

Romantic dinner from local waters

ROBERT GARDNER

Hard to believe today, but once upon a time, Newport was pretty small potatoes. Sure we had the Rendezvous and the Pavilion, which drew crowds of dancers, and the Drugless Drugstore and other establishments that drew the drinkers.

But for the most part, Newport was a summer destination for people who lived inland. Once September came, the place closed up shop. The year-round population was pretty small, and this was true of all the other towns along the coast.

These small populations didn't have much of an effect on the ocean. For a great deal of my life, I looked at the ocean much the way I looked at the grocery store, as a place to get food.

Hungry? Put on your trunks, head over to the rocks south of Little Corona, and get a couple of lobster for dinner, or maybe some abalone. The same thing was true of the Back Bay. We'd go back there and get scallops and steam them.

I remember one memorable meal. I had met a young woman at the beach that day. We hit it off, and I invited her over to my place for dinner that night. I will confess up front that I was intent on seducing her.

I left the beach and headed over to Little Corona, where I picked up a couple of abalone. On the way in, I saw a small octopus and grabbed that as well.

That afternoon, I prepared the abalone, slicing it into steaks, and then pounded away at those steaks with an empty milk bottle until they were perfectly tender. When the time came, I rolled them in cracker crumbs and fried them with a little lemon juice. Once the abalone was tenderized, I took the octopus and diced the tentacles into a seafood cocktail, and everything was ready.

My date arrived. I offered her a drink, she accepted, and we had that drink, then another, and I was practically rubbing my hands in glee, so well were my plans proceeding.

I put the seafood cocktail on, while plying the young woman with another drink. By this time, we were exchanging deep, meaningful glances, and I could hardly wait to get through dinner and to the main purpose of the evening, at least from my eager young man's point of view.

My date had virtually demolished the seafood cocktail and was fishing around with her fork for the last little morsel.

A woman of appetite! I liked that.

She speared the last piece of the cocktail and looked at it. This piece had an intact circle of the little suction cups that line the bottoms of octopus tentacles. She looked at it more closely. She frowned.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's the octopus -- ." I didn't even get the word "tentacle" out of my mouth before she threw up all over herself and the table.

So much for my romantic evening.

Of course, nowadays, everyone and his mother, brother and cousin twice removed wants to live at the beach. There are no coastal towns with small populations, and the ocean has paid a price for its popularity.

Today, if you want a lobster, you go to the market. Abalone have become like diamonds in their scarcity, and I don't think anyone would want to eat anything that came out of the Back Bay. I don't dive anymore, but I occasionally snorkel around, and you don't even see Garibaldi, which used to be extremely common.

I understand there's some move afoot to protect certain areas of the ocean like we protect our national parks. It might be something to consider.



Chinese feast an adventure in eating

Jan. 25, 2006. 01:00 AM

[SUSAN SAMPSON](#)

SAN FRANCISCO—I have eaten too many duck tongues.

Although I've been feasting for 3-1/2 hours straight, it is the duck tongues that haunt my stomach as I waddle back into my hotel. This evening, I have been initiated into the mysteries of the formal Chinese banquet.

The Chinese banquet is hardly unexplored territory — except for most of the North American writers attending the conference of the Association of Food Journalists here. But neither is it in the realm of the ordinary. For the Chinese, everyday meals revolve around the rice bowl. Steamed rice is topped with tidbits and brought close to the mouth. In Cantonese, the daily meal is called "eat rice," says Olivia Wu, our culinary interpreter. Wu is a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle.

A banquet is extraordinary. There's no rice in sight tonight. Soup is a substantial course, not something to wash down your meal. The dishes arrive not simultaneously, but in carefully arranged order and with ceremony. And they keep coming, so you must pace yourself.

"The Chinese banquet is the ultimate small plates meal," Wu tells us.

We have staked our claims at the round tables in Yank Sing restaurant. Yank Sing was founded in 1958. Surprisingly, it is no longer in San Francisco's Chinatown, but in the financial district. It accommodates crowds for dim sum, banquets and "nouveau Western" cuisine.

Banquet menus are often priced per table of 10. Ten is considered lucky in North America. In China and other parts of Asia, banquet-goers prefer the number 12. Eight is okay, too. Just don't sit seven around a table. It's a bad luck number. Banquet tables are always round. The "head" of the table faces the front door. The host will push the guest of honour there, then sit beside him or her.

