

# Shortnose Sturgeon, *Acipenser brevirostrum*

**Status:**

*State:* Endangered

*Federal:* Endangered

## Identification

The shortnose sturgeon has a short and bluntly rounded snout, wide mouth, barbels, numerous dorsal, lateral and ventral scutes (bony or horny plates), and a heterocercal tail (the upper lobe of the tail fin is larger and contains the upturned end of the spinal column). Typically, the body is yellowish brown to nearly black on the head, back and sides level to lateral plates, and whitish to yellowish below. Length at initial



Joshua D. Ingram, courtesy John C. O'Herron, II

maturity for this species occurs between 45-55 cm fork length, from the snout to the middle of the tail (18-22 in.) for males and females (Dadswell *et al.* 1984). Maximum known fork lengths are nearly 49 in. for a female and nearly 39 in. for a male. In New Jersey, 28 tagged males ranged between 21 in. to nearly 35 in. fork length.

## Habitat

River mouths, tidal rivers, estuaries, and bays serve as prime habitat for the shortnose sturgeon. In addition, individuals occasionally enter the open ocean. A significant portion of New Jersey's shortnose sturgeon occurs in the upper tidal Delaware River (Dadswell *et al.* 1984).

## Status and Conservation

The shortnose sturgeon has been federally listed as endangered since the inception of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, when it was also considered endangered in New Jersey. The Office of Natural Land's Management ranks the species as "rare in N.J." and "either very rare and local throughout its range or found locally in a restricted range or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extinction throughout its range."

This species is afforded protection under both federal and state Endangered Species acts, Clean Water acts, fishing regulations, and environmental review of proposed development projects.