

The state of sturgeon in Georgia: an overview of sturgeon research and sturgeon populations in the Peach State

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Since 2002, the UGA sturgeon research group has conducted long-term population assessments for both Atlantic Sturgeon (ATS) and Shortnose Sturgeon (SNS) on all major coastal rivers within Georgia. Because both species are federally endangered, the current status and population trends of Georgia's sturgeon populations are critically important to both state and federal resource managers. Over the past 14 years, the UGA research team has combined intensive field sampling with modern modeling approaches to produce some of the first quantified estimates of annual recruitment and population abundance for either species in any part of the range. Recent improvements in field methods, have also facilitated long-term telemetry studies that have provided new information regarding life history, behavior, and seasonal habitat use. The objective of this overview presentation is to present a summary assessment of the current status of Georgia's ATS and SNS sturgeon populations based on a combination of quantitative population data and biological parameters, within the context of what is known about populations of both species in other parts of their ranges.