

Endangered pallid sturgeon larvae found in Missouri River

July 30 2015

Three fish larvae captured from the Missouri River last year have been confirmed as those of the endangered pallid sturgeon, the U.S. Geological Survey said Thursday.

The [larvae](#) were among hundreds of larval shovelnose sturgeon and paddlefish collected near Bellevue on May 30, 2014, the survey said in a news release. The [pallid sturgeon](#) larvae were 1 to 3 days old, survey scientists said, indicating the parents spawned between Gavins Point Dam on the South Dakota and Nebraska border and an area where the Platte River meets the Missouri.

Genetic analyses indicate the three larvae are not siblings from a single spawning female, the survey said.

"It's the first time pallid sturgeon fish this small have been collected in the lower Missouri River," survey scientist Aaron DeLonay said Thursday. "It's really a very significant, exciting find. It means a bunch of adult fish got together ... found a patch of habitat that was suitable ... and were able to successfully spawn. It means something is going right somewhere."

But the discovery does not necessarily indicate the species is on its way to recovery, he and other [survey](#) scientists said.

"The pallid sturgeon population is still small and reproduction sufficient to increase the population has not been documented," DeLonay said.

The [fish](#) is considered to be critically endangered, with an estimate of only about 2,000 wild pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River. Efforts to rebuild the population include stocking rivers with pallid sturgeon from government hatcheries and improving spawning habitat.

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