

Average sturgeon weight increases to 38 pounds

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of the Northwestern

food for predatory fish such as walleyes, perch and saugers. As a result, there is less competition for the lake's redworm population.

The average sturgeon swimming around Lake Winnebago this winter is packing a few more pounds than it was one year ago.

According to the Department of Natural Resources in Oshkosh, the average weight of the 468 sturgeon speared during the February season was 38 pounds. That is three pounds more than the average in 1987.

Also, for the fourth straight year, and the sixth time in the 1980s, the average length was 55 inches.

This increase comes one year after the average weight dipped to the all-time low of 35. The DNR has kept track of the average weight since 1955. Since then, the average overall weight is about 43 pounds.

Dan Folz, area fish manager, predicted last fall that sturgeon weights would probably be higher this year. He based that on the fact that high populations of troutperch, emerald shiners, gizzard shad, and white bass and sheepshead fry were present in the lake.

These forage fish provide plenty of

The redworms, which are lakefly larvae, make up 99 percent of the lake sturgeon's diet. When redworms are eaten heavily by other fish, there is less food available for the sturgeon.

"All last fall we kept seeing the average weight climbing for all fish," Folz said. "We assumed it was because there were so many forage fish available. If other species are getting bigger, it usually follows that the lake sturgeon will, too."

Mark Endris, assistant area fish manager, said spearers in various parts of the lakes reported that the redworm beds appeared healthier and larger than last winter.

"With all the forage fish available, the game fish seem to be leaving the worm beds alone," he said. "That gives the sturgeon the chance to go back to their traditional food base."

Folz said the average gain in weight was still below the long-term average of

Sturgeon stats

Year	Fish taken	Ave. length	Ave. weight
1955	1,505	54	43
1956	661	54	46
1957	851	54	49
1958	464	54	50
1959	221	55	46
1960	520	55	44
1961	340	54	42
1962	262	53	42
1963	1,001	53	39
1964	685	55	47
1965	718	54	46
1966	300	54	45
1967	1,424	53	41
1968	21	51	36
1969	8	52	39
1970	692	52	40
1971	159	53	39
1972	1,251	54	41
1973	8	51	38
1974	117	54	45
1975	530	55	46
1976	936	55	46
1977	287	54	47
1978	1,246	54	46
1979	421	56	48
1980	763	54	45
1981	407	55	41
1982	2,238	55	42
1983	39	58	50
1984	302	54	42
1985	783	55	37
1986	491	55	38
1987	842	55	35
1988	468	55	38

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