

Sturgeon.
(Acipenseridae.)

Sturgeon are found in the waters of the northern hemisphere only. They seek their food chiefly among the mud at the bottom of the sea and rivers, and their heads are admirably adapted for the purpose. The elongated snout, protected by broad plates, ploughs up the mud, as a hog does the ground; and it is probable from this habit they get the name of Sturgeon, from the German störer, or stoer, which signifies to dig in the mud.

The snout plows up the mud; the objects turned up are examined by the worm-like cirri, or feelers, on the underside of the snout; and a little behind these comes the sucker-like mouth, ready to receive what is provided for it.

Both in France and Great Britain the sturgeon was regarded as a royal fish, i. e., the property of the Crown. The largest specimen recorded up to 1843 as having been caught in Great Britain weighed 460 lbs.

There are six species of sturgeon, five belonging to the genus acipenser and one of Scaphirhynchops, all of which are valued food fishes. All the species are toothless and all possess pyloric caeca and swim-bladders. Their food consists largely of small mollusks, annelids, crustaceans, and dead animal matter. They also, in the Fraser river, consume immense numbers of oulachans when the latter enter the river to spawn.

The principal sturgeon of the Atlantic ocean, both in European and American waters, is the *A. sturio*. It attains to a length of about ten feet and a weight of 500 lbs. Formerly they were very plentiful but were not valued as food, being generally fed to the hogs. About 1870 however they became appreciated and as a result of the reckless fishing methods which followed they are now rather scarce. While, as mentioned above, sturgeon were for a long time not appreciated on the Atlantic coast, they were held in high esteem in the time of Rome's supremacy and were likewise highly considered in Great Britain as early as the eleventh century.

There are two kinds of sturgeon on the Pacific Coast, the *A. transmontanus*, or white sturgeon, and the *A. medirostris*, or green sturgeon. The latter is not as good a fish as the former, although it is largely used for food. At one time it was considered poisonous, but it was found that this opinion was an error. The white sturgeon attains to a length of 13 or 14 feet. The heaviest recorded for the Columbia river was 828 lbs. and for the Fraser 1120 lbs.

The other species of sturgeon are small in size and, excepting the lake sturgeon (*A. rubicundus*) are of little commercial value. The lake sturgeon inhabits the Great Lakes and the surrounding waters, where it attains to a growth of about 50 lbs. Its food consists of snails, crayfish, and insects.

The ova of sturgeon vary considerably in quantity, ranging from one to two and a half millions. The eggs are about anninth of an inch in diameter, are blue-black in color, and are very glutinous.