

The Cartilaginous Fish

Lampreys



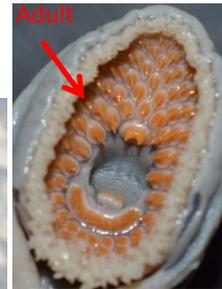
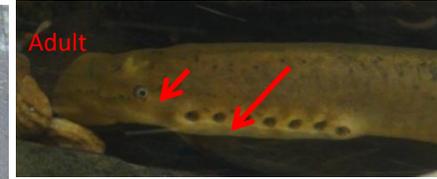
Paddlefish



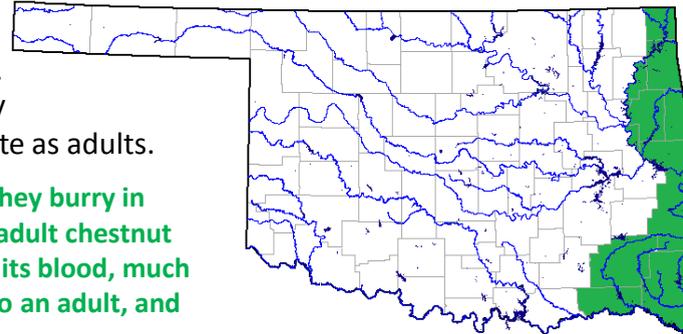
Sturgeon



Lampreys – Southern Brook & Chestnut



- Lampreys are primitive fish without jaws or paired fins, and a skeleton made of cartilage..
- Lampreys resemble eels, but can be identified by their disc-shaped mouths and whorls of raspy teeth.
- They also have seven round hole-like spiracles, or external respiratory openings, instead of gills.
- The larvae (up to seven inches) lack eyes, have slits instead of spiracles, and unformed horseshoe-shaped mouth parts.
- Oklahoma has two species of lamprey, which are practically indistinguishable as larvae, and often difficult to differentiate as adults.



Fish Fact: Oklahoma lampreys spend part of their lives as larvae. They burry in stream beds where they feed on microscopic life and detritus. An adult chestnut lamprey becomes parasitic, attaches itself to a host fish and sucks its blood, much like aquatic ticks. A brook lamprey does not eat after maturing into an adult, and will spawn the following spring, dying shortly after.

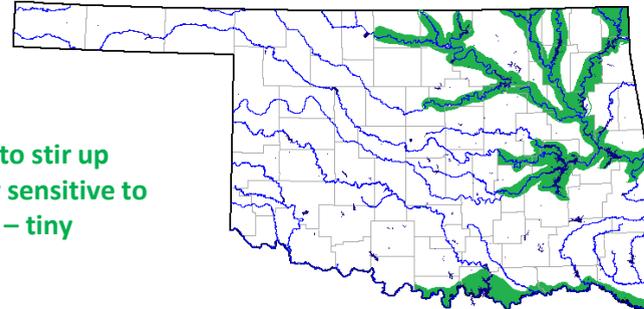
Paddlefish



- Paddlefish have long oar or spoon like bills and don't look like any other Oklahoma fish.
- They also have smooth scaleless skin and broad shark like tails.
- During the spring, males develop sandpapery like bumps (breeding tubercles) on their heads and back.
- Paddlefish have wide gaping mouths and toothbrush like bristles in their gills. They swim through the water with their mouth open and filter feed on small microscopic plankton, much like whale sharks do.



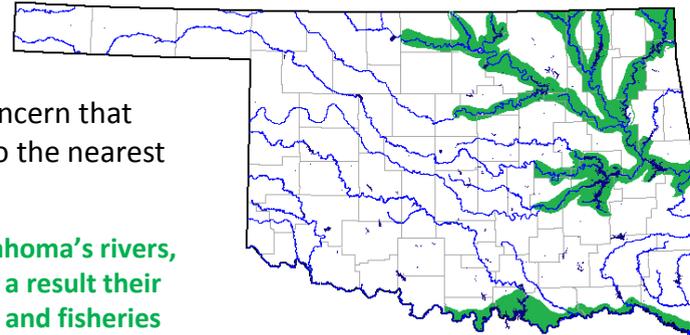
Fish Fact: A common misconception is that paddlefish use their bills to stir up the bottom. In fact, their bills are covered with sensors that are very sensitive to weak electric currents and help paddlefish detect their favorite meal – tiny plankton living in the water column.



Shovelnose Sturgeon



- Shovelnose sturgeon are another species that don't look like any other Oklahoma fish.
- They have a triangular, spade shaped head and 4 sensory barbels in a straight line directly in front of their mouth.
- Their mouths are extendable and their lips have a scalloped or cookie cutter appearance that isn't seen on any other Oklahoma fish.
- Their bodies are covered with hard, sharp plates called scutes.
- Sturgeon aren't good to eat and are a species of special concern that should be released immediately and all catches reported to the nearest ODWC personnel



Fish Fact: Shovelnose sturgeon were once found throughout Oklahoma's rivers, but dams have blocked their migrations and spawning routes. As a result their populations have declined. Their current range in OK is unknown and fisheries workers are trying to determine their numbers and distribution.