

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to PMs June 29, 1971

Carroll 343-5634

UNITED STATES OBTAINS BELUGA STURGEON IN TRADE WITH SOVIET UNION

The United States has obtained 100 highly prized young beluga sturgeon in a fish trade with the Soviet Union, the Interior Department announced today.

The beluga dwells in the basins of the Caspian Sea, Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and in the Eastern Mediterranean, and is capable of growing to 1½ tons in weight. Its processed eggs are the gourmet item, beluga caviar.

The sturgeons will be placed on public display at the National Aquarium in Washington, D.C., where they will not reach the maximum growth that occurs in the wild. Controlled feeding and the relatively cramped space in an aquarium keep size down; the beluga grow slowly and live long.

In recent years, six fish trades have occurred between the United States and Soviet Union, all handled by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and the Soviet All-Union Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography.

The present exchange also involves the shipment to this country of 330,000 Amur pike eggs, being turned over to Pennsylvania's Fish Commission for genetics research and related projects. This species, related to North American muskellunge, grows to more than 40 inches in length. It exists naturally in the Amur River, which forms part of the border between China and the Soviet Union.

Going to the Soviet Union are 10,000 striped bass fingerlings from Edenton National Fish Hatchery in North Carolina, 30,000 steelhead trout eggs from Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery in Oregon, as well as a few bigmouth buffalo, smallmouth buffalo, and black buffalo fish hatched at the Fish and Wildlife Service's laboratory at Stuttgart, Ark.

The Soviet Union is seeking to establish striped bass and steelhead trout as additional food fishes. These species, also involved in earlier trades, are reported to be adapting well to the Baltic and Caspian Sea.

Because fish involved in the trades are unhatched or at early stages of development, large numbers can be transported by air in small plastic bags inside insulated styrofoam containers.

Record of previous exchanges:

<u>To Soviet Union</u>		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
1965	Steelhead trout eggs	102,000
	Striped bass fry	50,000
1966	Striped bass fry	190,000
1968	Striped bass fry	25,000
	Steelhead trout eggs	50,000
1969	Striped bass fry	50,000
	Steelhead trout eggs	50,000
1970	Striped bass larvae	10,000
	Steelhead trout eggs	50,000
<u>To United States</u>		
1965	Kamchatka River Sockeye salmon eggs	100,000
1968	Amur pike eggs	125,000
1969	Amur pike eggs	60,000

x x x