

## Kaluga Sturgeon

A.K.A: The River Beluga

The Kaluga isn't a well-known fish to most people, which is surprising since they are the largest freshwater fish in the world. They *are* well known to some for another reason though. Kaluga sturgeons provide a popular delicacy to the rich: caviar. **Caviar** is made by removing the unfertilized fish eggs and curing or pickling them with a salty liquid. River beluga caviar is a sought-after treat for high profile customers who pay \$200 or more per ounce. That's about the same amount as a large strawberry or half of a cheese stick! Caviar is in demand because of its rich, buttery flavor and for the nutritional value its consumers think it provides. From extra energy to high quality skin care, caviar is believed to offer positive results to those who eat it. The high price paid for river beluga caviar has led to both legal and illegal overfishing and now the Kaluga sturgeon is in critical danger of becoming extinct.

*Scientific Name: Huso dauricus*

*Critically Endangered*

*Largest Kaluga on record:  
2,204 pounds and 18 feet long!*

*Found in the rivers & lakes of  
Russia and China*

### Lying Low:

Kaluga sturgeons are **predators**, or animals that hunt and feed on other animals or organisms. They are a **benthic** creature, which means they spend most of their time near the bottom of the lakes and rivers they live in. As youth, they eat **invertebrates**, or organisms without a backbone, like sponges, worms, anemones and squid. As sturgeons grow, the size of the food they choose grows also.

### Prehistoric Predator:



When you see a sturgeon, you might think it looks like something from back when the dinosaurs roamed the Earth. And you'd be right! In fact, the Kaluga has stayed almost exactly the same since it first swam the waters of Earth 200 million years ago. Animals **evolve**, or change over time to increase their chances of survival and to become better suited for the environment they live in. Since Kaluga's have no real evidence of change, this means they have very few predators.

### Conservation Challenges:

It seems the only real enemy this predatory fish has is human. Until the past decade or two, sturgeons thrived in the rivers, lakes and oceans of the

world. But today's craving for tiny indulgences from high-paying consumers means these fish will continue to be illegally caught and killed by poachers and sold for their eggs.

**Reading Challenge:**

What is the Main Idea?

---

---

List three details from the text to support the main idea.

---

---

---

---

What are two things you learned about the Kaluga from the Fact Bubble?

---

---

---

---

What is the most interesting thing you learned about the Kaluga Sturgeon?

---

---

---

---