_rfoKuNxKsJr7EOYxEHb4cd-Gg

On occasion, we do have some hits and misses. One of our misses this year was a planned Ladies Night of Sturgeon Fishing with Lori Card of Wildcard Outdoor Adventures. The weather would just not cooperate on October 20th. We do have plans for some future events with her.

Looking Forward - 2019

We know that each of you reading this are aware of how you are involved with us, but may not know all of the things we do. We hope this gives some perspective. Looking forward we want to continue to do all of these things and more. We have accomplished much for the resource. More and more anglers are taking advantage of the special sturgeon fishing opportunity we have in this corner of the state. More people are aware of the resource and the need

to protect it. More rehabilitation efforts are born every year.

One of our main goals this year will be to focus on the future of our organization. We have done much as part time volunteers with full time jobs. Now we need to figure out how to build membership, improve communications, attract volunteers and get youth involved in our conservation efforts. We have a strategic planning meeting coming up soon. We need people willing to join the organization and maybe serve a term on the board of directors. We want to hear from you how we can better serve you. Contact information is on our website. Please drop us an email.

Stclairsturgeon@gmail.com

Closing Thoughts from The Prez

When we first started St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow, we discussed if we wanted to be a fishing organization, a conservation organization or both. We were concerned that trying to appeal to both might confuse our identity. That has not been the case. In fact, the opposite is true. Anglers are conservationists of the highest level. Fishing connects people and the fish in a very personal way. The support from those of you that have made that connection allows us to reach out through our various events and activities to others that have not yet formed that same connection. We do face some challenges as we move forward. We will no longer be doing the Run with the Sturgeon in 2019. We had reached a plateau that we could not move past. We will continue as a co-organizer and sponsor of the Blue Water Sturgeon Festival. We will be forced this year to move the location away from the Maritime Center. Events are not being booked for that property due to it being for sale. We will keep you informed about the new location. We are planning on expanding our North Channel Sturgeon Classic to make it more of a community weekend event. It should be bigger and better than ever this year. We will continue to do the things we have done well and are constantly looking for new

opportunities. At some point we would like to assist with installation of video cameras at the Pearl Beach Pier. There are some plans to redesign the access so it may be a while for this to come to fruition. Thank you for your amazing and ongoing support for our efforts. It takes a village.

-Jim Felgenauer, President

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Your board members will be volunteering at several upcoming outreach and fundraising events. More information on upcoming events will be posted on our Facebook Page. Everyone is welcome to join in the fun. If you wish to volunteer, please contact a board member by email at:

Stclairsturgeon@gmail.com

February 1-2: Black Lake Shivaree – Assist our sister chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow with set-up, staffing, and tear-down of the event.

April 26-27: St. Clair County Earth Fair – At Goodells County Park, staff a booth and educate kids and families about lake sturgeon conservation and fishing.

Sept. 20-22: North Channel Sturgeon Classic – Volunteers needed for set-up and running Captain's dinner, and catch-and-release tournament start and finish. Note: **Dates are preliminary.**

Our Mission Statement:

The purpose of St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow is to perpetuate Lake Sturgeon through the support of science and public education by promoting, preserving, and protecting ethical and sustainable fishing; by assisting management agencies and their partners in their efforts to improve sturgeon populations and habitats; by promoting conservation through community outreach and education; and by engaging in other charitable activities deemed proper and necessary to accomplish the foregoing objectives within the Huron-Erie corridor.