



## On the occurrence of the Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii* Brandt, 1869) in Slovak–Hungarian section of the Danube

### A Lénai tok (*Acipenser baerii* Brandt, 1869) megjelenéséről a Duna szlovák–magyar szakaszán

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The Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii* Brandt, 1869) inhabits practically all large Siberian rivers, in which occurs in three different subspecies – *A. b. baerii*, *A. b. stenorrhynchus*, *A. b. baicalensis*. Detailed description of the distribution range of Siberian sturgeon and its particular subspecies is described by Ruban (1997). Populations of *A. b. baerii* inhabiting the Ob River basin and the East-Siberian *A. b. stenorrhynchus* inhabiting the Yenisey River were significantly affected by fishing and pouching, while *A. b. baicalensis* is extremely rare (Ruban 1997). Thus the Ob River and Baikal Lake populations are included in Red Data Book of Russian Federation and their commercial fishing is now prohibited (Ruban & Bin Zhu 2010). Recently, the Siberian sturgeon has become very attractive for aquaculture, as well as for recreational anglers. Thus its unintentional escape from hatcheries located close to rivers, as well as its unannounced (illegal) introduction became possible. The species was firstly recorded in the Slovak-Hungarian stretch of the Danube River in 2005 (Masár et al. 2006), but no further published data on the species occurrence in Slovakian waters are available for now.

Between the 24<sup>th</sup> April and 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012, two specimens of the Siberian sturgeon (Fig. 1, 2) of total length 450 mm and 900 mm were recorded in the Slovak-Hungarian stretch of the Danube River, between the villages Iža (rkm 1759) and Radvaň nad Dunajom (rkm 1749). Samplings were conducted by fishing group of the Slovak Anglers' Union, from the Slovak bank of the Danube using the large beach seine net (130m long, mesh size 5x5cm, average height 2,5m) operated from boat and bank. Species were identified from photographs by comparison of meristic characters (number of dorsal, lateral and ventral bony scutes) and shape of the mouth of both individuals with the available published data (Masár et al. 2006). According to the data provided by anglers, Siberian sturgeon was recorded in this Danube stretch already in 2011 (1 specimen of total length ca 800 mm) and also in 2010 (2 specimens of total length ca 500 mm and ca 600 mm). More specimens were recorded by anglers on the Malý Dunaj side arm (upstream the Čierna voda weir), where in 2007 more than 60 specimens were identified as Siberian sturgeon. In 2008 and 2009 only a few individuals were recorded and thus can be concluded that massive occurrence in 2007 should be a result of escape from aquaculture or illegal release. Evidence of different length and age categories of Siberian sturgeon in the middle Danube river section suggests the possibility of its presence in a larger number of individuals. Since the hybrids between the non-native Siberian sturgeon and native sterlets (*Acipenser ruthenus*) were already found in

the upper Danube (Ludwig et al. 2009), the possibility of their natural hybridisation with potential risk towards the native populations of the sterlet can not be excluded.

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Fig. 1. Siberian sturgeon (TL = 450 mm), Danube river, Radvaň nad Dunajom, Slovakia (Photo: J. Hajdú, 30. 4. 2012).



Fig. 2. Siberian sturgeon, detail of the rostrum from ventral side (Photo: L. Pekárik, 30. 4. 2012).