



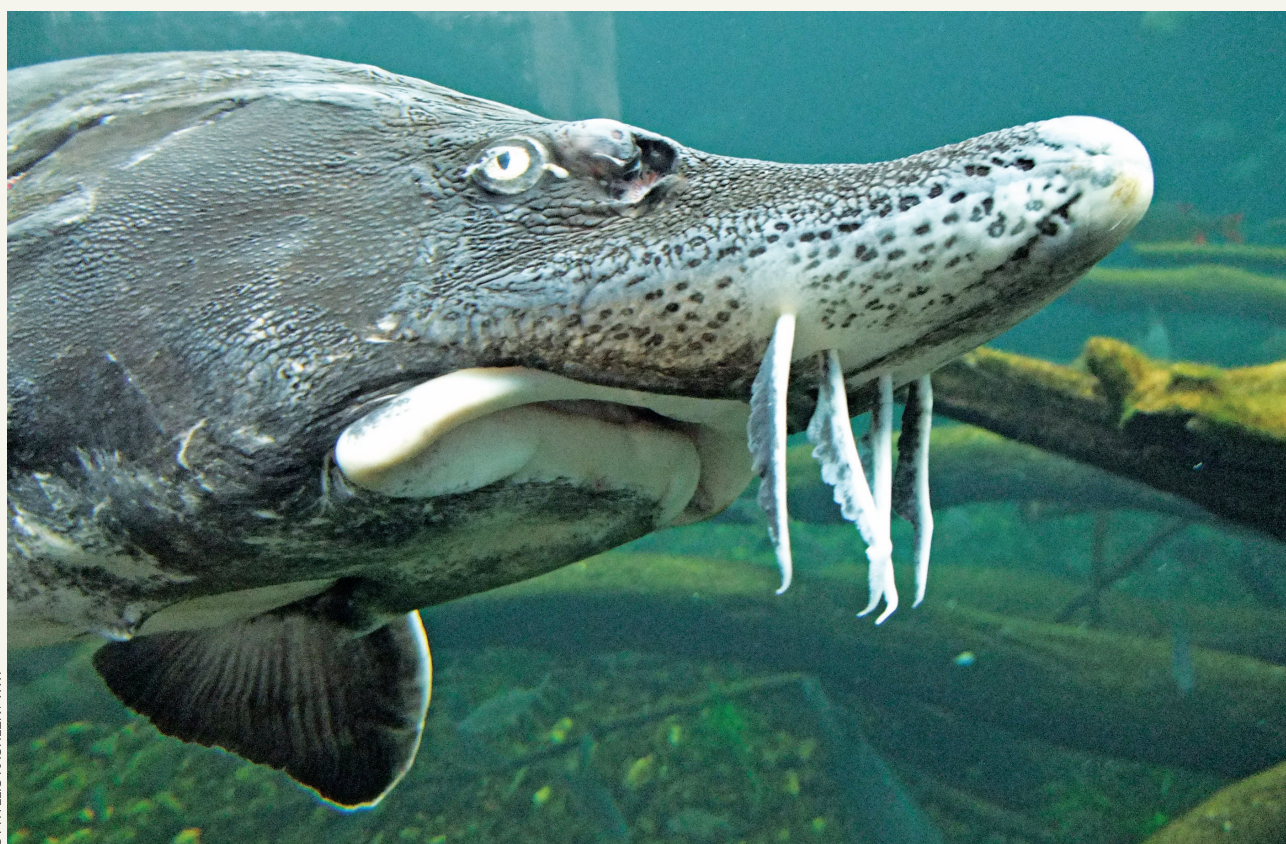
FACTSHEET

THIS PROJECT  
IS FUNDED BY  
THE EU'S LIFE  
PROGRAMME



## Conservation

# Halting overexploitation of Danube sturgeons



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## About the project



## STURGEONS

ARE THE MOST  
THREATENED ANIMALS  
ON THE IUCN RED LIST  
OF THREATENED SPECIES

The decline of Danube sturgeons, the ancient migratory fish that are today teetering on the brink of extinction due to overfishing, is clearly documented by the rapidly decreasing catches in the last decades. The project “**Joint actions to raise awareness on overexploitation of Danube sturgeons in Romania and Bulgaria**” aims to tackle the main direct threat to the species’ survival.

Project target groups are fishing communities, law enforcement agencies, decision makers, sturgeon breeders and caviar processors and traders in Romania and Bulgaria.

**Funded by the EU’s Life + programme, the project is implemented by WWF in Austria, Bulgaria and Romania from July 2012 until September 2015.**

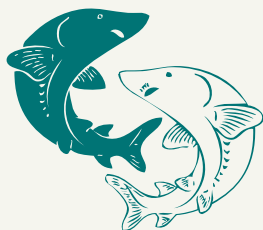
## Danube's endangered flagship species

Although CITES quotas and national fishing bans have been introduced, a supposedly high rate of illegal catches continues to diminish sturgeons. The main driver for overexploitation is the extremely high economic value of caviar. There are flourishing black markets in the whole region and illegal caviar from Bulgaria and Romania is found in several other EU Member States. The reasons for the dramatic decline are complex, but lack of awareness and information is the root cause of the most important one, overfishing.

**This project is aligned with the “Action Plan for the conservation of sturgeons in the Danube River Basin”, adopted by the Council of Europe in 2005.**

## Project goals

- **By 2015**, zero sturgeons are illegally fished at least in 15 targeted fishing communities in Bulgaria and Romania, and at least 6 key companies in these two countries support this through an official commitment against any illegal sourcing of wild sturgeons/caviar.
- **By 2015**, stronger enforcement and political support for the protection of Danube sturgeons are in place in both target countries, indicated by, amongst others, an increase of control activity reported by enforcement agencies and a joint declaration of at least 7 highest level decision makers of Danube range states.
- **By 2015**, all project target groups show at least 50% increased awareness and knowledge of overexploitation of sturgeons.



## STURGEONS

**PLAY AN IMPORTANT  
ROLE AS INDICATORS OF  
HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS**

## Selected project objectives

- By June 2013, **Sturgeon Advocates are established** in both countries and are recognized as liaison persons and information sources regarding sturgeon issues by at least 300 fishermen in 15 targeted villages.
- By October 2014, at least **150 targeted fishermen are aware of alternatives to substitute income** from illegal sturgeon fishing and are thus enabled to dispense with poaching activities, which will crucially add to stopping the decline of wild sturgeons.
- By May 2015, at least **50 relevant companies in other EU countries have been contacted** and are provided with information to increase their awareness and make sure that illegal caviar will not get on the EU market and that this negative impact on wild sturgeon populations will be stopped.
- By December 2013, **2 workshops** (for at least 100 officials in total) and **4 special sessions providing training on the job** (for at least 10 officials each) are held for competent enforcement authorities in Bulgaria and Romania.
- By the end of the project, **first time seizures of illegal sturgeon caviar in Bulgaria and Romania and imposed sanctions** to deter further poaching and illegal trade show higher enforcement effectiveness and improved conservation of wild sturgeons.
- By April 2015, **a joint declaration is signed by at least 7 high level decision makers from Danube States**, expressing clear political support for the protection of sturgeons and for stronger enforcement of national and EU policy and regulations to stop overexploitation.



### Why we are here.

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.danube-sturgeons.org](http://www.danube-sturgeons.org)

### For more information:

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