



Sturgeon in the Black Sea and insights on by-catch in Bulgaria

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The Black Sea Basin

- Least Concern
- Near Threatened
- Vulnerable
- Endangered
- Critically Endangered
- Extinct in the wild
- Extinct



● **Beluga sturgeon**
(Huso huso)



● **Stellate sturgeon**
(Acipenser stellatus)



● **Russian sturgeon complex**
(A. gueldenstaedtii)
(A. persicus colchicus)



● **Sterlet sturgeon**
(Acipenser ruthenus)

Black Sea (Danube & Rioni)



● **Ship sturgeon**
*(Acipenser nudiventris)**



● **European sturgeon**
(Acipenser sturio)

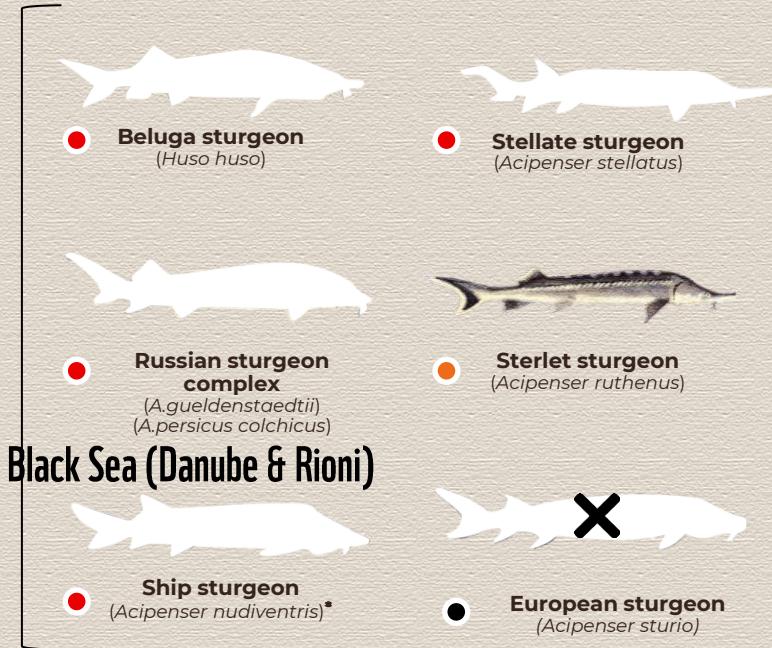


A last refuge in Europe

In Europe only 2 rivers hold naturally reproducing sturgeon, the Danube and the Rioni River. Both drain into the Black Sea Basin.

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Species on the brink of extinction

In Europe only 2 rivers hold naturally reproducing sturgeon, the Danube and the Rioni River. Both drain into the Black Sea Basin.

The European sturgeon is extinct in the Black Sea.

The ship sturgeon is extinct in the Danube with few individuals remaining in the Rioni

National legislations ban
catches in the Black Sea in
all range states
(In BG limited until 2025)

Illegal fishing, by-catch and illegal
trade exists;
no systematic information available;





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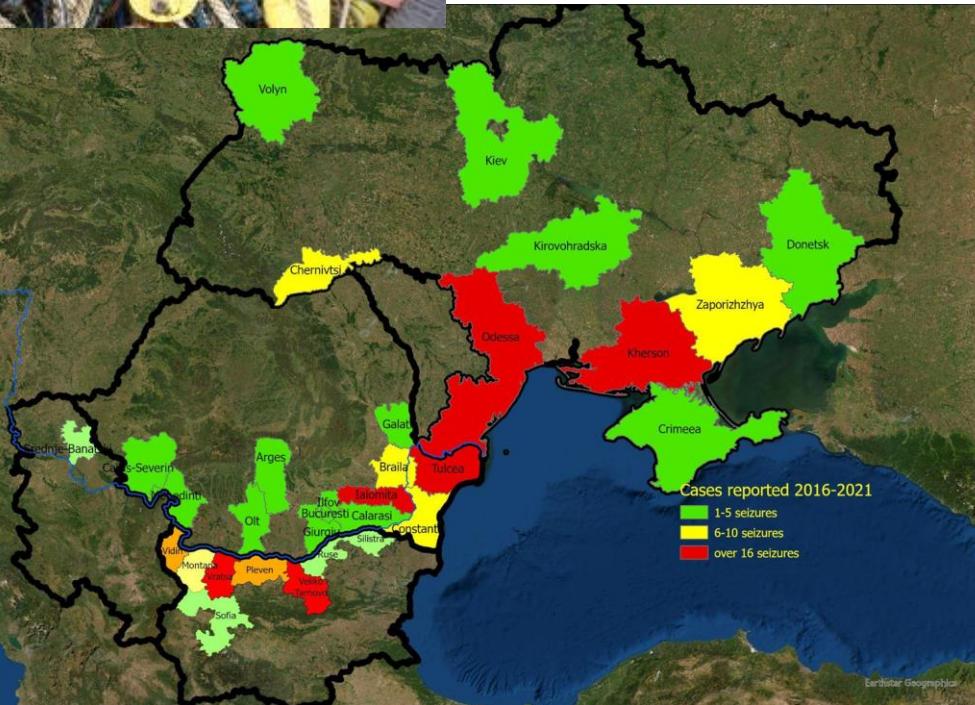