Oh no, there are nine at my table. After a first course of Imperial Walnut Salad, late-comers make it 11. That's not only a tight fit, but hey, they've ruined the feng shui of our little group!

The salad is made with red cabbage, jicama, rau rom, honey-glazed walnuts, lemon zest and citrus dressing. Rau rom, or Vietnamese coriander, is used in Asian herbal medicine. According to <http://www.herbnet.com>, it stimulates urination, fights nausea and fever, and may be used as an "aphrodisiac."

The salad is a hit, but our feng shui is sour. When the Six Happiness Cold Plates arrive to tease the palate, some diners won't take the hint. They approach this exotica with fear and loathing. A few won't even sample. I am embarrassed at their rudeness.

Jellyfish salad, duck gizzards with preserved vegetables and pig ears sliced thin offer a medley of textures and flavours. "Drunken squab" with plum is cut through to the bone and reassembled, Wu says, because the Chinese won't give up the best meat beside the bone.

And there are those duck tongues in a slippery, sweetish sauce. The tongues are firm little morsels that fight back when you bite. They beckon to the taste buds, though I am put off by the shoe-horn-shaped flap of bone at the centre of each one.

One of our hosts just laughs merrily when I ask where he gets the tongues. A restaurant this big must have cornered the local market.

A Chinese banquet is all about appreciation of food. As plates laden with leftovers are whisked away, one of the managers walks by and his eyes take in the wastefulness. He says nothing. I eat a few more duck tongues to compensate.

The arrival of tortoise soup with Chinese herbs, though fragrant and flavourful, proves no more alluring to some. Wu tells us the thin layer of cartilage under the armour of the tortoise is best loved.

The next course stars the crispy skin of a whole suckling pig. The skin is traditionally dipped in hoisin sauce or sugar. The meat is cut in rectangles.

There's nothing "weird" about pork. Surely, it is acceptable? But no. A couple of health-conscious tablemates shudder and shun it. Too fatty, they complain.

Geoduck sashimi arrives garnished with real grated wasabi and crunchy grains of caviar. These are rare treats. The geoduck (pronounced gooeyduck) is a Pacific clam that can average seven or eight pounds (3 to 3-1/2 kilograms). Raw and thinly sliced, it is reminiscent of abalone, another expensive banquet mollusc.

Jade Scallops in Bird's Nest have been tinted with spinach. They are flavoured with XO, a modern sauce made with dried seafood, chili and spices. The name is borrowed from XO (extra-old) brandy, a chic liquor in Hong Kong.

Western drinkers tend to resort to beer with Chinese food. For the banquet, a traditional drink is brandy with 7-Up; it's served with the cold course. Then the servers bring Riesling. A white wine with nice acidity and a hint of sweetness, Riesling pairs well with the multiple flavours we encounter.

Wu says drinking games and one-upmanship abound at Chinese banquets, mostly among the males. When there are too many toasts to keep up with, some diners fake it with tea in a whisky glass.

I give up on the drinking. I can barely keep up with the eating.

The servers march to the table with Treasure-Stuffed Lotus Leaf Chicken topped with an aggressive five-spice sauce, followed by a whole steamed rock cod.

The meal has an ebb and flow. The arrival of the cod signals the final segment of the banquet. Wu says it's the equivalent of a roast beef course.

Many Chinese restaurants have tanks to prove their fish are live just before steaming. Bulging eyeballs are a sign of really fresh fish, we are told. The cheeks are the finest morsels, given to the guests of honour.

The next course is the simplest: addictive snowpea shoots sautéed with garlic.

And the one after that is the most complicated: soup in dumpling packets. The jiggly Shanghai Dumplings must be eaten whole or they will squirt all over you. But beware of the hot broth.

Finally, I pick at dessert plates laden with sugar puffs and red dates stuffed with mochi (a paste made with glutinous sweet rice flour).

Even sticking with tiny portions, I am so full, I am desperate to lie down.

Wu says our banquet is a streamlined, 21st century version of a traditional banquet that can have even more courses. I groan.

Later, back in Toronto, chef Joseph Ho says you don't have to wait for an invitation to a Chinese wedding or New Year's celebration to get a taste of the banquet experience.

