

News Release

Oshkosh, WI .....The 1979 sturgeon spearing season on Lake Winnebago is now history. What kind of season was it?

Opening day, Saturday, February 10, found many spearing shanties still lining the shore. Water clarity was good over most of the lake, however, travel conditions were poor. Heavy snowfalls in December and January blanketed the lake preventing normal ice development. To complicate matters, pressure from the snow was released as fishermen cut holes and water pushed upward flooding the ice. Of the 700 opening-day spearing shanties most had been positioned by snowmobile, as 4-wheel drive vehicles were restricted to local areas.

When it was all over at sunset on March 1, after 20 days, this is how the season shaped up.

The ~~estimated 3,000~~<sup>2,973</sup> spearing licenses sold in 1979 was far below the record 6,809 distributed in 1978. With fewer spearers and poor travel conditions, the 1979 season was still a successful one as 421 sturgeon were registered. *(Average annual harvest equals 590 since 1977)* The average length of the fish was 56.3 inches and the average weight was 47.8 pounds. Five of the trophies topped the 100 pound mark, the largest being a 74-inch, 109 pounder. This beauty was speared by Charles Wilz of Menasha, Wisconsin.

The 1979 season provided interesting and valuable information on some of the sturgeon taken, as some fish had tags from previous years.

One of the sturgeon speared this year had been tagged by DNR personnel in 1954, in Lake Winnebago, at a length of 30 inches. Twenty-five years later it was registered by Allen Silverthorn of Omro at a length of 56.5 inches and 64 pounds.

Another sturgeon had been transferred from Lake Poygan in March, 1965, to Lake Winnebago at a size of 25.8 inches and three pounds. When registered by James Sweetalla of Appleton, it was 55 inches long and weighed 48 pounds.

Tag returns from the sturgeon speared each season provide information about growth, movement and abundance of the population. The present study can be successful if cooperation is received from all the spearers. If there are any fishermen who

(Over)

have speared a sturgeon in the past four years which had a tag that was not reported, the tag number and related information would be greatly appreciated. Please contact the local DNR office or send the information to the DNR Area Headquarters, Box 2565, Oshkosh, WI 54903 (Telephone: 414-424-3059).

For further information, contact:

Department of Natural Resources  
Area Fish Manager, Dan Folz or  
Assistant Area Fish Manager, Lee S. Meyers  
Box 2565  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54903

When it was first speared at sunset on March 14, after 24 days, this is how the spearing started up.

The estimated number of spearing licenses sold in 1979 was far below the number sold in 1978. With fewer spearkers and poor travel conditions, the 1979 season was still a successful one as 431 sturgeon were speared. The average length of the fish was 50.1 inches and the average weight was 12.4 pounds. The largest speared fish was 60.1 inches long and weighed 18.2 pounds. The largest speared fish was speared in the area of Wisconsin, Wisconsin.

The 1979 season provided interesting and valuable information on ways of the sturgeon taken in 1979 and tags from previous years.

One of the sturgeon speared this year had been tagged by DNR personnel in 1971 in Lake Winnebago at a length of 30 inches. Twenty-five years later it was registered by DNR at a length of 60.1 inches and a weight of 18.2 pounds.

Another sturgeon was transferred from Lake Poygan in March, 1971. The fish was 30 inches long and weighed 12.4 pounds. When registered by DNR in 1979 it was 60.1 inches long and weighed 18.2 pounds.

The returns from the sturgeon spearing season provide information on the growth, movement and abundance of the population. The present study can be successful if cooperation is received from all the spearkers.

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