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European sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*)

European sturgeon is an emblematic species of major European rivers such as Gironde, Elbe, Guadalquivir and Ebre. It is critically endangered and a European restoration program is dedicated to this species.

Old documents state that in the XV century the construction of the weir of Xerta caused serious problems to them (with other migratory species such as shad); they could no longer migrate upstream. Because of the construction of Xerta's weir, the area of reproduction of the sturgeon in the Ebre River and Delta remains, since then, limited to the last 57 km of the river system. Spawning areas were located in the top section of this area, between the municipalities of Bitem and Xerta.

Due to an intensive fishery in the estuary and the sea, and the decline of the amount of spawning

areas, the sturgeon populations weakened, especially between 1926 and 1946. This decline ended with the disappearing of the sturgeon at the lower Ebre River by mid-twentieth century. Since 1965, there is no data of capture of adults. The disappearance of juveniles is slightly later as one would expect, and occurs after the year 1970 -it is very similar to those that occurred in the Rhone River. Being its last capture related to a juvenile in 1970.

The European sturgeon was historically distributed to Northwest Europe, Southwest Europe and the Mediterranean. The most important areas were situated in the Northwest on the Atlantic coast. There were populations in the northern part of the Mediterranean region as well: Southwest of the Iberian Peninsula, Ebro, Rhone, Italy, Greece and up to the Black Sea.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- **Worldwide IUCN category.** CR A2d (Critically endangered)
- **Spanish IUCN category.** CR A2d (Critically endangered)
- **National legislation.** It is classified by "Endangered" by the Spanish National Catalogue of Endangered Species (R. D. 439/90)
- **Regional legislation.** Classified by "D" in Annex II of native wild fauna protected species, Catalonia animal protection law 3/88.
- **International Agreements.** Annex II 82/72 Bern Convention. Present at CITES Regulation (3626/82/CE) and its regulation extension (3646/83/CE) as a "1" species.
- **European Directives.** Annex II and IV Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
- **Red books.** Mentioned as "Endangered" in Spanish Vertebrates Red Book (992).