

Encountering 'the Border': Geopolitical Ecologies of Sturgeon Conservation

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Sturgeon are the most critically endangered group of species (IUCN, 2010) and have been driven to near extinction as a result of the global demand for their caviar. Given the geographical distribution of wild sturgeon in rivers and seas that intersect international boundaries, efforts to conserve sturgeon have subsequently become entangled in complex scenarios which fall under the rubric of "Conservation Geopolitics".

Borders and boundaries are inherently geopolitical, playing a central role in geopolitical thought and practice. Moreover, borders pose numerous questions and challenges for conservation, and conservation is said to 'animate' borders (Ramutsindela, 2015). As such, the paper utilises 'borders' as a heuristic device to consider the 'Geopolitical Ecology' of sturgeon conservation. The paper considers how 'the border' is variably encountered by both human and nonhuman actors via efforts to conserve and secure sturgeon populations.

Conceptualising borders in their multiplicitous forms – as physical objects; as a practice; and as metaphors – the paper makes the case that conservation of sturgeon both creates borders, and is impeded or challenged by borders. Interrogating these border dynamics – of creation and restriction – is revealing of ecologies of multi-species (geo)political encounter, that extend far beyond the ostensible aim of sturgeon conservation.