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The sterlet sturgeon genome sequence and the mechanisms of segmental rediploidization

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Sturgeons seem to be frozen in time. The archaic characteristics of this ancient fish lineage place it in a key phylogenetic position at the base of the ~30,000 modern teleost fish species. Moreover, sturgeons are notoriously polyploid, providing unique opportunities to investigate the evolution of polyploid genomes. We assembled a high-quality chromosome-level reference genome for the sterlet, Acipenser ruthenus. Our analysis revealed a very low protein evolution rate that is at least as slow as in other deep branches of the vertebrate tree, such as that of the coelacanth. We uncovered a whole-genome duplication that occurred in the Jurassic, early in the evolution of the entire sturgeon lineage. Following this polyploidization, the rediploidization of the genome included the loss of whole chromosomes in a segmental deduplication process. While known adaptive processes helped conserve a high degree of structural and functional tetraploidy over more than 180 million years, the reduction of redundancy of the polyploid genome seems to have been remarkably random.

Vertebrate genome evolution has been strongly impacted by polyploidization events1,2. Early on, vertebrate ancestors experienced two rounds (1R and 2R) of whole-genome duplications (WGDs)3. The evolutionary history of the ~30,000 species of teleost fish, which make up more than 99% of all ray-finned fishes (Actinopterygii), is defined by a third WGD (3R) that occurred in their common ancestor about 320 million years ago (Ma), but not in the basal fish (bichirs, reedfish, sturgeons, paddlefishes, bowfins andgars), the land vertebrates or their sarcopterygian forbearing relatives (coelacanths and lungfishes). Some teleost groups, such as salmonids and carpids, independently underwent another round (4R) of WGD. Interestingly, among the basal fishes only the sturgeon lineage is known to be prone to polyploidization events and includes many-ploid species, some with up to 380 chromosomes.

Sturgeon genomes, however, are a missing puzzle piece for understanding vertebrate ancestry. Sturgeons are a group of ray-finned fish that diverged from the actinopterygian stem before the teleost-specific 3R duplication and after the ancient 2R event3,4. After their divergence from the other ray-finned fish, the various lineages of Acipenseriformes (sturgeon and paddlefish) experienced several polyploidization events8, resulting in karyotypes, comprising between ~120 chromosomes in some species, and ~360 chromosomes in species that are considered dodecaploid9. The genomic basis for this parallelism between basal and derived fish lineages to acquire WGDs is not clear. While teleost lineages that experienced more recent 4R events are still recognizable apparent tetraploids, the other teleost lineages retained on average only 17% of gene duplicates from the ancient 3R ohnologues5. The evolutionary trajectories and forces driving species from polyploids to meiotic diploids are the subject of major adaptive hypotheses and their empirical evaluations6,7.

The genomic state of sturgeons is much less clear. They are often seen as ancient polyploids. On the basis of some cytogenetic and microsatellite data, others have considered sturgeons to be functional diploids9 as result of an evolutionary process, where the gene content of a tetraploid species degenerates to become functionally diploid but maintains twice as many chromosomes, which form regular bivalents10. Such far-reaching redundancy reduction leads one to question their polyploidy state11.

Because sturgeons branched off early from modern fishes, their genomes may harbour traces of the ancient vertebrate ancestors12. Notably, their early embryonic development is of the classical

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Sturgeons are distributed from subtropical to subarctic rivers, lakes and coastlines of Eurasia and North America. They are long-lived and reproduce late, usually not before reaching an age of ten years. In many sturgeon species, adults migrate repeatedly from the sea into freshwater to spawn. Sturgeons are celebrities among fishes because of their pre-ovulation female gametes, known as caviar. Habitat destruction, the lack of river connectivity, pollution and the 2,000-year-old rural caviar production culminated in ongoing devastating overexploitation that drove most sturgeon species into a threatened status. Because wild caviar can no longer be traded legally, sturgeon aquaculture has gained high economic importance, and in turn can contribute to the protection of wild populations by providing a safe market supply.

Despite their ancient lineage, peculiar biological features and economic value, sturgeon genomes have remained largely unexplored owing to their dauntingly polyploid state. We therefore sequenced the sterlet sturgeon, *Acipenser ruthenus*, a species with only 120 chromosomes, and present here an annotated chromosome-scale genome assembly. We found that this genome represents an ancient WGD, which remained close to tetraploidy owing to the slow evolutionary rate and serves as a good representative of the ancestral actinopterygian genome. In contrast to other polyploid fish, deduplication after the sterlet WGD involves the loss of entire chromosome remnants, thus probably representing a fully assembled B chromosome. They are found in some but not all individuals within a population and are considered to be either non-functional, beneficial or harmful. Scaffold 60 consists mainly of interspersed repetitive DNA and contains only three corrupted gene remnants.

**Results**

**Genome assembly and annotation.** Polyploid genomes are extremely challenging for de novo assembly because of the coexistence of ohnologous and allelic sequences of each original locus with various degrees of sequence similarities. To generate a high-quality reference sturgeon genome, we produced 42-fold coverage of Illumina sequences, 54-fold coverage with PacBio long reads and 20-fold coverage of Hi-C sequences of the estimated 1.8-gigabase (Gb) genome of a male *A. ruthenus*. For the assembly process, we considered possible complications owing to the simultaneous presence of polyploidy and heterozygosity. After reduplication and Hi-C scaffolding, we produced a 1.8-Gb assembly with a final N50 scaffold size of 42.4 megabases (Mb) (Supplementary Fig. 1, and Supplementary Tables 1 and 2). The 60 largest scaffolds correspond to 120 chromosomes of the sterlet karyotype. The chromosome number of *A. ruthenus* can vary, however, by two to four small chromosomes, indicating the occurrence of B chromosomes. B chromosomes are enigmatic accessory elements to the regular chromosome set. They are found in some but not all individuals within a population and are considered to be either non-functional, beneficial or harmful. Scaffold 60 consists mainly of interspersed repetitive DNA (83.9%) and contains only three corrupted gene remnants.

