

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

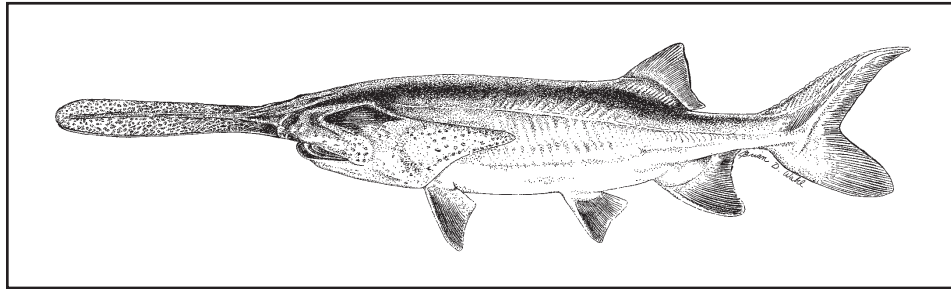
Division of Wildlife

Life History Notes

Paddlefish

Common Names: Spoonbill

Scientific Name: *Polyodon spathula*



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Identification

Paddlefish are odd looking fish with their long paddle-shaped snout. The mouth is large and toothless, the eyes are small, and the skin is scaleless. The skeleton is made completely of cartilage.

Range and Habitat

Paddlefish are found in the Ohio River and up to the first dam on its larger tributaries. They prefer the sluggish pools and backwater areas. This species is listed as threatened in Ohio.

Life History

Paddlefish spawn in the spring during periods of high flow. The female scatters eggs over submerged gravel and cobble bars. The young hatch and drift down stream to deeper pools with slow water. It is thought that paddlefish use their long snout to help locate areas with large

concentrations of zooplankton. Young and adult fish then swim through these areas and filter the zooplankton and small insect larvae from the water with their long gill rakers.

Adult Size

Paddlefish reach sizes of over 5 feet and can weigh up to 150 pounds.

Fishing Methods

Paddlefish cannot be caught by traditional fishing methods because of their feeding habits. Most paddlefish are caught accidentally or snagged by anglers. If you do catch a paddlefish, you must return it to the water if it is caught in or within 2,000 feet of the following reservoirs or dams: Paint Creek, Deer Creek, Caesar Creek, or East Fork.