Signature banquet dishes are on the menus of many restaurants, he says, including his own. It's the Empire Court at the Hilton Suites hotel and conference centre in Markham. Ho says essential banquet dishes to look for include a showy soup (shark's fin is favoured), abalone (traditionally sliced into 10 pieces), barbecued pork or duck, and whole steamed fish.

As for those duck tongues, he says Chinese restaurateurs get them from Ontario farms and they are also sold at some Asian markets for about \$10 a pound.

After the San Francisco banquet, I am sated and educated. But I fear I will dream of a flock of tongue-less ducks waddling around — unable to quack. It's been an adventure in eating.

Not an abalone story but interesting

17. Japan Grapples with Invasion of Giant Jellyfish (Japan)

Source: <http://www.planetark.com/avantgo/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=34584>

20 January 2006

A slimy jellyfish weighing as much as a sumo wrestler has Japan's fishing industry in the grip of its poisonous tentacles.

Vast numbers of Echizen kurage, or Nomura's jellyfish, have appeared around Japan's coast since July, clogging and ripping fishing nets and forcing fishermen to spend hours hacking them apart before bringing home their reduced catches.

Representatives of fishing communities around the country gathered in Tokyo on Thursday, hoping to thrash out solutions to a pest that has spread from the Japan Sea to the Pacific coast.

"It's a terrible problem. They're like aliens," Noriyuki Kani of the fisheries federation in Toyama, northwest of Tokyo, told Reuters ahead of the conference.

There are no official figures on the size of the problem, but Kani says the financial losses are obvious.

"If your nets are full of jellyfish, of course there is no space for fish," he said.

Cutting up and disposing of the giants can turn a three-hour fishing trip into a 10-hour marathon, while valuable fish are poisoned or crushed under the weight of the unwanted catch.

And what a catch. One Echizen kurage can be up to 2 metres (6 ft 7 in) in diameter and weigh up to 200 kg (440 lb).

Despite their size, the invertebrates aren't toxic enough to cause serious harm to humans, but fishermen often wear goggles and protective clothing to avoid stings when dealing with them.

Much about the jellyfish, the largest variety found in the Sea of Japan, remains a mystery, according to Hitoshi Iizumi of the Seikai National Fisheries Research Institute in Niigata.

Researchers have suggested they drift to Japan on currents after reproducing in South Korean or Chinese waters, a theory that Japan wants to investigate with the other two nations.

But with relations between Japan and its nearest neighbours at a low ebb, Tokyo is anxious to avoid apportioning blame.

"We have a neutral stance," said Yukihiko Sakamoto of the National Fisheries Agency, which organised Thursday's conference...

<http://www.planetark.com/avantgo/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=34584>



[ABC Online](#)

Abalone bust sees 5 facing charges. 26/01/2006. ABC News Online

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200601/s1555725.htm>]

Last Update: Thursday, January 26, 2006. 12:26pm (AEDT)

Abalone bust sees 5 facing charges

Five Mount Gambier men stand accused of illegally fishing more than a quarter of a tonne of abalone in South Australia's south-east.

Fisheries officers say they seized a haul of more than 2,000 abalone - mostly undersized and valued at \$28,000 - when they caught four of the men near Millicent today.

Paul Tatarelli from PIRSA Fisheries says the men could face fines of up to \$90,000 or up to two years in jail for the alleged offences.

"Abalone are a fairly slow-growing species of fish and the taking of undersized fish is going to reduce the number of sized fish which are available to be caught both recreationally and commercially," Mr Tatarelli said.

"The abalone fishery and all fisheries are a community resource and the reason that we have regulations in place is to protect that resource," he added.

"And certainly the message is for all people to stick to the fishing rules and regulations."

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LOCAL News

Festive feast at Emperor's Court

By Grace Jiu



RBC and Emperor's Court staff tossing Lobster Yee Sang with enthusiasm.

To usher this Chinese New Year, Emperor's Court welcomes food lovers to enjoy popular oriental delicacies at promotional prices at the restaurant.

One of these dishes is the 'Yee Sang', a traditional Chinese cuisine prepared from a rich variety of fine shreds of vegetables and spices, including colourful yam crackers, jelly fish with its star ingredients abalone, lobster, prawn, pacific clam or salmon to choose from.

Sweet and sour plum sauce would later be poured over the Yee Sang, including oil and white pepper, and five spice powder from two ang paws would be sprinkled over the dish.

