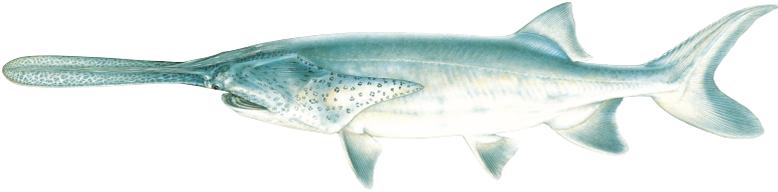


## **PADDLEFISH (family Polyodontidae)**

### **Paddlefish**

*Polyodon spathula*



**Similar Species:** None

**Identification:** Snout long and paddle-like, shark-like tail, no scales apparent on body.

Paddlefish are truly ancient survivors of the Mississippi Basin. In South Dakota, paddlefish occur in the Missouri River system. Paddlefish numbers have declined since 1900 due to destruction of habitat and overharvest. In some areas, their annual spring spawning migrations are blocked by dams. Paddlefish cruise open water and feed on plankton with their large, gaping mouths. Like sturgeon, their skeleton is cartilage rather than bone. Adult paddlefish may attain lengths up to 60 inches and weights exceeding 100 pounds. Paddlefish are very long-lived and can reach ages of 30 years or more.

