

Fishing Equipment & Tips

Minnesota's Finest Fight -- Fishing for Sturgeon

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August 2011

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Ben Brettingen with his catch

"I honestly can't move it off the bottom", I said, barely audible over the squealing of the reel's drag. I thought to myself, "If he struggles, what in the world am I going to do?" I soon found out.

It must have been quite a sight! -- A 6'4", 240 lb. collegiate wrestler with a fishing rod bent over in half, which looked more suited to being a diving board than a fishing rod! Slowly, the fish started to make its way to the surface and, moments later, I lay the 102 lb. behemoth across my exhausted body for a quick snap shot. It was then that I remembered why I came to the border waters of the Rainy River.

Are fish this big really located in Minnesota's waters? You betcha, the Lake Sturgeon! Catching fish of this caliber must require top of the line gear and a boat that's worth more than most people's

house...right? No! The beauty about fishing for sturgeon is that it doesn't have to break the bank.

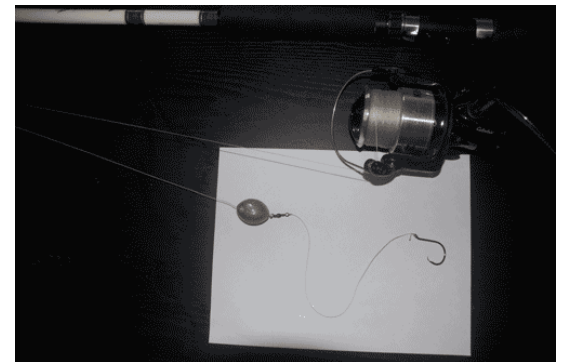
The basic set-up can be purchased at your local sporting goods store. The rods needed for these fish are similar to a catfish set-up, a medium-heavy to heavy fiberglass rod and a spinning or bait casting reel combo. The most critical component to your sturgeon set-up is the line. You'll need braided line in a 50 lb. test or more will allow you to hoist these pre-historic creatures from the depths of the rivers without fear of breaking.

Rigging the rod is also quite simple. All you need is a 2 to 5 ounce no-roll sinker, a heavy-duty barrel swivel and an octopus hook. As seen in the picture, attach a foot long length of line to the barrel swivel with a polymer knot, then tie the hook to the other end of the line. Finally, slide the sinker on the line and attach the swivel to the line of the rod and reel.

Sturgeon are found in lakes and rivers such as the Rainy, St. Croix and St. Louis Rivers. The best time of year to target Sturgeon is immediately following ice out up until the end of April. Deep pools of 20 to 40 feet of water are optimum locations to fish from a boat or even from shore.

The preferred bait is 3-5 night crawlers hooked multiple times, in a ball like form. When you get to your fishing hole, let your rig sink to the bottom but keep enough tension on the line in order to see the bites on the rod tip. The bites will range from slow up and down movements of the rod to the fish hitting the bait like a freight train.

When a bite occurs, let out roughly 5 feet of line, point the rod tip directly at the fish and start reeling quickly. As soon as tension from the fish is felt, set the hook as hard as possible. Get ready for the best freshwater fight of your life—all in the land of 10,000 lakes!



Typical sturgeon fishing tackle

- ***Check out this short video of my 2011 spring sturgeon trip deemed "Battle on the Border".***
- ***For sturgeon fishing opportunities in your area please contact the nearest area fisheries office.***