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Species

CONSERVING THE STURGEONS: Danube's endangered flagship species

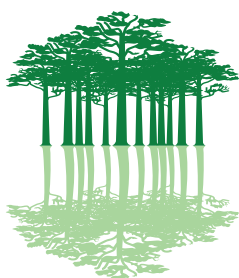
Danube sturgeons today are in danger of becoming extinct, with five of the six native species critically endangered (IUCN, 2009). The project "Conservation of sturgeons and improving their status in Bulgaria through implementation of activities from the National Action plan" aims to redress the balance. The project is funded by the EU's Environment Operational Programme. It is implemented by WWF in Bulgaria from January 2012 until February 2015.

OVERALL GOALS

- Conservation of sturgeons in the Bulgarian stretch of the Danube through limiting negative human impact and illegal activities.
- Improvement of efficient protection and introduction of direct conservation measures to strengthen sturgeon populations.
- Implementation of the National Action Plan on Sturgeons (2005-2014) and some activities from the European Action Plan on Conservation of Sturgeons.



**THE STURGEON IS ONE OF
WWF'S PRIORITY SPECIES**



STURGEONS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS INDICATORS OF HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

WHY ARE STURGEON POPULATIONS DECLINING?

WWF's Action Plan for the conservation of sturgeons in the Danube River Basin identifies three key reasons for the dramatic decline of sturgeons over the past few decades:

- Over-exploitation.
- Habitat loss and degradation.
- Disruption of spawning migration.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Improvement of legislation and scientific information (key habitats, spawning grounds) to design efficient protection measures.
- Strengthening of Danube sturgeon populations through direct conservation measures: restocking.
- Better stakeholder capacity to limit negative human impact and illegal activities: work with authorities, local communities and scientists.
- Improved awareness among interested stakeholders and the general public on sturgeons and the problems they face: information campaign.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Review and improvement of the national legislation related to sturgeon conservation.
- Field research of sturgeon habitats, identification of sturgeon spawning grounds along the Bulgarian Danube and ensuring their effective protection.
- Strengthening the Danube sturgeon population through restocking (breeding, marking and release) with sturgeons of Danube origin – release of at least 50,000 individuals.
- Preparation of tri-lateral (Bulgaria-Romania-Serbia) management measures to ensure conservation and reproduction of sturgeons in the Danube river basin.
- Joint activities with stakeholders (authorities, scientists, local communities), involvement of authorities in main project activities: field work, work with local communities.
- Forming of two advisory councils for the project – scientific (with participation of international experts) and with authorities/stakeholders.
- Creation of electronic database and an online portal on sturgeons – all available documentation, legislation, scientific data, analyses, reports, studies, maps, etc will be collected and uploaded there along with main project results.
- Publicity and information campaign.



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.wwf.bg

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