

**FOOD HABITS OF HATCHERY-REARED JUVENILE PALLID STURGEON
AND JUVENILE SHOVELNOSE STURGEON IN THE MISSOURI RIVER
ABOVE FORT PECK RESERVOIR, MONTANA^{AFS}**

Paul C. Gerrity And Christopher S. Guy
Montana Cooperative Fishery Research Unit
Department of Ecology, Montana State University
Bozeman, MT 59717
pcgerrity@montana.edu

William M. Gardner
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
P.O. Box 938
2358 Airport Rd., Lewistown, MT 59457
bgardner@state.mt.us

Natural recruitment of pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) has not been observed in the Missouri River above Fort Peck Reservoir, Montana, for at least the past 20 years. In an effort to recover the species, 736 age-1 hatchery-reared juvenile pallid sturgeon (HRJPS) were released in 1998 and 2,300 were released in 2002. However, the ecology of juvenile pallid sturgeon is relatively unknown, and more scientific information is needed to assist in the recovery of the species. Therefore, we examined the stomach contents of HRJPS and juvenile shovelnose sturgeon (JSNS) (*Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus*) from the Missouri River above Fort Peck Reservoir from June through September 2003. Stomach contents from HRJPS and JSNS were obtained using a gastric lavage to allow captured fish to be released unharmed. Gastric lavage was performed on 61 JSNS and 16 HRJPS. Stomach contents were obtained from 50 percent of the HRJPS and 71 percent of the JSNS. Fish remains, *Ephemeroptera* nymphs, *Chironomidae* larvae, *Trichoptera* larvae, plant material, and detritus were found in HRJPS stomach contents. Fish composed the majority of the wet weight of HRJPS diets (82%), while *Chironomidae* composed 93 percent of the diet by number. Aquatic invertebrates composed the majority of the diet for shovelnose sturgeon. In addition, no fish were found in any shovelnose sturgeon stomach contents. This is the first documented food habits data for juvenile pallid sturgeon and these data illustrate that pallid sturgeon are piscivorous as juveniles.