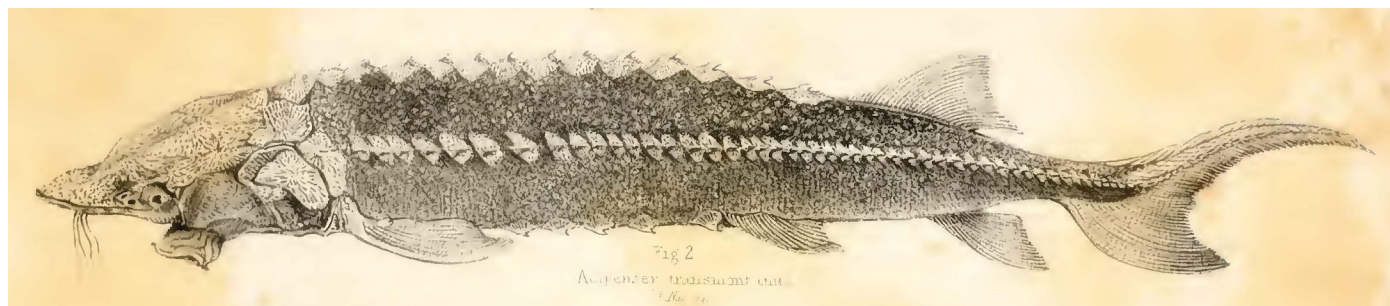


Order ACIPENSERIFORMES

Sturgeons

Family ACIPENSERIDAE

Bonaparte 1831



Acipenser transmontanus. From: Richardson, J. 1836. The Fish. In: Fauna Boreali-Americana; or the zoology of the northern parts of British America: containing descriptions of the objects of natural history collected on the late northern land expeditions, under the command of Sir John Franklin, R.N. J. Bentley, London. Part 3: i–xv + 1–327, Pls. 74–97.

Acipenser

Linnaeus 1758

Latin for sturgeon, with at least three published explanations of its derivation: (1) derived from the Greek *akkipesios* (ἀκκιπῆσιος) and perhaps equivalent to the Egyptian *xipen-pennu*;¹ (2) combination of the Greek *akis* (ἄκίς), point, and *pénte* (πέντε), five, presumably referring to five rows of sharp scutes on body;² (3) from the Latin *acus*, needle, and *pensum*, weight (a quantity of wool given to handmaids to be woven or spun daily), i.e., a fish that “possesses a weight of needles,” referring to the “needle-shaped barbels” that hang down from its mouth³

***Acipenser baerii* Brandt 1869** eponym not identified but probably in honor of Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876), Baltic-German scientist and explorer, considered the father of embryology

***Acipenser brevirostrum* Lesueur 1818** *brevis* (L.), short; *rostrum* (L.), snout, referring to shorter snout compared with *A. oxyrinchus*

***Acipenser colchicus* Marty 1940** *-icus* (L.), belonging to: Colchis, ancient name for eastern coast of Black Sea in Eurasian Georgia, type locality [possibly a synonym of *A. persicus*]

***Acipenser dabryanus* Duméril 1869** *-anus* (L.), belonging to: Claude-Philibert Dabry de Thiersant (1826–1898), fish culturist, French counsel to China, and student of Chinese fishes, who collected holotype

***Acipenser dauricus* Georgi 1775** *-icus* (L.), belonging to: Daourie, Russian name for area of central Asia southeast of Lake Baikal to about 120°E, roughly the range of this sturgeon in the Amur River basin of Russia and China [often placed in *Huso*, treated here as a synonym of *Acipenser*]

***Acipenser desotoi* Vladikov 1955** in honor of Hernando (misspelled Fernando) de Soto (ca. 1496–1542), Spanish conquistador who explored the Gulf of Mexico (where this sturgeon occurs) and was first European to see the Mississippi River

***Acipenser fulvescens* Rafinesque 1817** Latin for yellowish or tawny, referring to its “dark fulvus color”

***Acipenser gueldenstaedtii* Brandt & Ratzeburg 1833** in honor of Johann Anton Güldenstädt (1745–1781), Baltic German naturalist and explorer,

¹ Thompson, D. W. 1947. A glossary of Greek fishes. London: Oxford University Press. vi + 302 pp. Thompson did not explain why sturgeons, which do not occur near Egypt, would have an Egyptian name.

² Kirsch, P. H. and M. W. Fordice. 1889. A review of the American species of sturgeons (Acipenseridae). Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia 41: 245–257.

³ Guasparri, A. 2000. *Acipenser*. Glotta 76 (1/2): 50–52.

Notes on sturgeon taxonomy

Sturgeon taxonomy is unresolved with multiple conflicting classifications. Vasil’eva et al. (2009) treat *Huso* as a synonym of *Acipenser*. Brownstein & Near (2025) split *Acipenser* into three genera, moving nine species to *Huso* and seven to a resurrected *Sinosturio* Jaekel 1929 (*Sino-*, prefix for Sinica [China], type locality of *A. dabryanus*; *sturio*, Medieval Latin for sturgeon). Kottelat & Freyhof (2025) argue that *Huso* is a junior synonym of *Sterletus* Rafinesque 1820 (presumably a Latinization of the German and French *sterlet*, originally from *sterljad*, Russian name for *A. ruthenus*).

