



Is the River Rhine ready for the European sturgeon?

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Acipenser sturio is one of the most endangered fish species in the world. This magnificent creature once thrived in the river basins of Western Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. The French research group IRSTEA started the rehabilitation of the European sturgeon in the river Gironde and helped with the new rehabilitation programs in the rivers Elbe and Rhine.

This beautiful specimen (70 cm in length and 2 kg in weight) is one of the 47 tagged sturgeons that were released with the help of Dutch Princess Laurentien, 8 May 2012 in the river Rhine (NL).

Tracking with the Nedap Trail ® System showed that these fast swimmers adapted easily to the river, however they encounter two problems: (1) Due to the closed discharge sluices of sea lock Haringvlietdam, sturgeons can't enter the North Sea via the historic estuary, they had to take a detour; (2) Sturgeons were quite easily, accidentally recaptured in the sea by shrimpers, 13% within one month (!)

Open the Door ! It was concluded that the Rhine offers ample habitat for sub adult sturgeons. However, the sea lock Haringvlietdam needs to be opened (also for the return of adult sturgeons in the river Rhine) and coastal fishing must be made even more sustainable.

Photo's: Implantation of transponder (left), Royal release of sturgeons (middle), Migration route downstream and recaptures North Sea (right).