First evidence for “Trafficking of Critically Endangered Sturgeon in the Lower Danube Region” (BG,RO,RS,UA) provides picture of the scale of the problem.

19% of samples from wild sturgeon

[Full trafficking report \(2021\)](#)





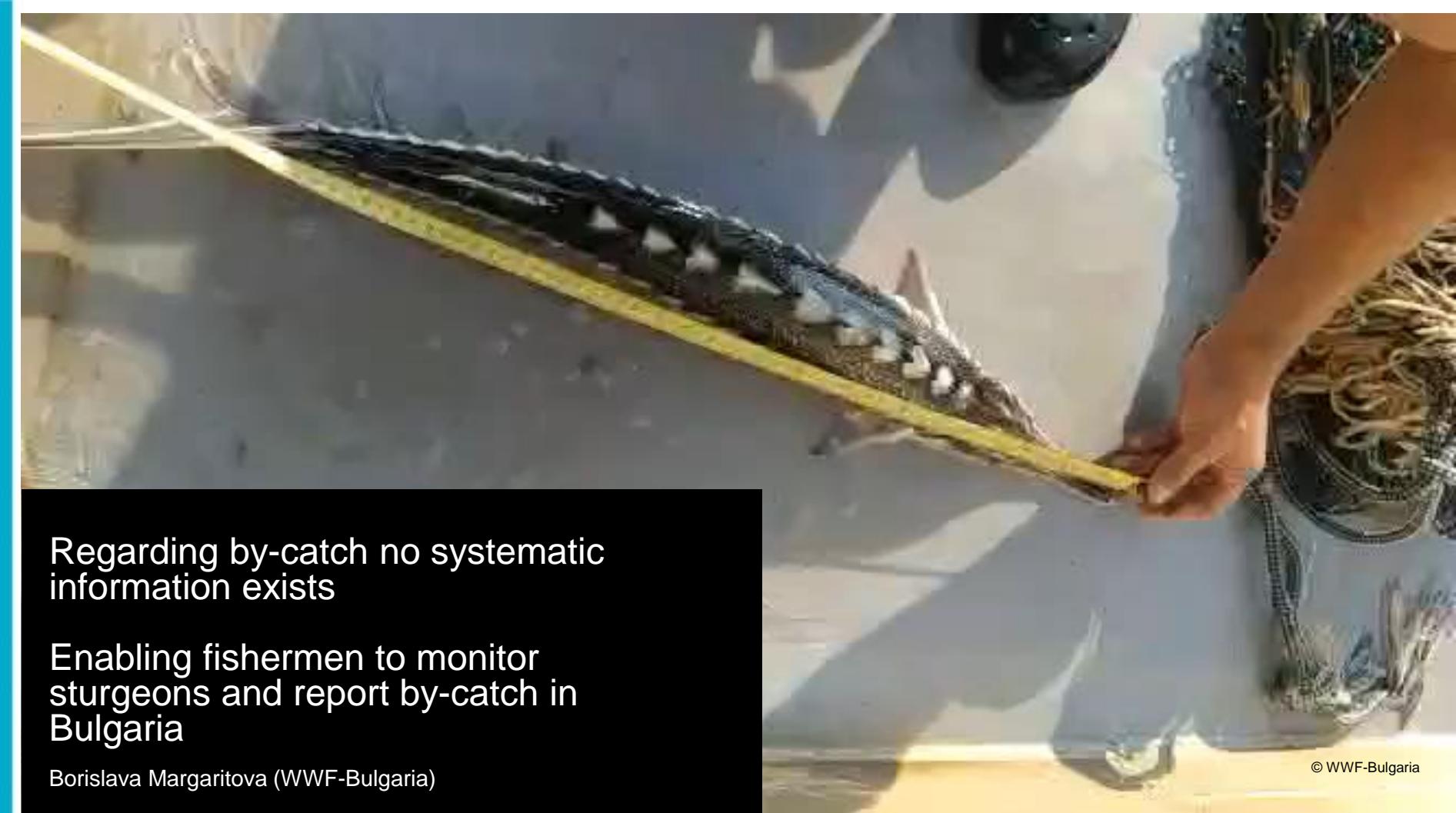
The tip of an iceberg !?!

