Adult Lake Sturgeon Populations and Location

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Project Sponsors: Manitoba Hydro and NSERC

Lake Sturgeon in the Manitoba area have been labeled as endangered and as such much interest has been taken in sturgeon research in the last few years. With more knowledge comes better ways to keep this prehistoric fish around. For our project, students will focus on collecting and analyzing data on adult sturgeon located in between Seven Sisters and Slave Falls.

The aim of this project was to see where sturgeon adults, ones that actively take part in the spawn, are located after the spawn and why. Most of the project consisted of acoustic tags being surgically inserted into adults, which relayed a signal to tracking devices placed in the river. Adults from various positions along the river were tagged to see if they stayed in the area they were caught in or if they migrated over long distances. The data from the receivers at the bottom of the river was collected and population movement patterns were assessed in the spring.

Students assisted in manual tracking and habitat data collection during their stay. Manual tracking of the acoustic tags were used to find adult fish. Once a fish had been found a substrate sample was be taken to see what substrate was preferred and what food was available, since sturgeon are bottom feeders. A water quality sample was taken as well. A drift trap, with a flow meter attached to it was placed in the water where the fish was found and left for an hour. After an hour it was pulled to see what kind of things are found drifting in the current and how fast the flow of water was.

All the substrate samples, water quality data, flow meter data and drift trap samples were taken back to the lab and analyzed by the students. A indication of why adult sturgeon are where they are, emerged from the parameters analyzed.

Research Team (L to R back)
Student Jaclyn Oliver, Dr. Steve Peake, Tutor Melanie Beaudreau and student Alannah Sefton.
Seated: Project Supervisor Holly Labadie

Alannah and Jaclyn show of the catch of the day!

Team discusses their project at MSA Open House July 19th