

It Was Like a Scene From Jaws



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When it takes five anglers to handle a fish - you know it is big! From left to right Phil Degens, Daryl Cruttenden, Doug Small, Peter Hyland and their guide, Greg

Four fishing pals from East Sussex have shared one of the biggest hauls of sturgeon ever taken topped by this magnificent creature weighing in at an estimated 600 lbs.

During a dream eight day holiday to Canada the quartet caught an astonishing 11,360 lb of fish from the mighty Fraser and Harrison Rivers in British Columbia, after timing their trip to coincide with a run of pink salmon, on which the sturgeon were gorging.

Using fish strips for hook bait, Daryl Cruttenden, Phil Degens, Doug Small and Peter Hyland caught 105 of the prehistoric looking creatures between them. 44 of which weighed over 100lb,

with each angler catching at least one fish in excess of 350lb.

But it was Daryl's very first bite on the first day of the trip which produced the biggest specimen – a fish the Hastings-based rod believes is the pinnacle of his 36 year angling career.

"I felt honoured to have caught such a magnificent creature, which measured 10 ft 1 in long and had a girth of almost 4ft 6ins.

Once hooked, it jumped clear of the water just 15ft behind the boat – it was like a scene from Jaws!" said Daryl, who played his quarry for 90 minutes before bringing it alongside the boat.

"They are such powerful fish that you just have to let them run. You also need a bit of luck on your side because they seem to know where all the snags and fallen trees are in the river. My fist was believed to be the largest sturgeon caught in British Columbia in 2009, until it was beaten a week later by a fish two inches longer and also the largest example of the species that our guide, Greg from Len's Sportfishing Adventures, had witnessed in nine years on the river."

Once beaten, Daryl's fish was measured and checked to see if it was one of the estimated 40,000 sturgeon that have been electronically tagged in recent years.

Although a number of the fish caught had already been tagged, Daryl's biggest fish hadn't. "The fact that it had probably never been caught before made the whole thing all the more special. This fish was probably between 100 and 120 years old – a truly humbling experience," he added.

The four friends used purpose build Shimano sturgeon rods, coupled with Penn International multiplier reels loaded with 120lb Dacron line. Size 6/0 to 9/0 barbless hooks and running leads ranging between 14oz and 30oz completed their set-ups.