

Shortnose sturgeon return to Orono area in Penobscot River

COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Endangered shortnose sturgeon have rediscovered habitat in the Penobscot River that had been inaccessible to the species for more than 100 years prior to the removal of the Veazie Dam in 2013.

University of Maine researchers confirmed evidence that three female shortnose sturgeon were in the area between Veazie and Orono in mid-October. Researchers had previously implanted the sturgeon with small sound-emitting devices known as acoustic tags to see if they would use the newly accessible parts of the river.

Among the most primitive fish to inhabit the Penobscot, sturgeon are often called “living fossils” because they remain similar to their earliest fossil forms. Their long lives — more than 50 years — and bony-plated bodies also make them unique.

Historically, shortnose sturgeon and Atlantic sturgeon, a related species also present in the watershed, had spawning populations in the Penobscot River as far upstream as the site of the current Milford dam, and provided an important food and trade source to native peoples and early European settlers. Overharvest

and loss of suitable habitat due to dams and pollution led to declines in shortnose sturgeon populations and a listing as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1967. In 2012, Gulf of Maine populations of Atlantic sturgeon were listed as threatened under the ESA.

Today, a network of sound receivers, which sit on the river bottom along the lower river from Penobscot Bay up to the Milford Dam, detect movement and location of tagged fish.

According to Gayle Zydlewski, associate professor at UMaine’s School of Marine Sciences, the three individual fish observed were females. The fish have since been tracked joining other individuals in an area identified as wintering habitat near Brewer. Wintering habitat in other rivers is known to be staging habitat for spawning the following spring.

“We know that shortnose sturgeon use the Penobscot River throughout the year, and habitat models indicate suitable habitat for spawning in the area of recent detection upriver of Veazie, although actual spawning has not yet been observed,” Zydlewski said.

Since 2006, Zydlewski has been working with Michael

Kinnison, a professor in UMaine’s School of Biology and Ecology; and multiple graduate students, including Catherine Johnston, to better understand the sturgeon populations of the Penobscot River and Gulf of Maine.

Johnston, who has been tagging and tracking sturgeon in the Penobscot for two years to study the implications of newly available habitat to shortnose sturgeon, discovered the detections of sturgeon upstream of the Veazie dam remnants. Each new bit of information adds to the current understanding of behavior and habitat preferences of the fish.

“We’re very excited to see sturgeon moving upstream of where the Veazie Dam once stood, and into their former habitats,” says Kim Damon-Randall, assistant regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries’ Protected Resources Division. “We need to do more research to see how they’re using it, but it’s a tremendous step in the right direction.”

Habitat access is essential for the recovery of these species. The removal of the Veazie Dam is only a portion of the Penobscot River Restoration Project, which,



BDN FILE PHOTO

A sturgeon found in the lower Penobscot near Winterport in 2008. The shortnose sturgeon has now returned to the Veazie-Orono area.

when combined with the removal of Great Works Dam in 2012, restores 100 percent of historic sturgeon habitat in the Penobscot. In addition to dam removals, construction of a nature-like fish bypass at the Howland Dam in 2015 significantly improves habitat access for the remaining nine species of sea-run fish native to the Penobscot, including Atlantic salmon and river herring.

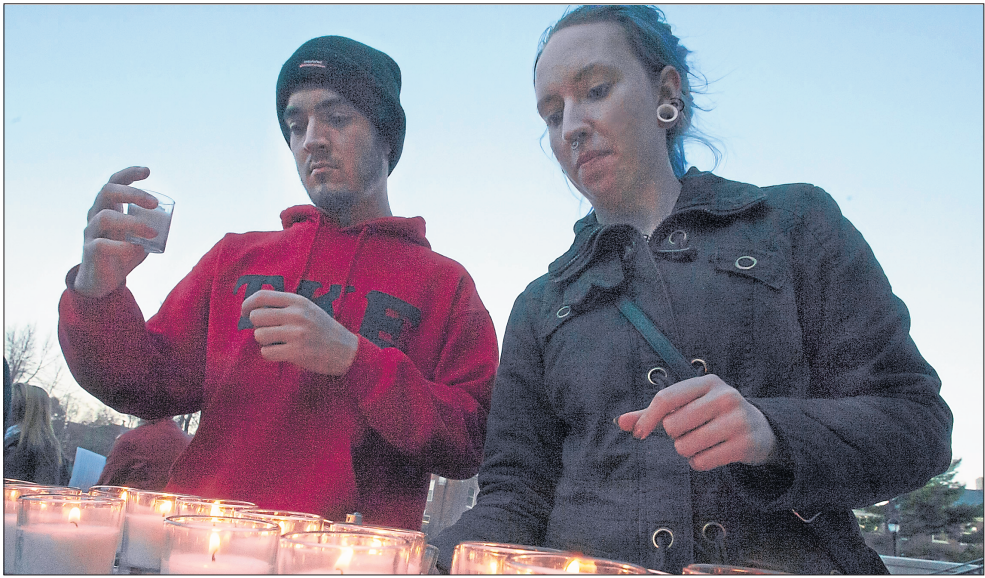
“Scientific research and

monitoring of this monumental restoration effort has been ongoing for the past decade,” says Molly Payne Wynne, monitoring coordinator for the Penobscot River Restoration Trust. “The collaborative body of research on this project is among the most comprehensive when compared to other river restoration projects across the country.”