The oil would symbolise money and each red packet is meant to bring blessings to the family, job or business.

Traditionally, diners would gather around the dish and toss the Yee Sang in the air, a gesture to usher in prosperity in the new year.

The higher it is tossed, the better the new year would be. Also like a wish dish, wishes and hopes may be expressed for the Lunar New Year while tossing.

The meaningful savoury delicacy is available from \$30 to \$120. Some Yee Sang

cuisines are also available at the Dynasty Restaurant.

Specially tailored for this festive period, Emperor's Court also features four other CNY set menus comprising nine items per set designed to offer a rich variety of taste.

One of these menus would commence with a prosperous abalone Yee Sang, followed by a five hot and cold combination platter. Those are akin to appetisers.

Ranging from \$388 to \$518, a CNY set menu would cater for a table of 10 people.

Dynasty Restaurant also offers three similar promotional CNY set menus.

An à la carte delicacy at the Emperor's Court is the Emperor's seabass fish claypot with its broth being concocted with herbs, yam, white and black fungi to give a rich blend of taste with fried fish immersed in the soup.

In a food tasting session among a group of about nine people, it was a highly commended dish with its rich, aromatic and herbal taste.

Adorned with oriental décor with much Chinese cultural designs and aesthetics, the Emperor's Court cultural and classy ambience add to diners' experience of enjoying a rich variety of delicious Chinese delicacies.

Both offers on Yee Sang and CNY set menus run from January 15 to February 12.

The price--and meaning--of a Chinese New Year banquet

First posted 11:41pm (Mla time) Jan 27, 2006
Associated Press

BEIJING -- Picture this: Lobster cooked eight ways. Sharks' fin bathed in a rich brown sauce. Stewed bird's nest sweetened with apricots. Abalone braised until tender.

Now, the bill: 198,000 yuan (US\$24,500).

The Lao Zhengxing restaurant in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou has taken culinary decadence to new heights with its Chinese New Year banquet menu -- a mix of exorbitantly priced ingredients and flashy cooking topped off with a dash of self-promotion.

"Our boss loves good food and has served it for more than 40 years," said the manager, who would give only his surname, Li. "But I don't deny we are also aiming to get publicity for our restaurant."

Just a few years ago, Chinese spent the Lunar New Year -- their most celebrated holiday -- cooking feasts at home. But now, increasingly wealthy and busy, they are splurging on elaborate restaurant banquets. Eateries like Lao Zhengxing with special New Year menus are benefiting.

"It is the time for families to

gather," said Bian Jiang, secretary-general of the China Cuisine Association. "People expect and enjoy higher standards of food, teas, wines and services during the New Year."

The rush to book a table now starts as early as December and meals range from hundreds to tens of thousands of yuan (dollars, euros) -- fortunes in a country where incomes average about \$300 a year in the countryside and \$1,000 in cities.

"People are getting lazier and they have less time to cook," said Liu Jiang, a 43-year-old homemaker from Beijing who has reserved a table for 12 at a roast duck restaurant on Saturday, the eve of the Lunar New Year.

"It's so much easier to go to out -- especially if you have as many people as we do."

Dishes at a New Year's eve reunion dinner are full of symbolic meaning: noodles represent longevity, fish for wealth and round foods, like meat balls, emphasize togetherness. The menu usually has one or two high-priced delicacies like abalone or sharks' fin thrown in to make the occasion more memorable.

The Lao Zhengxing banquet features a soup with a hair-like black sea moss whose name in Mandarin sounds the same as the phrase "get rich."

Among the other rarities offered -- a "three-headed" Japanese abalone, which costs 20,000 yuan (US\$2,400) each and 50-year-old Pu'er tea from southern Yunnan province.

The price is so high, said Li, the manager, because the ingredients are so rare and come from the owner's private collection.

"We have enough only for about 20 to 24 people," Li said. "It will take at least another five years to collect them again."

So far, there's been one taker for the banquet, a Hong Kong businessman who is an old friend of the restaurant owner, Li said, refusing to provide any more details.

Quan Ju De, a popular roast duck chain in Beijing, is attracting more takers, with its most-expensive holiday menu, which feeds 10 for 8,666 yuan (US\$1,000), a play on numbers considered lucky by the Chinese.

