

The 2019 Sturgeon Spearing Season

Ryan Koenigs, Winnebago System Sturgeon Biologist, February 24, 2019

The final chapter of the 2019 sturgeon spearing season has been written, but the memories made will live on for a lifetime. I've distributed a lot of information in previous reports, but I wanted to take the opportunity to compare this season's harvest to years past. For starters, there were 479 sturgeon harvested during the 2019 sturgeon spearing season, which ranks as the 52nd highest harvest from Lake Winnebago dating back to 1941 (page 2). The 478 fish registered this season means that 3.9% of license holders on Lake Winnebago filled their tag this season.

The 2019 sturgeon spearing season marks the 4th consecutive full 16-day season on Lake Winnebago and the 7th full length season in the last 9 years. Poor water clarity has been the primary reason for these longer seasons, but the sturgeon population remains strong. There were 18 fish larger than 100 pounds harvested from Lake Winnebago this season (31 from the Winnebago System), which equates to 3.8% of the harvest. 2019 is the 12th season consecutive season where at least 2% of the fish harvested from Lake Winnebago were larger than 100 pounders. The largest fish of the 2019 season was 171.0 pounds (85.5") and registered on opening day by Jonathan Eiden. I've already chronicled the history of that fish, so I won't go into too much detail at this time. You can reference the report from day 4 for more information on that fish.

With the conclusion of another sturgeon spearing season, I am anticipating that I will be asked questions about how I would summarize this season. In my opinion, the 2019 season was a success. Yes, the fishery went the full 16 days on Lake Winnebago and the season harvest was below the long-term average, but when you look at the season as a whole how could you characterize it as anything other than a success? There were

Photo credit: Mary Smedbron



over 4,600 shanties on Lake Winnebago opening day and this season provided over 12,411 license holders with an unrivaled opportunity to harvest a lake sturgeon through the ice with a spear. This fishery is so unique that even in seasons with below average harvest, we must step back and look at how remarkable the sturgeon resource in our back yard is. Ice conditions also held up during the season allowing people to participate in the spear fishery from day 1 to day 16. Most importantly, the 2019 sturgeon spearing season provided spearers with another opportunity to renew traditions associated with sturgeon spearing and make more memories with their loved ones! Those memories can't be traded for anything and are what will have many spearers looking back fondly on the 2019 sturgeon spearing season! I, like many spearers, am already looking forward to the 2020 spearing season!

Season Rank (Harvest)	Year	Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Harvest	Season Length Days
1	1995	3173	19
2	1990	2908	20
3	1982	2238	17
4	1998	2051	12
5	1953	2044	29
6	2015	1870	8
7	2004	1854	2
8	1948	1735	30
9	1993	1643	17
10	2001	1590	2
11	2014	1513	6
12	2010	1508	6
13	1955	1505	29
14	1999	1484	3
15	1954	1479	29
16	1967	1424	26
17	1946	1370	29
18	1997	1290	16
19	1972	1251	26
20	1978	1246	19
21	2009	1235	8
22	2008	1213	4
23	2011	1091	16
24	2007	1034	16
25	1963	1001	21
26	1976	936	17
27	2003	902	10
28	2005	893	12
29	1957	851	19
30	2002	847	16
31	1987	842	16
32	1950	793	29
33	1941	788	29
34	1985	783	21
35	1996	766	9
36	1980	763	22
37	1965	718	17
38	1994	698	18
39	1970	692	23
40	1964	685	23

Season Rank (Harvest)	Year	Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Harvest	Season Length Days
41	1956	661	20
42	2018	654	16
43	1991	651	21
44	1952	617	30
45	1951	608	29
46	2017	552	16
47	1975	530	22
48	1992	525	23
49	1960	520	20
50	1947	503	29
51	1986	491	22
52	2019	479	16
53	1988	468	18
54	1942	467	29
55	1958	464	22
56	1979	421	20
57	1981	407	16
58	2016	396	16
59	1949	384	29
60	1989	362	19
61	2000	347	2
62	1961	340	19
63	2012	324	16
64	2013	306	16
65	1984	302	20
66	1966	300	25
67	1977	287	18
68	1943	283	29
69	1962	262	20
70	2006	225	16
71	1959	221	19
72	1971	159	24
73	1974	117	21
74	1983	39	18
75	1968	21	28
76	1973	8	27
77	1969	8	22
78	1945		29
79	1944		30

Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Spearing: % Fish \geq 100 lbs. (1955-2019)

