

Threatened fishes of the world: *Psephurus gladius* (Martens, 1862) (Acipenseriformes: polyodontidae)

Xin Gao · Jian Wei Wang · Sébastien Brosse

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Common name: Chinese paddlefish (English).
Conservation status: Critically endangered—IUCN Red List and China Species Red List. *Identification:* D 46-61, A 50-55 (Ding 1994). Body without scales, grey azure on head, back and tail fin, white on belly. Long sword-like snout, inferior mouth, small round eyes, one pair of short barbels, nostrils. Maximum length 7 m; Maximum weight 908 kg (Ma et al. 1996). Figure from Anonymous (1976). *Distribution:* Potamodromous fish living mainly in the Yangtze River basin but also occurring occasionally in the Yellow River, East China and Yellow seas (Deng et al. 1987). *Abundance:* Historically considered a



commercial fish, but commercial fishing has been prohibited since 1983. The species is now very rare, and only three captures of adults died in the Yangtze River in 2000s, two in 2002 and one in 2007. *Habitat and ecology:* Mainly feeds on fish. Spawning grounds distributed on the upper Yangtze, upstream from Chongqing. The two known spawning grounds are located in lotic reaches with sand and/or gravel bottom (Ding 1994). Detailed biological studies are scarce. *Reproduction:* Spawning period from late March to early April. Fecundity ranges 178 000–787 000 (Deng et al. 1987). No young fish have been caught since 1995. The genetic diversity of the current population is lower than historically (Wu 2005). *Threats:* Three Gorges Dam and the Gezhouba Dam block migration and access to spawning grounds. No spawning ground has been found downstream of Gezhouba Dam (Deng et al. 1987). *Conservation recommendations:* Artificial reproduction failed because no mature fish was found (Wei et al. 1997). Recovering natural spawning grounds and building artificial spawning grounds should be considered as alternative conservation strategies.

X. Gao · J. W. Wang (✉)
Institute of Hydrobiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences,
7th southern road of East Lake,
Wuhan, Hubei Province 430072, China
e-mail: wangjw@ihb.ac.cn

S. Brosse
Laboratoire Evolution et Diversité Biologique,
U.M.R 5174, C.N.R.S—Université Paul Sabatier,
118 route de Narbonne,
F-31062 Toulouse cedex 4, France

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