2016-2021 - **total of 271 cases** of illegality collected from authorities/media including:

- illegal fishing gear from Bulgaria 748 hooklines = more than 30km
- seized sturgeons or products (meat, caviar)
- In 2021 the seizures included a minimum of 178 individual sturgeon

NOTE: Minimum numbers as ...
many case are documented without the number of fish and many cases go undetected or unreported

Compilation of data on regional level important as **every case affects shared populations of all countries.**



Regarding by-catch no systematic information exists

Enabling fishermen to monitor sturgeons and report by-catch in Bulgaria

Borislava Margaritova (WWF-Bulgaria)

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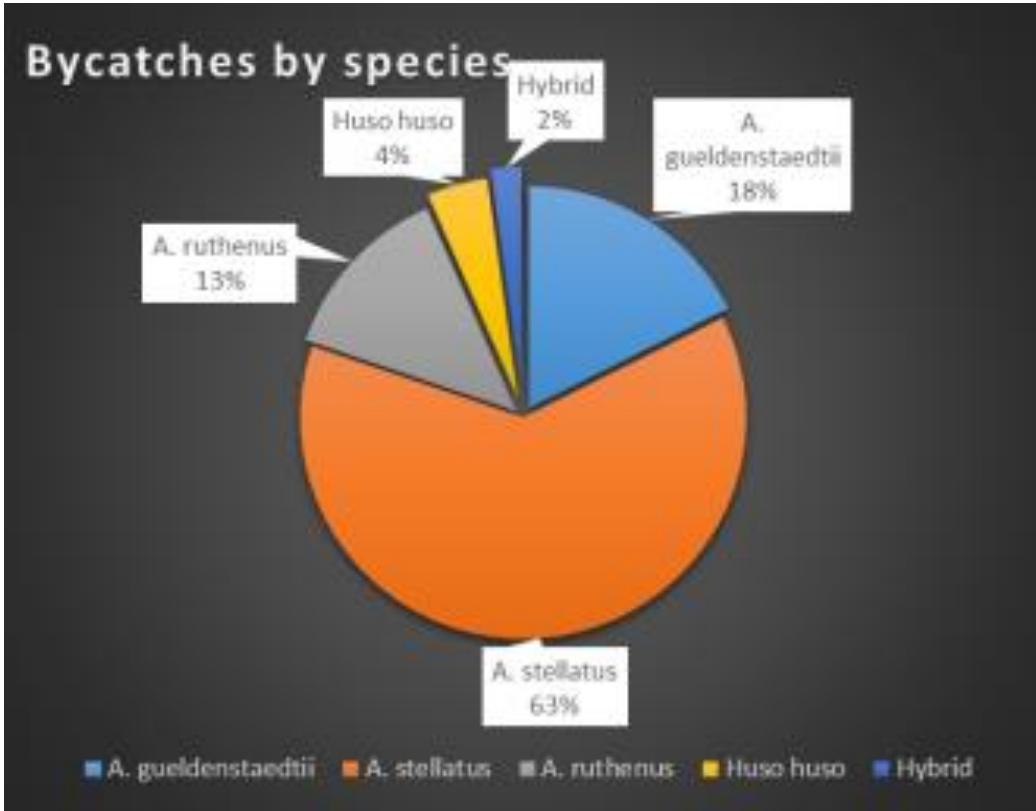
Enabling Fishermen to Monitor Sturgeons



