

Rare Animals of Louisiana

Pallid Sturgeon

Scaphirhynchus albus

Rarity Rank: S1/G2

	1	2	3	4	5
State	■				
Global		■			
	imperiled		rare		secure



Guy LaBranche, La. Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

Identification:

- Relatively large, cylindrical fish with shovel-shaped head and slender tail base
- Tail fin 2-lobed with top lobe larger than bottom, terminating in a long filament
- Mouth is placed on the underside of the head and is preceded by several fleshy barbels
- Can be separated from the similar and more common shovelnose sturgeon (*S. platorhynchus*) by the absence of bony plates on the belly
- Grayish-white above and white below
- Adults typically range between 19.5 and 31.2 inches in length and up to 65 lb in weight
- The pallid sturgeon is one of the most poorly known and infrequently recorded freshwater fishes in North America

Habitat:

- Large rivers in Southeast United States
- The species apparently prefers the main channels of excessively turbid rivers in areas with strong currents over firm sandy bottom

Food habits:

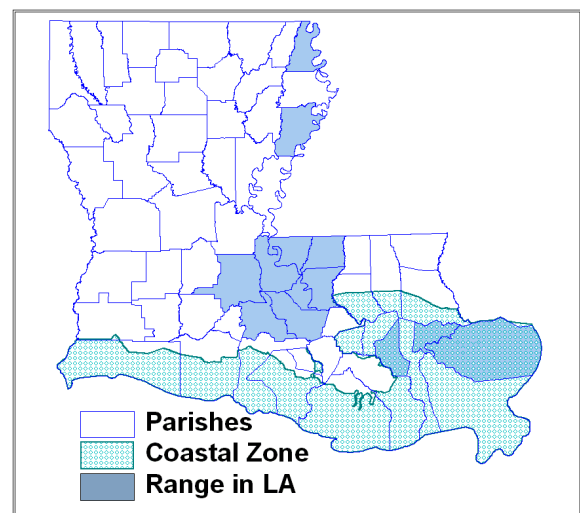
Aquatic insects and small fishes comprise a majority of the diet

Range:

- AR, IA, IL, KS, KY, LA, MO, MS, MT, ND, NE, SD, TN
- Almost entirely restricted to the Missouri and lower Mississippi rivers
- In Louisiana, this species was formerly thought to be restricted to the main channel of the Mississippi River; however, recent data indicate that the species also exists in the Atchafalaya River

Reproduction:

- Spawning takes place in the spring or early summer



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Threats:

- Channelization of rivers and construction of reservoirs eliminates spawning habitat, blocks access to remaining spawning sites and alters prey availability
- Man-caused changes in habitat and water quality have apparently greatly reduced successful reproduction in recent years
- Interbreeding with shovelnose sturgeons

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Protect from harvest
- Little is known about the life history of this species, research would be beneficial

LA River Basins:

Atchafalaya, Mississippi, Pontchartrain,

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