On 22 Oct. 2025, the IUCN SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group (SSG) and the World Sturgeon Conservation Society (WSCS) discussed the proposed changes at a joint meeting during the 10th International Sturgeon Symposium in Yichang, China. Participants unanimously agreed that the most recent (2025) revisions are not “robustly supported” and recommend maintaining the genus-level phylogeny of Vasil’eva et al. (2009) until a comprehensive analysis of all taxa within the family is conducted. Their classification, adopted by Eschmeyer’s Catalog of Fishes on 9 Dec. 2025, is the one used here.

References:

Brownstein, C. D. and T. J. Near. 2025. Toward a phylogenetic taxonomy of sturgeons (Acipenseriformes: Acipenseridae). Bulletin of the Peabody Museum of Natural History 66 (1): 3–23.

Kottelat, M. and J. Freyhof. 2025. *Huso* Lovetzky, 1834, a junior synonym of *Sterletus* Rafinesque, 1820, and comments on some other generic names for sturgeons (Chondrostei: Acipenseridae). Zootaxa 5689 (3): 538–548.

Vasil’eva, E. D., V. P. Vasil’ev, S. V. Shedko and G. V. Novomodny. 2009. The revision of the validity of genus *Huso* (Acipenseridae) based on recent morphological and genetic data with particular reference to the Kaluga *H. dauricus*. Journal of Ichthyology 49 (10): 861–867.

World Sturgeon Conservation Society. 2025. IUCN SSG summary report. 13 Nov. 2025. <https://www.wscs.info/iucn-ssg-summary-report>

who identified this sturgeon in 1772 but used a non-Linnaean name (Sturio)

***Acipenser huso* Linnaeus 1758** Medieval Latin and Old High German word for sturgeon [often placed in *Huso*, treated here as a synonym of *Acipenser*]

***Acipenser medirostris* Ayres 1854** *media* (L.), moderate or middle; *rostris*, Neo-Latin scientific adjective of *rostrum* (L.), snout, referring to snout length compared with specimens of *A. transmontanus* that Ayres examined, all from San Francisco Bay, California, USA

***Acipenser mikadoi* Hilgendorf 1892** eponym not identified, possibly in honor of the “mikado” or emperor of Japan, then Emporer Meiji, who reigned from 1867 to 1912 (Hilgendorf lectured at Tokyo College of Medicine from 1873–1876 and described this sturgeon from one he saw at a fish market)

***Acipenser naccarii* Bonaparte 1836** in honor of Italian botanist Fortunato Luigi Naccari (1793–1860)

***Acipenser nudiventris* Lovetsky 1828** *nudus* (L.), bare or naked; *ventris*, genitive of *venter* (L.), belly, referring to seeming absence of ventral scutes, which are totally absorbed in large adults

***Acipenser oxyrinchus* Mitchell 1815** sharp-snouted, from *oxýs* (ὀξύς), sharp or pointed, and *rhýnchos* (ρύγχος), snout, referring to its sharply V-shaped snouts

***Acipenser persicus* Borodin 1897** *-ica* (L.), belonging to: Persia, i.e., Persian, referring to Caspian Sea, Iran, type locality

***Acipenser ruthenus* Linnaeus 1758** *-us* (L.), adjectival suffix: from Ruthe-
nia, historic name for Central and Eastern Europe, probably referring to its distribution

***Acipenser schrenckii* Brandt 1869** eponym not identified but almost certainly in honor of Leopold von Schrenck (1826-1894), Baltic German zoologist, geographer and ethnographer

***Acipenser sinensis* Gray 1835** *-ensis*, Latin suffix denoting place: Sinica (China), referring to its occurrence in the Yangtze and Pearl River basins

***Acipenser stellatus* Pallas 1771** Latin for studded with stars, referring to stellated marks and tubercles on head

***Acipenser sturio* Linnaeus 1758** Medieval Latin for sturgeon

***Acipenser transmontanus* Richardson 1836** *trans* (L.), over or beyond; *montanus* (L.), pertaining to mountains, referring to its occurrence on the western side of North America’s Continental Divide, the first sturgeon described from the Eastern Pacific

Pseudoscaphirhynchus

Nikolskii 1900

pseudo-, from *pseudēs* (ψεῦδης), false, although this genus may superficially resemble *Scaphirhynchus*, with all three species having previously been assigned to it, such an appearance is false

***Pseudoscaphirhynchus fedtschenkoi* (Kessler 1872)** in honor of Russian naturalist and explorer Alexei Pavlovich Fedtschenko (1844–1873), who collected holotype

