

# Sturgeon spearing season starts Saturday

BY JIM HARP  
Post-Crescent outdoor editor

Up until 10 days ago, those who were anxiously awaiting the start of the 1978 sturgeon spearing season on Lake Winnebago were bubbling over with anticipation.

Water clarity was listed as excellent, the ice was in good, solid shape and vehicle travel over the sprawling 137,708-acre lake was practically unrestricted. Things are different now and some apprehension is noted among would-be spearman.

Good old Mother Nature, who seems to have a way of protecting her own, ushered in the worst snow storm of the winter a week ago Thursday, and now Lake Winnebago has taken on a new look.

Lake travel is very restricted. Roads have been and are being plowed and maintained around the lake at certain access points, but the main problem is getting around once you are out on the frozen surface. Drifts that piled up are now "solid as concrete," according to one ice fisherman. Cross-country

travel is no longer possible. It is necessary to stay within the area of the roads or it is easy to get stranded in a drift.

Consequently, those who had planned on locating sturgeon spearing shacks in certain areas, may not be able to get to them. Spearman also like to move about during the season, following the reports they get on fish sightings and successful spearman. It is very likely that most shanties which will be pulled out onto the lake will have to be set up close to the plowed roads. Fishermen who have had their shanties on the lake for a portion of the winter already may find a problem in getting to them, or getting them off the ice after the season closes March 1.

Regulations for the upcoming season are much the same as in the past. All spearmen must have a \$2.50 sturgeon spearing license in their possession and must be 14 years of age or older. With the exception of those 14 and 15 years of age, all others must also have a regular valid Wisconsin fishing license. Persons under 14 are not authorized to spear sturgeon. A special tag is

issued with the sturgeon license and this must be locked to the tail of the sturgeon immediately after the fish is speared.

Sturgeon must be at least 45 inches long to be legal. Spearmen are advised to be sure about the length of a sturgeon before they throw the spear. Known-length decoys and measured spots on the bottom of the lake aid the spearmen in determining the length of the fish.

Personnel from the Department of Natural Resources have issued a reminder to spearmen that some sturgeon are carrying tags in their dorsal fins. It is important that spearmen getting these tagged fish point out the fact at registration stations so the tags can be checked. Vital information is obtained through studies of sturgeon, their growth rate and movements by the tagging system.

Spearmen are hoping that lake conditions will be somewhat better than they were during the 1977 season. A total of 287 sturgeon were speared during the 18-day season last year as spearmen had only 8 to 10 feet of good visibility. This compares with 1976 when nearly ideal conditions prevailed and 1,021 sturgeon were taken.

The largest fish last season was 76 inches long and weighed 130 pounds. It was taken on the last day of the season by Victor Steaven, of Chilton.

Since the DNR has been registering sturgeon, the leanest years were 1969 and 1973 when only 8 fish were taken. Poor water and lake conditions were contributing factors to the low harvest. Best season since records were kept was 1955 with 1,505 registrations. There was a 29-day season in 1955.

Spearing licenses will be available throughout the season, however, after the opening weekend they can only be purchased at county clerk offices in Winnebago, Calumet, Fond du Lac, Outagamie and Waushara counties as well as the DNR offices at Oshkosh and Calumet Harbor.

Registration stations have been set up at various points around the lake. Here is a list of the stations where successful spearmen can register their fish:

**Wisconsin**  
**OUTDOORS**  
Sunday Post-Crescent, Appleton-Neenah-Menasha, Wis.  
**February 5, 1978**  
F-12

Fishstate Inn, Calumet County Park road, 439-1965.

Parson's Harbor Bar, Stockbridge 439-1450.

Fisherman's Inn, Brothertown 849-2760.

Calumet Harbor, DNR state fisheries office 795-4211.

Chuck Lisowe's Tap, Quinney at the lake 439-1341.

**South shore**

Clarence's Harbor, Highways 55-151, one mile east of Fond du Lac, 921-8349.

