

# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

8/1/2021

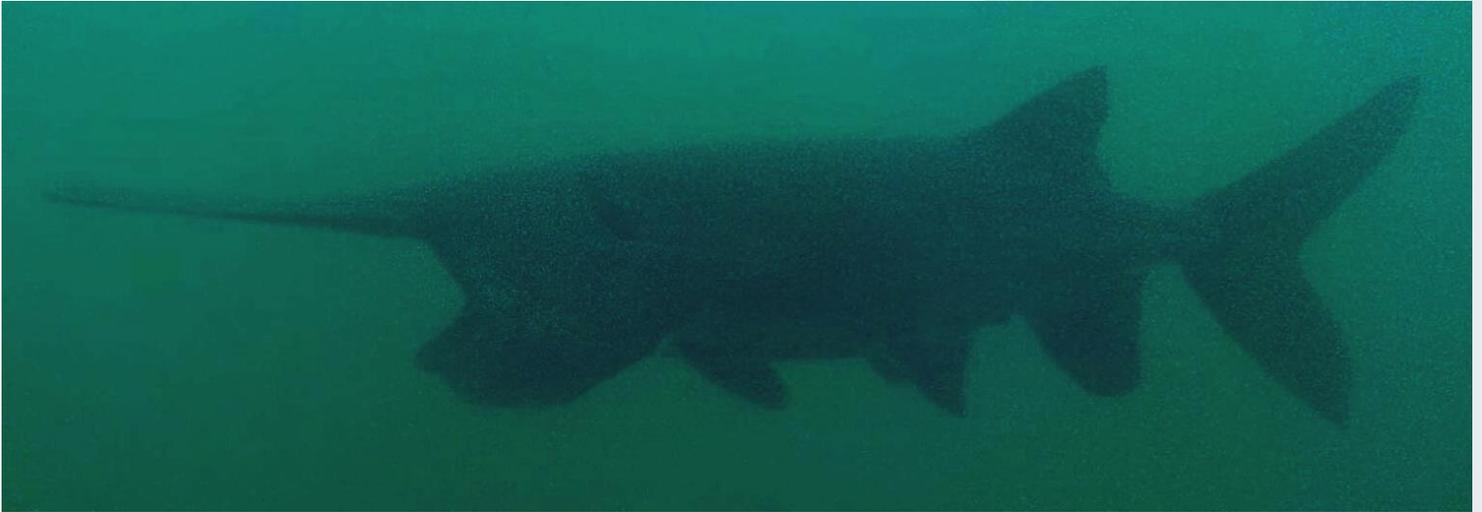


Photo by Lauren Connolly

## **Paddlefish** (*Polyodon spathula*)

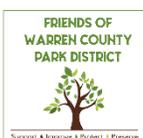
By Lauren Connolly, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

Known as a living dinosaur that dates back around 120 million years, the paddlefish is a unique species in the Ohio area. They are most easily recognized by their long paddle-like snout. The purpose of the paddle has long been debated amongst scientists. Paddlefish are filter feeders, and they swim with their mouth open and filter the water and collect tiny plankton to eat. They can reach almost 5 feet long and weigh over 60 pounds! Paddlefish are an endangered species as they are prized for their eggs, a.k.a. caviar, and are susceptible to illegal poaching.

To learn more about this species, visit [page 12 of the Ohio Division of Wildlife's Stream Fish of Ohio Field Guide](#).

## **FUN FACTS**

- The paddle takes up about one third of its body.
- They are one of two freshwater species that are important to caviar production. The other species is sturgeon fish.
- They are almost completely cartilaginous, meaning instead of bones, their skeleton is made up the same material that makes up our ears!
- The oldest known paddlefish is over 50 years old!



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