

Caviar demand threatens U.S. sturgeon

December 31 2005

A shortage of the prized beluga caviar from the Caspian Sea has increased sales for caviar from the sturgeon of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

The rise of U.S. caviar is good news for fishermen in those rivers. But it could be bad news for the sturgeon, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said.

"We're already seeing a decrease in our shovelnose sturgeon in the past few years, and now that beluga has been banned from importation in the (United States), we're even more concerned that it will increase demand," said Craig Gemming, a fisheries biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

The shovelnose is the only one of the three species of sturgeon in the Mississippi that can legally be fished, since the other two are considered endangered or threatened. Even the shovelnose is a "species of concern."

That's what happened to the beluga sturgeon. The population has plummeted in the past 20 years because of overfishing, habitat loss and pollution.

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