

# Sturgeon Dive



This (in my opinion) is the BEST Marine life dive in Ontario. It is also an advanced dive that is hazardous if you are not experienced for the conditions.

## *About the Dive:*

You start the dive by entering the water from the beach. The current here is strong and you will be pulled away if you are not anchored. You proceed at a north west heading (you need a compass) the current will be pulling you west as you are swimming. It's OK let it just maintain your heading while swimming. You will be in 15-25 ft of water until you are entering the channel. The depth varies in the channel (generally 40-50 ft at this point) but once there let the current take you and just drift with it. It will pull you toward the St Clair River. While drifting keep your eyes out for the sturgeon. They spend time in the lake at the head of the river. While in the lake the current is mild to strong as it increases as you near the river. As you enter the river the current gets very strong. It is the likely the fastest you might ever dive in and is reported to be upwards of 5 knots. (for comparison the Niagara River is 1.5 – 2 knots) You will know you have entered the river when the current is taking you South and your speed increases. There is a deep hole just after you enter the river with depths to 90ft. You Could pass on either side or go into it. You notice it stay or work your way to the left (Canadian side). As you pass the hole the river will get shallower. This is the indication you are nearing the exit. The current increases in speed again as it shallows. If you are in 25 ft or less on the Canadian side just go with the flow. It will take you under the 2 Bluewater Bridges. If it is a sunny day you will notice the shadows as you pass indicating time to swim toward shore(east). If it is overcast you may not notice the shadow but there is also sand dune as you go past the second bridge. As you approach the bridges you will be drifting over a rock/clay river bed, once you are over the sand dune swim toward shore (east).

## *Some Considerations:*

- The current being very strong can separate buddy pairs quickly you will need to be extra attentive .
- Boat traffic is heavy and surfacing in the river is hazardous. This is a shipping channel for lake freighters and with multiple marinas there are lots of motor and sail boats traveling this zone.
- The swim to shore exerts more energy than drifting and you need to start with an ample gas supply.

**Dean's Sport and Dive**

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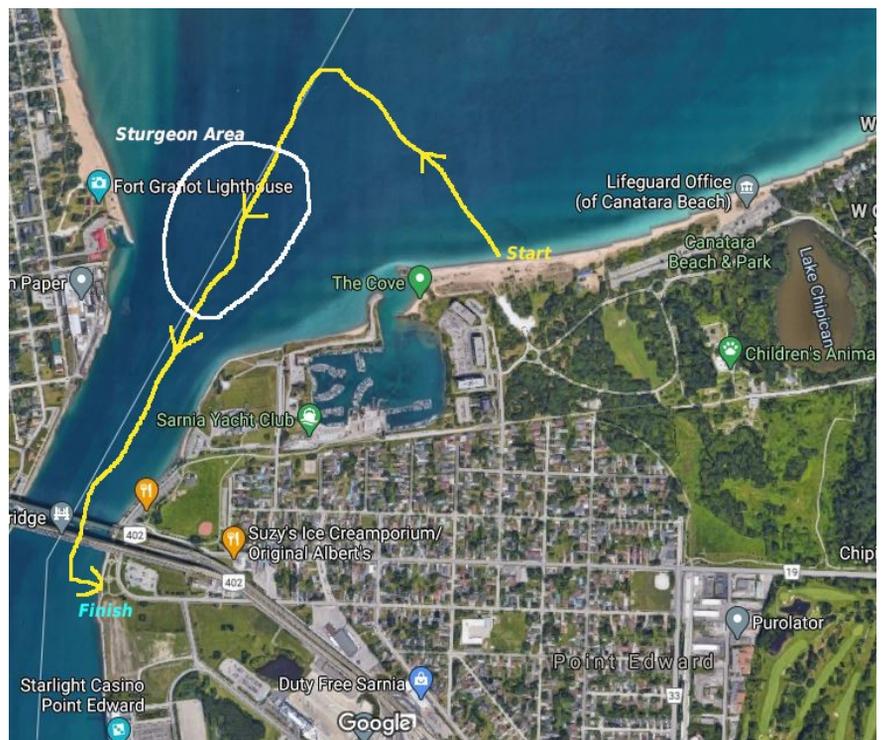
It is possible to exit on the Canadian shore line at any point once you have passed the Yacht Club.

Do not go far past the Casino. Just past it is an entrance to a marina and if you pass it the shortest walk would be about 3km

Dive Conditions;

- Strong Current
- Depths to 90ft
- Heavy Boat Traffic
- Visibility ranges 2-50ft

A west or north west wind stirs the shoreline of the lake and the current pulls that water into the river. Conditions are best with a wind out of the South.



When are the Sturgeon in this area?

While you may see the occasional one over the summer, they are abundant earlier in the year while the water is cooler. May through June is a great time.

Dive time varies depending on how far you swim out. The further out you go the more likely you are to drift through the Sturgeon Area. Some divers with multiple tanks have done 2.5 hour or longer dives and some dives with single tanks have run low on air well before the exit area.

Safety is your responsibility and you need to put a plan in place with your buddy.

Some recommended practices are:

- Plan your turn pressure. Most use a maximum 1/3 on the swim north west then just drift with the flow.
- Plan a minimum pressure to exit. With a single cylinder you should start your swim to shore at 1000psi. The swim to shore can be a workout depending on the area.
- Plan only to surface at the shore. Heavy boat traffic makes surfacing in the middle of the river hazardous.
- Be good buddy's know where you and your buddy should be seen, ie me on the right and you on the left. In the current you can not go back so staying beside each other is more challenging and the buddy falling back needs to catch up. If you find a spot to hold on and just grab it your still drifting buddy will be out of site very quickly.
- Plan for buddy separation Stick together but if separated during the dive swim directly to shore. If you surface in the middle as well as being hazardous you will drift so far down stream in the time it takes you to surface and then swim to shore you will not even know where you last saw your buddy.