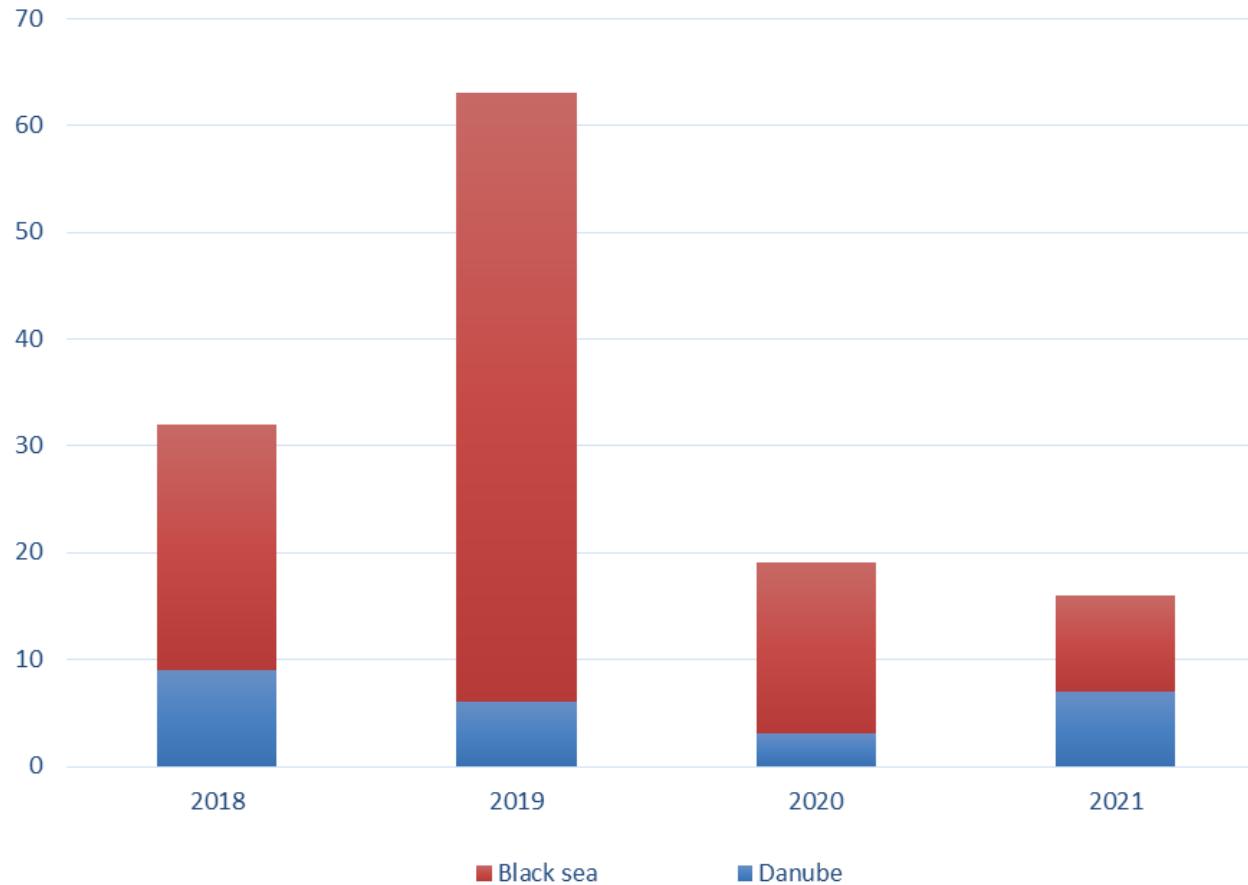
By-catch: Pilot project on data collection