"We're fully booked," said a manager who refused to give her name, but promoted another holiday menu of Australian scallops, bird's nest and of course, duck.

Quan Ju De packs them in: One branch seats 900 people and is filled with white-cloth topped tables and velvet red chairs, with bunches of firecrackers on pillars. Photos of famous customers line the walls -- Bush, Arafat, Yanni, Castro and Carreras.

The Chinese zodiac moves in a 12-year cycle named after animals, starting with the Year of the Rat and ending with the Year of the Pig, which falls in 2007. According to that series, this is the Year of the Dog.

And is it unlucky to eat dog in the Year of the Dog?

Not in the northeastern province of Jilin. "The people of Jilin have the tradition of eating dog in winter since dog meat is good for the health," said a man who answered the telephone at Chaoxian Restaurant in the provincial city of Jilin.

"No one has ever complained about eating dogs in the Year of the Dog," he said. "If so, we cannot eat pigs next year, right?"

Yee sang, in all its variations

By **ESTHER CHANDRAN**

Photos by **SAM THAM** and provided by the hotels

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Vistana Hotel Kuala Lumpur

For something different, Vistana's Coffee House is continuing its tradition of serving Thai Yee Sang.

Head chef Chew Hock Seng said Thai ingredients like kaffir lime leaves, young mango, bird's eye chilli, Thai chilli powder and raw shallots give the *yee sang* its character.

The spiciness of bird's eye chilli and the intense fiery sensation it leaves on the palate together with the combination of sweet, sour and spicy flavours make this *yee sang* unique.

Chew also uses marmalade and pineapple jam mixed with plum sauce for his *yee sang* dish.



Vistana Hotel Kuala Lumpur is continuing its tradition of offering Thai Yee Sang.

Sheraton Subang Hotel and Towers

The Emperor's executive Chinese chef Louie Hoi has given the *yee sang* presentation a facelift by incorporating octopus among the crunchy sweet and sour ingredients.

“We went through several rounds of food tasting and found this unique combination brought out the sweetness of each seafood item without one overpowering the other – a definite must-try this Chinese New Year,” he says.

Besides the Fresh Japanese Octopus with Abalone Yee Sang, the outlet also offers Fresh Toro Yee Sang (fatty tuna belly *yee sang*).

Grand Plaza Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur

Yee sang symbolises abundance and at Si Chuan Dou Hua Restaurant, premium ingredients such as Pacific clams, soft shell crab, abalone and jellyfish or even tropical fresh fruits are some of the main ingredients found in the delicacy.

The *yee sang* here can be complemented with one's own choice of sauce, which include wasabi, Thai chilli sauce, and fruity sour plum sauce.

Crown Princess Kuala Lumpur



Crown Princess Kuala Lumpur's Spring Garden Restaurant's Chinese chef Lau Tian Sing with his new yee sang creation.

At the Spring Garden Restaurant, the Salmon Fish Yee Sang with Chicken Floss is making heads turn, as this is indeed a trendy dish with both fish and chicken in it.

Sturgeon in peril

By Denis Cuff
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

A prehistoric fish has hooked the Delta into a global black market for caviar and an epidemic of poaching that feeds it.

The white sturgeon, a bony, bottom-sucking fish that dates to the age of dinosaurs, has plummeted to its lowest population in 50 years, a new state survey shows.

Poaching, fueled by a worldwide scarcity of sturgeon eggs known as caviar, is partly to blame, biologists say.

To protect the fish that can grow to 10 feet and 500 pounds or more, the state Department of Fish and



Bob Larson/Times
Department of Fish and Game Cody Gamble, right, checks the size of a sturgeon as Elvin Grinby, Santa Cruz, looks on as they enforce sturgeon fishing rules on the Delta.

Game disclosed this month it is considering tightening recreational fishing limits on sturgeon so wardens have an easier time clamping down on poachers.

California law allows sport anglers to catch one sturgeon per day, but bans selling the fish or its eggs to protect the species that needs 10 to 14 years before it can reproduce.

Unfortunately for the fish, a collapse of beluga caviar stocks in the Black and Caspian seas near Russia has turned Delta sturgeon eggs into black gold.

"We have seen an increased level of activity among poachers in the last three or four years," said Lt. Kathy Ponting, who leads a state Department of Fish and Game team of undercover wardens. "It can be a very lucrative activity, and very damaging to our natural resources."