**West shore**

Wendt's Bar, Highway 45, 8 miles north of Fond du Lac, 698-2901.

Mac and Pack-it's Tavern, Highway 45, 2 miles north of Fond du Lac, 923-9973.

Jerry's Tavern, 1210 Ceape st., Oshkosh 231-7380.

Payne's Point Resort, Winnebago county trunk A, 3 miles south of Neenah, 725-9722.

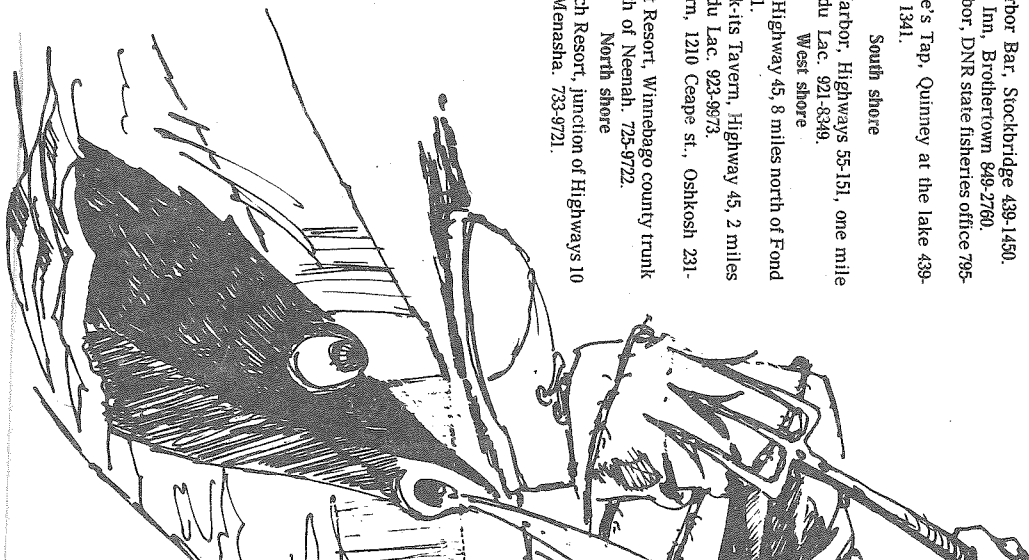
**North shore**

Waverly Beach Resort, junction of Highways 10 and 114, near Menasha, 733-9721.

## Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Spearing Season Data, 1955-77

Year	Season Length (Days)	Bag Limit	Shanty Count	License Sales	Sturgeon Registered	Average Length (Inches)	Average Weight (Pounds)
1955	29	3	1,291	—	1,505	54	43
1956	20	2	1,238	—	661	56	46
1957	19	2	1,538	—	851	56	49
1958	22	1	2,152	—	464	56	50
1959	19	1	1,481	—	221	55	46
1960	20	1	1,417	—	520	55	44
1961	19	1	1,917	—	340	54	42
1962	20	1	1,180	—	262	53	42
1963	21	1	1,830	—	1,001	53	39
1964	23	1	1,967	—	685	55	47
1965	17	1	1,816	—	718	54	46
1966	25	1	—	—	300	54	45
1967	26	1	1,916	—	1,424	53	41
1968	28	1	—	—	21	51	36
1969	22	1	—	—	8	52	39
1970	23	1	—	—	692	52	40
1971	24	1	—	—	159	53	39
1972	26	1	2,500	—	1,251	54	41
1973	27	1	—	—	8	51.4	37.5
1974***	21	1	—	—	117	55.5	45.1
1975	22	1	—	—	530	57	46
1976	21	1	—	—	3,850**	55	44
1977	18	1	—	—	287	56	47

\*First Year of \$2.50 License \*\*Includes Upriver Lakes \*\*\*45-inch Size Limit in Effect



Elmer and Harriet's Tavern, Fairy Springs

East shore