

# Sturgeon threatened with extinction

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Sturgeon, the fish that produce black caviar, are at the brink of extinction, Miami researchers reported Thursday.

"I could not recommend people eat caviar from any wild population of sturgeon," Ellen Pikitch, director of the Pew Institute for Ocean Science at the University of Miami, told The New York Times.

Pikitch is the lead author of a study published in Thursday's issue of the journal *Fish and Fisheries*.

The study -- the first global assessment of the sturgeon's threatened state -- noted the fish is protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, but illegal trade continues.

"Few viable sturgeon fisheries now remain," the researchers wrote. They said it takes 15 years for a sturgeon to reach reproductive age and then each fish typically spawns only every three or four years. As a result, they are expensive and time-consuming to raise in captivity.

Sturgeon have been caught for caviar since 500 B.C., Pikitch told the Times, and at one time caviar was so abundant it was served in bars "like beer nuts." But during the last century sturgeon in Europe, North America and Asia have been fished to the brink of extinction.

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