***Pseudoscaphirhynchus hermanni* (Kessler 1877)** in honor of Hermann (forename not given), a ship officer (presumably on the Aralo-Caspian Expedition), who delivered sturgeon to zoologist and explorer Nikolai Severtsov (1827–1885), who coined the name in a presumably unpublished paper

***Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni* (Kessler 1877)** in honor of “Lord” Kaufman for the “professional help” (translation) he gave zoologist Modest Nikolaevich Bogdanov, who named this sturgeon in 1874 but did not provide distinguishing features; “Lord” Kaufman is almost certainly Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufmann (1818–1882, also spelled Kaufman), first Governor-General of Turkestan, who commissioned the scientific exploration of the land after it became part of the Russian Empire in the 1860s

Scaphirhynchus

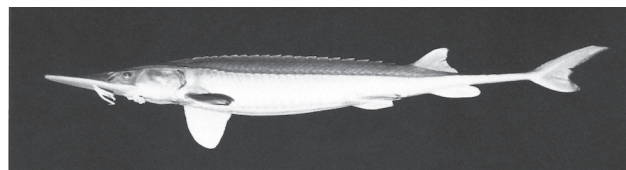
Heckel 1836

skaphís (σκαφίς), shovel; *rhýnchos* (ρύγχος), snout, referring to flat, shovel-shaped snout of *S. rafinesquii* (=platyrhynchus)

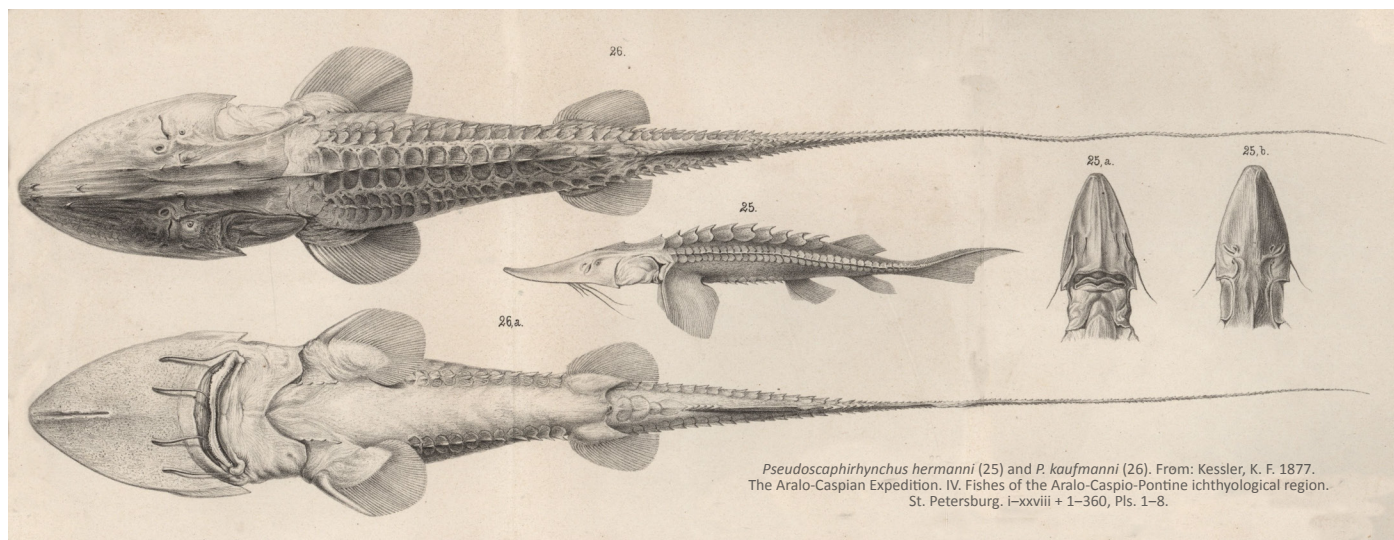
***Scaphirhynchus albus* (Forbes & Richardson 1905)** Latin for white, referring to its pallid coloration

***Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus* (Rafinesque 1820)** flat-snouted, from *platýs* (πλατύς), flat, and *rhýnchos* (ρύγχος), snout, referring to its head (including snout) “flattened somewhat like a spade”

***Scaphirhynchus suttkusi* Williams & Clemmer 1991** in honor of Royal D. Suttks (1929–2009), Tulane University (New Orleans, Louisiana, USA), for his “longstanding dedication” to ichthyology



Scaphirhynchus suttkusi, holotype, male, 552 mm SL. From: Williams, J. D. and G. H. Clemmer. 1991. *Scaphirhynchus suttkusi*, a new sturgeon (Pisces: Acipenseridae) from the Mobile basin of Alabama and Mississippi. Alabama Museum of Natural History Bulletin No. 10: 17–31.



Pseudoscaphirhynchus hermanni (25) and *P. kaufmanni* (26). From: Kessler, K. F. 1877. The Aralo-Caspian Expedition. IV. Fishes of the Aralo-Caspio-Pontine ichthyological region. St. Petersburg. i–xxviii + 1–360, Pls. 1–8.