

IUCN declares extinction of the Chinese paddlefish, with dam-building likely to be a major factor

By Xiaoi

Abstract:

According to the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group (SSG) new assessment published on July 21, 2022, 100 percent of the world's 26 remaining sturgeon species are now at risk of extinction, up from 85 percent in 2009, and the IUCN officially declared the extinction of the Chinese paddlefish, *Psephurus gladius*. In September 2021, a report co-published by United Nations agencies noted that while overfishing and pollution had contributed to the acceleration of extinction, the construction of multiple dams in the Yangtze River, the Chinese paddlefish's natural habitat, may have resulted in its distinction. Dam construction has affected all sturgeon species that migrate to their breeding grounds, and warming rivers due to climate change have further disrupted sturgeon reproduction.

Key words:

Chinese paddlefish, species extinction, IUCN, Hydropower station construction, biodiversity

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The screenshot shows the IUCN Red List entry for the Chinese Paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*). The page is in English and features a red header with the IUCN logo and search bar. The species name is prominently displayed, followed by its scientific name. The status is listed as 'EXTINCT' (EX). A summary of the assessment is provided, stating that the species has been assessed for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 2019 and is listed as Extinct. The page also includes a section for 'THE RED LIST ASSESSMENT' with a citation: Qiwei, W. 2022. *Psephurus gladius*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2022: e.T18428A146104283. Accessed on 2... The bottom of the page shows a navigation bar with various categories and a logo for the China Green Development Association.

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX
								EXTINCT EX

Source: IUCN Red List



The paddlefish once had a range that is now extinct

Event Chinese Paddlefish Extinction

The fish that survived the dinosaur extinction but not humankind

Chinese Paddlefish have been around for an estimated 200 million years, which means they already swam alongside the dinosaurs and survived their extinction. But they did not survive the overconsumption and intervention of humankind, and were

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Event Chinese Paddlefish Extinction



While overfishing and pollution played an accelerating role, much of its demise can be attributed to the multiple dam constructions in the Chinese Paddlefish's natural habitat: the Yangtze River. The 'last rail in the coffin' was the construction of the Geheba Dam in 1981, which effectively cut the Chinese Paddlefish off from its only spawning ground, which was further upstream. While wild-caught freshwater fish provides food security and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people across the world, the Chinese Paddlefish no longer can. In this, the Chinese Paddlefish is not alone: 30 species of freshwater fish disappeared in 2020, and another 16 have been classified as 'critically endangered, possibly extinct'. Aside from the loss of unique biodiversity, freshwater fish extinction has other long-term impacts. While freshwater makes up only 1 per cent of Earth's area, 37 per cent of known fish species can be found there, and they are an important source of nutrition and income for communities around the world. At least 40 per cent of the wild freshwater fish harvest comes from 50 low-income, food-deficient countries, where access to other forms of quality food is limited. Freshwater fish also play an important role in the food chain as they are eaten by larger animals (for example, bears).

Dams are not the only reason why these fish go extinct, but they play an important role. Around the world, more than 60,000 large dams have been built since the 1960s, and 3,700 further dam projects are pending. Many of these

projects are planned in areas that are considered biodiversity hotspots, including the Amazon, Congo and Mekong rivers. It is estimated that these dams will alter 90 per cent of the river volume worldwide, which means they have an impact on almost all global habitats of freshwater fish.



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