**Collecting data via smartphones
from fishermen in Bulgaria**

- 6 phones distributed
- 253 photos/videos
- 130 specimens



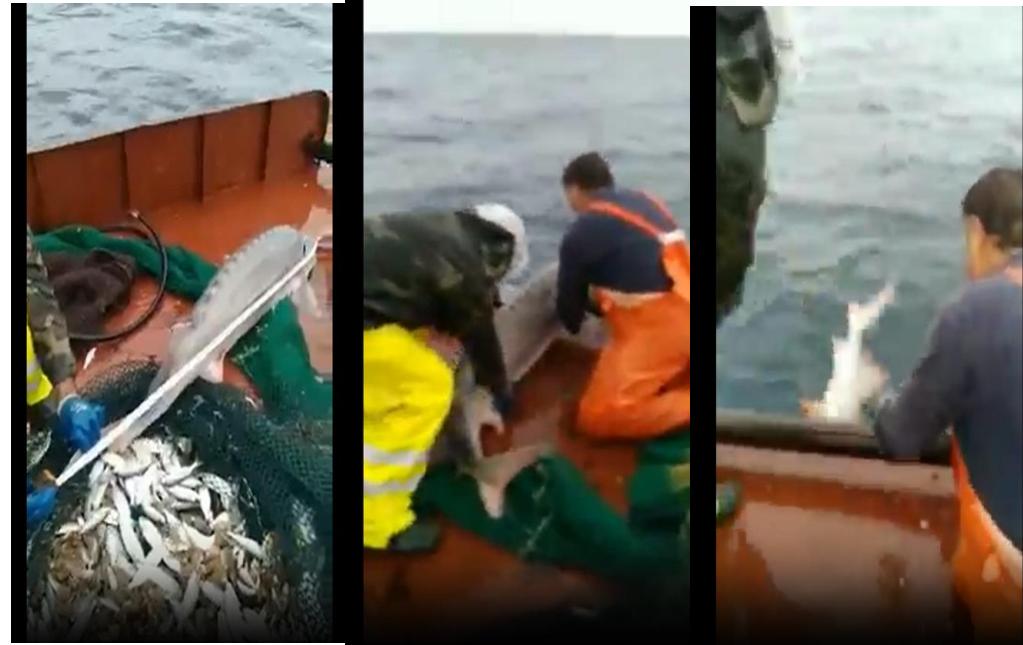
Reported by-catch per year





https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0XrkJGx6iAC4nVtPPQiZAwLFjRxQ4MmKLcB7qWPrmDWukyeaYAQnbBKNTDxRF4aXI&id=100012519129188

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What needs to be done in the Black Sea?

- Implement the actions of the [Pan European Action Plan for Sturgeon](#)



Stop IUU & by-catch of sturgeon

- **Action 1.2.1 Assessment**

Identify the by-catch problem and enhance data reporting on bycatch rates in a coherent manner

- **Action 1.2.2 Avoidance**

Identification and implementation of management options (no-take zones/times) or gear modifications to reduce by-catch in marine fisheries

- **Action 1.2.3 Monitor compliance**

Enforce existing legislation to prevent IUU fishing and comply with by-catch avoidance and reporting measures

