

SHORTNOSE STURGEON

Acipenser brevirostrum

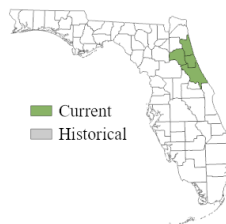
Order: Acipenseriformes

Family: Acipenseridae

FNAI Ranks: G3/S1

U.S. Status: Endangered

FL Status: Endangered



Description: A relatively small sturgeon, generally < 3 ft. (1 m), with a wide mouth, darkly colored viscera, bluntly V-shaped, short snout, and prominent, bony scutes (enlarged scales). The general body color is brown to black dorsally, fading to yellow on the sides and white ventrally.

Similar Species: Adult Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) is much larger, 8 ft. (2.5 m) or more; has lightly colored viscera; and a long, prominently V-shaped snout (upturned at the tip in young).

Habitat: Most of the life cycle is spent in lower portions of large rivers and in brackish habitats along the Atlantic coast. During spawning, however, this species may migrate long distances upstream if unimpeded by dams. Excursions into full-strength salt water occur seldom if ever.

Seasonal Occurrence: Resident year-round; spawning occurs in late winter in our part of the species' range.

Florida Distribution: Known in FL only from the St. Johns River System, from its mouth to Lake George and Crescent Lake. Florida is at southern extreme of species' range, which extends northward along Atlantic coast to southern New Brunswick.

Range-wide Distribution: Atlantic coastal rivers from the St. John River, Canada, southward to the St. Johns River, Florida.

Conservation Status: Breeding habitat in the St. Johns River basin was eliminated by the construction of the Rodman Dam. Because this species does not undergo coastal migrations, the St. Johns River population of shortnose sturgeon may be extinct or is likely to become extinct in the near future.

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Protection and Management: Maintain water quality and natural characteristics of habitat. Remove Rodman Dam and restore Ocklawaha River to its natural state.

References: Crance 1986, Georgia DNR 1999, Gilbert (ed.) 1992, Hoehn 1998, Page and Burr 1998.



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Duane Raver, courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service