Wild caviar can sell for \$150 to \$250 or more per pound in the Northern California black market, and more in other regions, state investigators estimate.

That means a 100-pound female laden with 10 pounds of eggs can rake in \$1,500 to \$2,500 on the black market. Sturgeon fillets fetch lower prices, but can add to a poacher's payoff.

Two recent actions could further shrink supplies and escalate prices.

Last fall, the United States, the world's biggest caviar consumer, banned import of beluga sturgeon caviar from the Caspian Sea because of collapsing populations there. The collapse of the Soviet Union accelerated poaching, environmentalists say.

Earlier this month, a branch of the United Nations blocked caviar-producing countries indefinitely from exporting their product until they can prove their sturgeon stocks are sustainable.

In California and other states, consumers are turning to legal caviar from sturgeon farms, a booming business.

"The decline in sturgeon populations around the world is leading to pressures for poaching in this country," said Lisa Speer, a policy analyst with Natural Resources Defense Council. "Caviar is very valuable. It's easy to smuggle. It's like drugs."

Undercover wardens have broken up three Delta sturgeon poaching rings in the past three years. Russian immigrants were involved in two.

In a raid last May, wardens arrested an auto body shop operator north of Sacramento who allegedly bought sturgeon from anglers and then processed the eggs into caviar in the back of two rented shops.

The shop owner allegedly drove the caviar to a Russian deli in San Francisco's Sunset District.

The deli owner was fined \$8,000. The criminal case against the auto body shop operator is pending.

The involvement of some Russian and Ukrainian immigrants in Delta poaching rings is no surprise to a Sacramento County sheriff's deputy who immigrated from the Ukraine 16 years ago.

Poverty and corruption in the old Soviet empire bred a tolerance for poaching, said Vitaly Prokopchuk.

Caviar is a status symbol in Russia, he said.

"People would dynamite fish if they could do it to put food on the table," Prokopchuk said. "I think times will change as people are here long and become more American and believe in the system."

Sturgeon poaching has become such a serious problem that it now ranks close to abalone poaching as a top priority of undercover wardens, Ponting said.

Penalties, however, are relatively low, something Ponting thinks should be changed.

Abalone poachers face fines up to \$40,000 and revocation of their fishing licenses for life. Sturgeon poachers can be fined \$15,000 and lose their licenses for up to three years.

Manning the front lines to enforce fishing rules is a special Delta-Bay unit of 10 uniformed wardens on boats.

"We will patrol at night, at day, in bad weather, any time fishermen are out here," said warden Richard Brunke during a patrol on a Zodiac Hurricane inflatable boat with twin engines.

Brunke and his partner, Cody Gamble, zipped along, covering long stretches of Suisun Bay and the Delta between checks on fishing boats.

The area's huge size offers many hiding places for lawbreakers.

"We know we can't be everywhere," he said. "But we can make it harder for people to break the rules."

On a four-hour cruise, Brunke and Gamble checked about 15 boats, but found no anglers taking sturgeon outside the legal range of 46 inches to 72 inches long.

Numbers of sturgeon big enough to harvest dwindled from 144,000 fish in 1998, to 10,000 in 2005, the lowest in half a century, state Fish and Game reported in a survey earlier this month.

In response, department biologists are asking the Fish and Game Commission on Feb. 2 to bar sturgeon fishing from March through June this year on some upper reaches of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

The agency also is looking into limiting how many sturgeon can be caught in a year.

The state now has no way to track sturgeon catches because anglers don't have to report their catches.

Jim Smith, operator of a fishing charter boat in Martinez, said he would support limits.

But he added that he thinks the state should do more to protect the fish from Delta water pumping that disrupts environmental conditions for the sturgeon, and sucks up fish eggs and larvae.

"The water going south is the worst problem," Smith said. "Poaching has been going on for 50 years."

Red Bartley, a long-time sturgeon fisherman, says the poaching has taken its toll, too.

"Poaching is a tremendous problem," said Bartley, a Modesto resident who works with several recreational fishing groups.

Bartley said it would be a shame if the decline in sturgeon spurred a fishing ban, as occurred between 1917 and 1954, when unregulated fishing devastated sturgeon numbers.

"It's a magnificent fish from ancient times," he said. "It's a hard fighter. It would be a loss if people could not have the experience of seeing it."