Close data gaps on marine life cycle

Objective 3 - Habitat protection

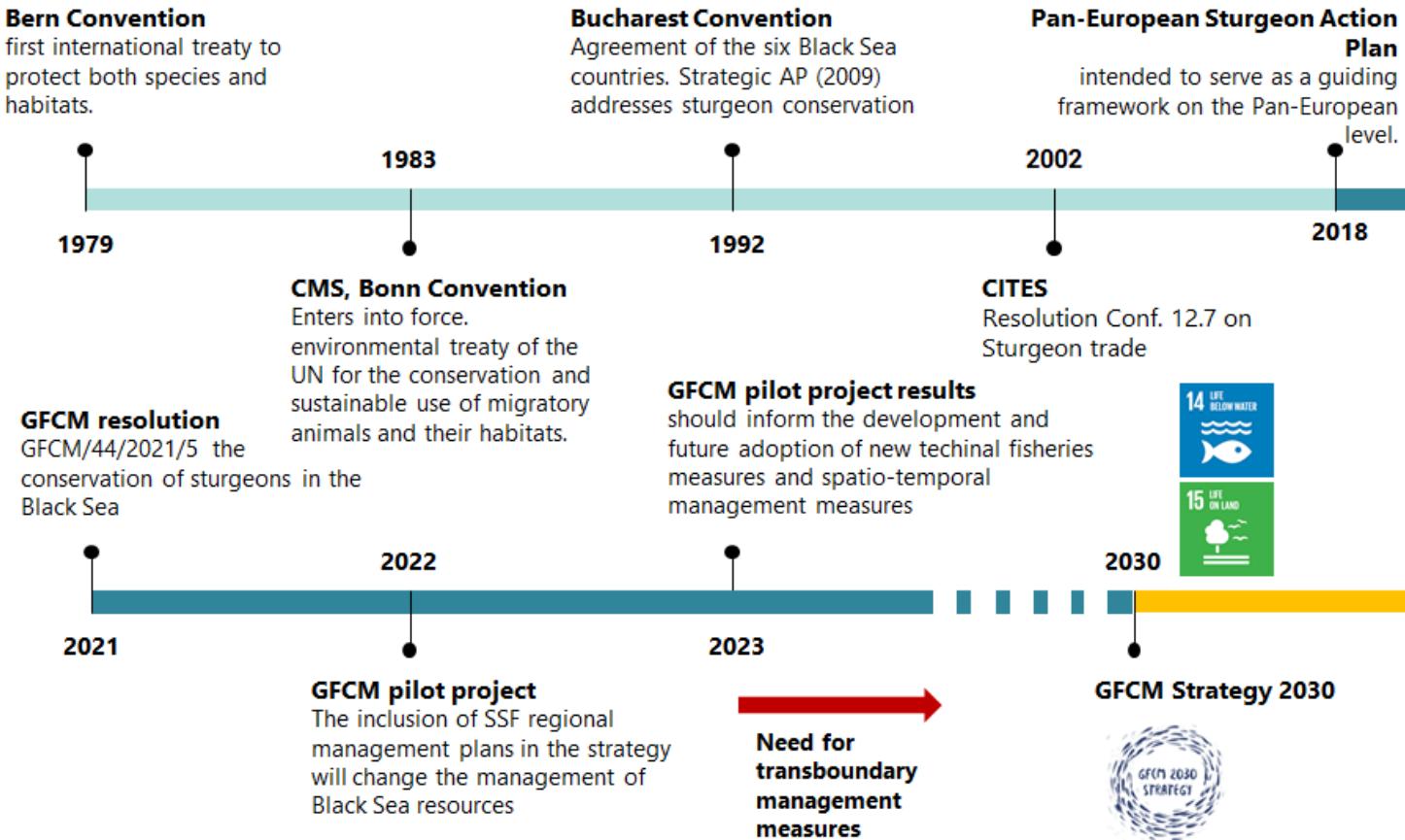
- **Action 3.1.1 Habitat Inventory** - Identify existing habitats used by sturgeon in the Black Sea
- **Action 3.1.2 Better legal protection** of known habitats
- **Action 3.1.4 Mitigate conflicts** between the protection of habitats and fishery activities or other economic activities

Objective 5 - Population monitoring

- Design and implement a coherent population monitoring
- Ensure regular data exchange within the BS Basin, including monitoring results from rivers

Policy - Sturgeon a priority species for the Black Sea

INFORM
NEW
REGIONAL
POLICIES
AND
LEGISLATION





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Further resources - INFORMATION BROCHURES

- Identification of sturgeon species - [English](#) - [Romanian](#) - [Bulgarian](#) - [Serbian](#) - [Ukrainian full version](#) - [Ukrainian short version](#)
- How to handle and release sturgeon safely – [English](#) – [Romanian](#) - [Bulgarian](#) - [Serbian](#) - [Ukrainian](#)
- Fighting Wildlife Crime – brochure for prosecutors and judges
[English](#) - [Romanian](#) - [Bulgarian](#) - [Serbian](#) - [Ukrainian](#)



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LIFE FOR DANUBE STURGEONS

TRAINING VIDEOS

- Identification of the Wild Danube Sturgeon species

[English](#) - [RO subtitles](#) - [BG subtitles](#) - [RS subtitles](#) - [UA subtitles](#)

- Identification of Exotic and Hybrid Sturgeon species

[English](#) - [RO subtitles](#) - [BG subtitles](#) - [RS subtitles](#) - [UA subtitles](#)

- CITES caviar labelling

[English](#) - [RO subtitles](#) - [BG subtitles](#) - [RS subtitles](#) - [UA subtitles](#)

PROJECT WEBSITE: danube-sturgeons.org

