

August 5, 2006

A Very Large Sturgeon Story

This is a special article to give you the first hand news of a remarkable fish that we hooked, landed, tagged and released earlier this week!

August 2, 2006 started out for me like any other day by picking up a pair of guests at our downtown meeting spot. Cyril Paquin and his girlfriend Lindy are both from Alberta and were my guests for the day on my boat. Our company had three other boats out on that day comprising of 9 visitors from England. All four guides decided to fish a similar stretch of river and see how things went from there.

We got out on the water and Cyril and I talked about his #1 Alberta archery mule deer he took a couple of years ago! He had mentioned that the reason he wanted to come here was to beat the fish his brother Leo had caught while fishing with us back in 2000 - a 55 pounder. I had said to Cyril, "we're going to beat that". The first fish that comes to the boat is a 2 foot long white sturgeon weighing a hefty 10 pounds! This is just a kid in the scheme of things, and its certainly not going to beat his brother's fish!

We moved along shortly afterwards and dropped the hook within sight of the other 3 of our guide boats. I had casted out the lines with fresh bait, and the rods were sitting in the holders, waiting for the tell-tale sign that a sturgeon was near. We had a couple of small tugs after waiting a few minutes when the left rod started to indicate a sturgeon bite. I was right there by the rod, so I picked it up and waited for the rod to "load up", which it did quite nicely. I struck into the fish and the rod buckled over and thats where it stayed. Knowing there was a decent sized fish on the other end, and hoping for a 100 - 150 pound fish, I passed the rod over to Cyril who was eagerly awaiting.

The fish tore off at a medium speed angling across and downstream. After 80 - 100 yards of line disappeared from the reel, the fish rocketed out of the water showing his truly immense size and power. In my mind I knew this fish had to be 10 feet long. Now he was in direct drive and quickly swimming for the next time zone!

Cyril leaned into the fish, but did not make any impression on the massive sturgeon. After disconnecting the boat from the anchor I followed the the fish with the boat to stay in close contact. Cyril meanwhile, was hanging on and working the fish as hard as possible. A man can only take so much - after 40 minutes, Cyril needed to get some feeling back in his fingers and passed the rod to me for 15 minutes while he drove the boat. I knew this current situation could not work for very long, and it was apparent we needed some backup so I could stay on the wheel

of the boat and keep us on the fish. Enter the "sturgeonator", Tim Swain from England. Tim was fishing with CEJ (pronounced Cee-Jay) who was the next boat to us. After already having a good fish to the boat, you'd think Tim would be a bit tired himself. But, Tim was only warmed up! He leaned into the fish and kept the pressure on and gained line until Cyril could get his fingers working again. With Cyril and Tim applying themselves with truly gritty hard work, the fish was landed in just over 90 minutes. I tip my hat to you two gentlemen for doing such a fine job!

With CEJ already on site with Tim's wife and family, the other two boats showed up right on time. Both CEJ, Dave Huntley and myself grabbed the fish and pointed it to shore where we began the tagging process. Harry (pronounced SHREK) brought his crew along to provide more hands to assist with measuring and photographing this massive fish.

It was a perfect day - everyone worked together to make this happen and each person, even those who did not play the fish, felt truly honored and privileged to put a hand on such a fish. I know I did! This 11 foot 3 inch giant is around 120 years old, and the most amazing feature of this fish other than its brilliant white and light grey coloring, was the fact that there was not a single mark on this fish. Every fin was in perfect, mint condition - a remarkable feat for a fish so old in a river filled with nets, ropes and boats.

Thank you to: Cyril, Lindy, Tim, CEJ, Leanne, Kyra, Rem, Dave, Lee, Nigel, Anthony, Harry, Mikky, and Robert!

Interesting Notes:

The fish's weight is estimated at 800 - 850 pounds. This is a realistic estimate.

This is the second largest fish tagged in the Fraser river at 342 cm fork length. The longest fish tagged is 343cm.

The pectoral girth is 56 inches and the mid-girth is 59 inches.

The Besse sturgeon is 338 cm fork length, has a pectoral girth of 55 inches and was captured only last September! Two very large sturgeon landed less than one year!

This fish was landed on 60 lb Berkley Big Game monofilament leader. A truly tough line. Why mono? It has some stretch (thats why I use 36 inch leaders) to allow for shock absorption, it shows frays and rough spots better than dacron so you change leaders often to keep fresh ones on, and mono is less abrasive to fish when they roll on it or when it rubs against their snouts/mouths.

This fish was easily handled and tagged without any rope or noose around the tail of the sturgeon. We do this all the time, and encourage other anglers to do the same. Nooses and ropes are dangerous to fish and they are unappealing in photographs.

This event brought 4 groups of people from opposite sides of the world together to forge a memory that will last a lifetime. My thanks to the fish for the memories....

Here it is:



*342 cm fork length and 800 - 850 pounds.
Cyril (2nd from right) and Tim (3rd from right) are the lucky anglers!
Note the condition of this fish - perfect dorsal and caudal fins.*