

# Piers & Places

## The Lake Sturgeon of Rainy River

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When I moved to Baudette some twenty years ago to work as a DNR biologist, I was enthralled with the opportunity to live in the 'walleye capital of the world.' But, almost immediately after I arrived in this land of walleye, pike, and sauger, I found myself enamored by a completely different fish species-one that I had previously never considered-the lake sturgeon.

And, I was not alone. Fishing for lake sturgeon in the Rainy River, as it winds downstream from Rainy Lake to Lake of the Woods, has become very popular in recent years. Folks travel to these Ontario-Minnesota border waters from all over the country with the allure of catching fish that can grow to sizes over 100 pounds.

Fishing success can be very good. The lake sturgeon population of Rainy River/Lake of the Woods is in the midst of recovering after being over-fished in the early 1900's. Nowadays, it is not unusual for anglers to catch fish that exceed 60 inches in length. And, there are some fish being caught that are over 70 inches long. An 'average' 70-inch lake sturgeon weighs 89 pounds, and is 51 years old. [This length-weight-girth key](#) can help you determine a sturgeon's approximate age based on its size.

Anglers are allowed to fish the Rainy River for lake sturgeon from July 1 through May 15. The period of mid-April to mid-May is the most popular time to fish. This is the time-of-year when lake sturgeon are traveling to spawning areas, so the chance of encountering big fish is highest. But, summer and fall are also good times to fish for them.



An early May catch



Although most fishing takes place from a boat, lake sturgeon can also be fished from shore. There are [eight public boat ramps](#) along the U.S. side Rainy River. If you plan to fish the Rainy River from a boat, be sure to stay in Minnesota waters of the river. Anglers are not allowed to target lake sturgeon in Ontario waters of the River.

Several of the Rainy River boat access sites provide good areas to fish from shore. The sites at Manitou Rapids, Upper Sioux, Nelson Park, and Vidas are among the best spots to catch a lake sturgeon from shore.

Angling for a fish that can be over 100 pounds will take some special preparation for most people. For information on being prepared to fish for lake sturgeon, refer to this informational guide with advice about [fishing for and handling sturgeon](#).

There are special regulations and seasons applicable for sturgeon anglers on the Rainy River. That information is available in the Canada-Minnesota Border Waters section of the [Minnesota Fishing Regulations synopsis](#) (begins on page 48 of the 2011 Reg's Book).

Another good source of information on Rainy River lake sturgeon is the [Baudette DNR Fisheries web site](#). One thing is for certain...if you are like me, and most other anglers, once you catch your first sturgeon you will be 'hooked for life!'