



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries  
Commission for  
the Mediterranean

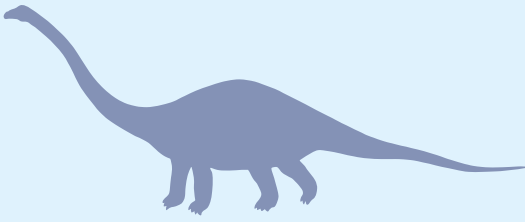
BlackSea4Fish

# Sturgeons in the Black Sea



Join our urgent action to  
protect an iconic species group



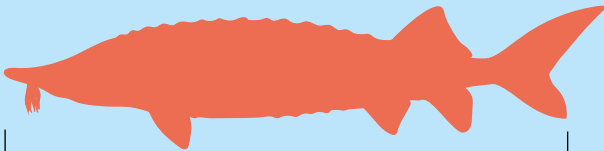
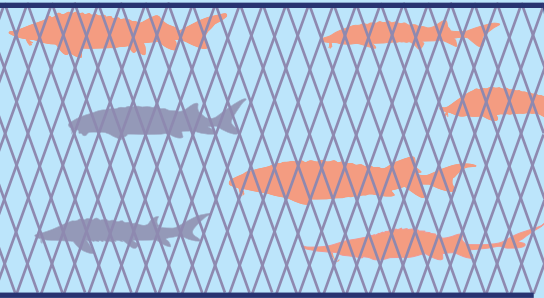
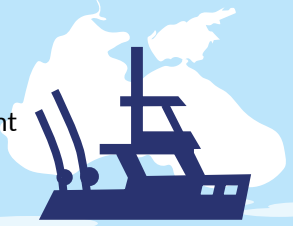


Sturgeons (*Acipenseridae*) have been on the planet since the time of the dinosaurs.



It is one of the most threatened aquatic species group in the world, with 17 out of 25 sturgeon species classed as critically endangered.

Several sturgeon species are present in the Black Sea.



The largest Black Sea sturgeon, the beluga, can reach a length of more than 4 metres.



Sturgeon fishing is no longer permitted in any Black Sea country.



The species face regional extinction unless immediate action is taken.



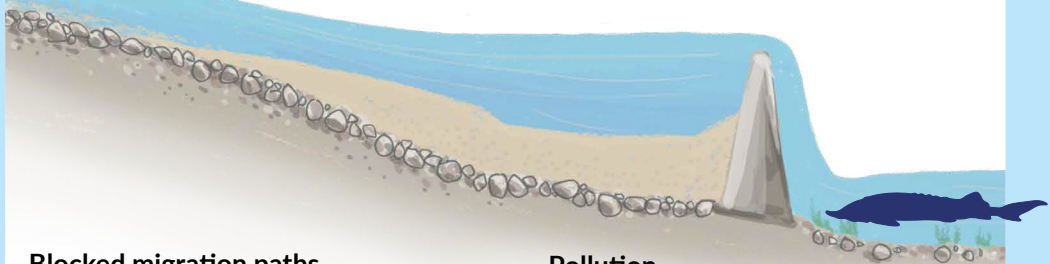
## Key threats to Black Sea sturgeon species

### Illegal fishing and trading

After decades of being fished above sustainable levels, sturgeons are still illegally and unsustainably caught and traded around the Black Sea for their caviar and their meat, drastically reducing their populations.



© GFCM / BlackSea4Fish project



### Blocked migration paths

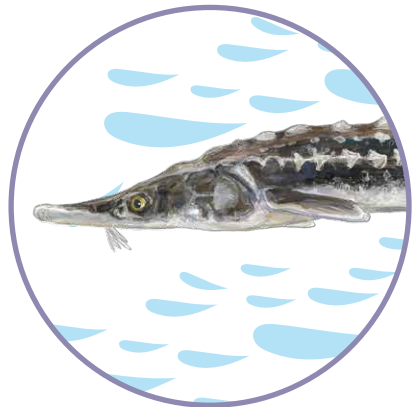
Hydropower dams and other obstacles across rivers disrupt Black Sea sturgeon life cycles, preventing them from moving freely upstream to their spawning habitats and downstream to the estuaries and river deltas where they feed.

### Pollution

Sturgeons are particularly sensitive to water pollution and siltation, which can harm both the physiology of the fish and their habitats, and food supplies. Considerable work is needed to tackle the sources of pollution in the Black Sea.

### Bycatch

Although deliberately targeting sturgeon is illegal in the Black Sea, bycatch in other fisheries remains a serious threat to remaining populations. There is an urgent need for more monitoring and to develop and share sturgeon bycatch mitigation measures across fishing fleets.



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## We need your help!

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is very keen to hear from fishers with information on sturgeon bycatch or who can alert us to any fishing activity, targeted or not, that produces or is likely to produce sturgeon catches. If you have any knowledge to share, then you have a valuable part to play in protecting the species: please get in touch today.

You can reach us by email at [BlackSea4Fish@gfcmonline.org](mailto:BlackSea4Fish@gfcmonline.org)

### The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, BlackSea4Fish and the sturgeon recovery project

The GFCM manages fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Comprising 22 member countries and the European Union, its main goal is to ensure the **conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources** in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

In 2016, the GFCM launched **BlackSea4Fish**, a project to provide scientific and technical support for the sustainable management of Black Sea fisheries. BlackSea4Fish is currently working with national partners on a **pilot project to protect sturgeon populations** in the region, aiming to mitigate fisheries impacts and enhance their conservation. The final outputs of pilot project will be shared in 2024.

The pilot project will include awareness-raising campaigns and a region-wide dialogue on the critical issues which threaten the future of the sturgeon, such as bycatch and illegal activities. In particular, project partners will **work with Black Sea fishers to bring on board their unique experience and understanding**, to fill knowledge gaps and inform management plans for these critically endangered Black Sea fish.

The project activities are carried out in cooperation with the National Institute for Marine Research and Development (NIMRD) and the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture (NAFA) from Romania, the Central Fisheries Research Institute (SUMAE) and the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (BSGM) from Türkiye, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection from Georgia, and the Executive Agency of Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAFA) from Bulgaria, under the supervision of the GFCM Black Sea Technical Unit.



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