NOAA Fisheries is an active partner and provides funding for this long-term

monitoring collaboration that includes the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, The Nature Conservancy and others. These efforts are beginning to shed light on the response of the river to the restoration project. Restoration of the full assemblage of sea-run fish to the Penobscot River will revive not only native fisheries but social, cultural and economic traditions of Maine’s largest river.

JE SUIS PARIS



BDN PHOTO BY MICHAEL C YORK

UMaine students from the French Club, German Club and Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity took part on Nov. 17 in a show of condolence and camaraderie with the victims of the shootings in Paris.

Beverly Uhlenhake to serve as new Brewer City mayor

The Brewer City Council unanimously selected Councilor Beverly Uhlenhake to serve as the city’s mayor for the next year.

Uhlenhake, a commercial real estate broker who was elected to the council in 2013, was sworn in Tuesday night, Nov. 17 during the city’s annual organizational meeting at Jeff’s Catering in Brewer.

She said the council should be guided by the question: “Will this be beneficial to Brewer citizens today and tomorrow? Because if it isn’t, we shouldn’t be doing it.”

Continued collaboration with neighboring communities, especially Bangor, would be key to improving the region’s economy and attracting development.

“We’ll make good decisions for the city of Brewer, and simply get it done,” she added.

Uhlenhake will be joined by Kevin O’Connell, who councilors picked to serve as deputy mayor and the council’s vice chairman.

“I look forward to a fabulous year,” Uhlenhake said.

City Clerk Pam Ryan also swore in Councilors Matthew Vachon and Jerry Goss, who were re-elected to serve new three-year terms by Brewer voters earlier

this month.

New and returning members of the Brewer School Committee also were sworn in at the Tuesday meeting. Last year’s committee chairman, Kevin Forrest, re-joined the council for another three years. Tammy Smith, a freelance court reporter with four children in the Brewer school system, joined the board for the first time, as did Ashley Blanchard, who won a one-year seat on the committee that was vacated by a former member who left the post before the end of her term.

Mark Farley will serve as chairman of the school committee, with Holly Lundquist serving as vice chairwoman.

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Beddington area- 30 acres \$30,000 Lake
Views
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Brookton-50 Acres \$18,000
Brookton-12 Acres w/ well/septic
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Brookton-12 Acres \$13,900*
Carbon-5.5 Acres \$12,900*
Cary Plantation- 472 ACRES
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Cary-81.15 Acres \$35,000
Cherryfield-42 Acres SALE PENDING
Cherryfield-28 Acres \$15,900
Copper-Cathance Lake \$69,000*
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\$79,900

Dyer Brook-1.5 Acres \$7,500
Hayesville-700 river acres \$380,000*
Henes- 5-acre Nxt \$14,400
Hodgdon-90 Acres \$49,900
Hodgdon-49 Acres \$19,900
Howland-38 River Acres \$99,900*
Island Falls- 1.53 Acres, Lake Access-
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Island Falls- Pleasant lake view \$25,000
Island Falls- 1.45 Acres on
Mattawamkeag Lake \$49,900
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\$19,900
Island Falls-4.7 Acres \$12,900 Near
Lakes!
Island Falls- Pleasant Lake Lot SALE
PENDING
Island Falls- (2) Pleasant lake \$65,000
Lakerville-Hershey Lake \$39,900
Lakerville-Juneau Lake \$15,000
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Lee-8 surveyed acres \$19,900*
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Lee-45 Acres \$29,000
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Lee-11.5 Acres \$12,900
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\$65,000*
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Linneux-65 Acres PWR \$33,900
Littleton-60 Acres Brook, Fields, Woods
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Littleton-50 Acres SALE PENDING!
Moosehead-200 acres on Squa Pan Lake
\$200,000
Merrill-40 Acres \$29,900*
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Monticello- 45 Acres of fields & Tillable
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Mount Chase-20 Kathdin view acres
\$19,900
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New Limerick- 3.3 acres \$14,900*
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Oakfield-22 Acres \$14,900
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Oakfield-40 acres & Cabin \$35,000
SALE PENDING
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Portage Lake- Boat access lot \$27,500*
Porter- 425 Acres 425,000*
Prestito- 8 Acres \$12,000
Prestito-40 Acres w/ Cabin \$54,900
SALE PENDING
Prestito-16 Acres w/ por \$14,500*
Sherman-2 cabins w/ 30 acres \$35,000

Schoag- 387 acres near Sebago lake
\$387,000*
Tremont-29-40 Acres \$59,900
T4 R3-Near Island Falls- 3500 Lake
acres! 1.79 Mill
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Weston-Bracket Lake- \$69,900*
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Weston-Faulkner Lake w/ well/septic
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Weston-Bracket Lake- \$69,900*
Woodland-3.5 acres \$6,500

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