

River Otter Predation of Juvenile Nechako White Sturgeon



Photo Credit: Roy Rea

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The Predator – North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*)

- Adult River Otters weigh 5 – 14 kg and can eat up to 20% of their body weight every day. They primarily eat fish and the Nechako River is home to an abundance of fish of different species, making it an ideal hunting ground.
- River Otters are opportunistic feeders, meaning they will eat whatever suitable prey is available, even if it isn't a part of their normal diet. Therefore, it is possible that they take advantage of hatchery-released juvenile Nechako White Sturgeon as a food source.

Latrine Sites

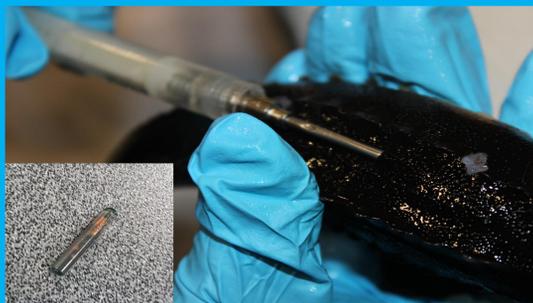


River Otters have particular terrestrial locations called latrine sites that they use for defecation and urination. River Otters are social animals and latrine sites offer a location to interact with other otters, both physically and through scent-based communication.

How do Researchers Know River Otters Eat Juvenile Nechako White Sturgeon?



Some juvenile sturgeon released from the NWSCC every year are implanted with a radio tag



All juvenile sturgeon released from the NWSCC are implanted with a PIT tag



Photo Credit: Kyle Krahn

Radio tags found on shore, often in areas with suspected otter activity



River otters ingest PIT tags when eating sturgeon, tags are defecated in otter latrine sites

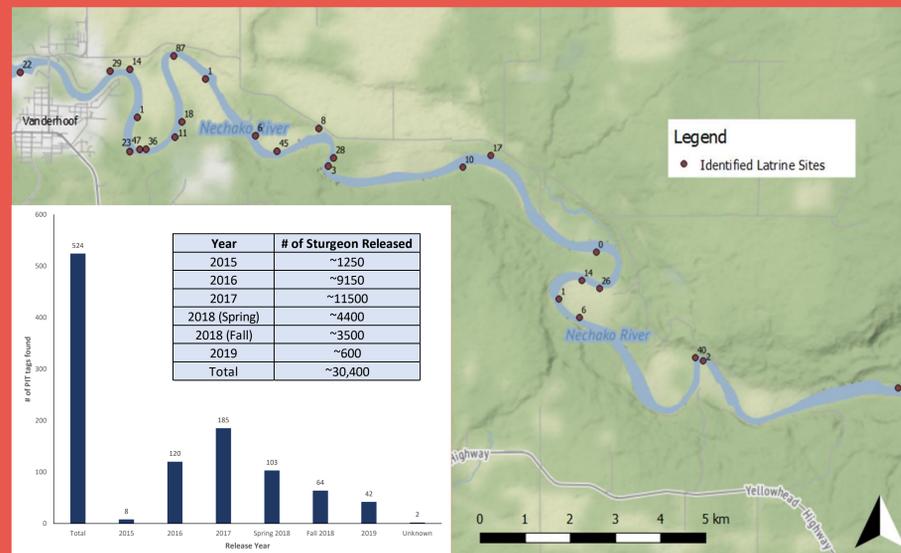
Steps to Collecting Data About Predation



What do Researchers Want to Learn About this Predation?

- How much predation is happening?
- Where is predation happening and are there locations with higher predation than others?
- When is predation happening and are there times of the year when juvenile sturgeon are more vulnerable to predation?
- What are the spatial and temporal factors contributing to this predation?
- What size of sturgeon are otters eating and is there a size where they are no longer vulnerable to predation?

What have Researchers Found so Far (2019)?



- 524 PIT tags from 27 identified latrine sites.
- 0 – 87 PIT tags collected from each latrine site.
- Largest mortalities: 69.8cm FL, 2.1kg (radio tag evidence), 55.1cm FL, 1.3kg (PIT tag evidence)



Poster created by UNBC Graduate Student Cale Babey who is doing research on this predator-prey interaction.