**Ancient origin and slow evolution.** Sturgeons are one of the most deeply diverging groups of bony fishes and have been referred to as both the Leviathans and Methuselahs of freshwater fish. They appear in the fossil record between 250 and 200 Ma, near the end of the Triassic. Our phylogenomic trees place the sterlet sturgeon basal to the other ray-finned fishes (Fig. 1 and Supplementary Fig. 2).
in agreement with the current tree of life. The divergence time inference based on the 275 one-to-one orthologues revealed that the sterlet lineage had already diverged from the actinopterygian fish 345 (295–400) Ma during the Upper Devonian or Carboniferous period (Supplementary Fig. 3), in the range of earlier estimates.

Because extant sturgeons show remarkably little morphological change compared with fossils from the Triassic and because most of the 27 extant species differ relatively little except in body size, Charles Darwin called them living fossils. We therefore asked whether the morphological stasis in sturgeons is matched by the slower substitution rates of several mitochondrial and nuclear genes. Calculations of pairwise distances from phylogenetic trees (Supplementary Table 4) revealed that proteins in sterlet are indeed evolving much more slowly than in teleosts, including basal species such as arowana and arapaima. The rate of protein evolution is even slower than in gar, and similar to those basal lineages such as coelacanth or elephant shark (Fig. 1, Supplementary Tables 4–6 and Supplementary Note 3).

The repeat content (40.3%) and transposable element (TE) composition (Supplementary Table 7) of the sterlet genome are comparable to those in other fish (teleosts, gar, elephant shark and coelacanth) studied so far. Despite representing an old, slowly evolving lineage, the inferred transposon activity revealed a recent expansion of all major types of TEs (Supplementary Fig. 4a). The presence of TEs in sterlet transcriptomes, in particular of endogenous retrovirus long terminal repeat (EVR-LTR) retrotransposons and transfer-RNA short interspersed nuclear elements (tRNA-SINEs), indicates that the sterlet retains some active transposons (Supplementary Fig. 4b). The mobilome of the sterlet sturgeon thus seems to be similar to that of many modern fish genomes, including fast-evolving teleosts. This situation contrasts notably with the slow evolution of sterlet protein-coding genes, but recently expanding TEs and slow protein evolution also occur in the coelacanth genome.

**The sterlet WGD and its initial rediploidization.** Cytogenetic and microsatellite data supported the notion that polyploidy is a general feature of sturgeons. We identified 11,765 genes that have two copies in sterlet but only a single-copy orthologue in gar, coelacanth or elephant shark. We further identified in sterlet 9,914 high-fidelity orthologue pairs with positional orthology (Supplementary Table 8). A comparison with gar revealed double conserved synteny for 8,752 genes (Supplementary Table 9). This all indicates a WGD in the sterlet lineage (Ars3R) (Supplementary Fig. 5).

To estimate the timing of the Ars3R event, we calculated the pairwise synonymous substitutions per synonymous site (dS) value among sterlet orthologue pairs (median, 0.064) and between sterlet and one-to-one orthologues of five other sturgeon species (http://publicsturgeon.sigenae.org/home.html) (Supplementary Note 4). On the basis of our timing of the sterlet–Atlantic sturgeon (A. oxyrinchus) divergence at 166 (115–208) Ma (Supplementary Fig. 6a) and the dS value between their orthologous pairs (median, 0.059; Supplementary Fig. 6b and Supplementary Table 10), we deduced that the sterlet WGD must have happened around 180 (124–225) Ma. Thus, the Ars3R genome duplication event is older than the salmonid WGD at 80–100 Ma (refs. 34,35) and the carp–goldfish 4R estimated at 14 Ma (ref. 36).

The analysis of conserved syntenies between sterlet and gar revealed that most gar chromosomes have two counterparts in sterlet (Fig. 2a). When sterlet orthologous gene pairs were mapped against the genome scaffolds, they delineated 46 scaffolds, also in a pairwise fashion. This result indicates homeologous chromosome segments, as expected from a WGD event (Fig. 2b, Supplementary Figs. 7 and 8, and Supplementary Notes 5 and 6). To confirm this conclusion, we used sequence libraries, prepared from individual
microdissected chromosomes or chromosome arms of the sterlet\textsuperscript{37,38}. In whole-mount in situ-hybridizations, each of these probes painted two pairs of sterlet metaphase chromosomes and chromosome arms, respectively, identifying likely ohnologous pairs. Reads from each of the libraries aligned specifically to individual scaffolds, which thereby could be assigned to either of the homeologous chromosome segments (Supplementary Figs. 9 and 10, Supplementary Note 6 and Supplementary Data 1).

Remarkably, most of the large homeologous chromosomes (1–6, 8 and 9) are conserved over their full length, while the majority of the intermediate-sized chromosomes have ohnology-relationships to two other chromosomes. The alignment of chromosomes by LAST indicated that whole chromosome arms were exchanged, most probably in reciprocal translocation events (Supplementary Figs. 8 and 11, and Supplementary Note 5).

Interestingly, the remaining 11 scaffolds, corresponding to smaller chromosomes, contain exclusively singletons or only a small region with ohnologues on another chromosome, while the remainder of the chromosome only contains singletons. Those small ohnologue regions are obviously translocations from other chromosomes (Supplementary Fig. 12a). We conclude that the entire homeologue or the majority region of the counterparts of those smaller, whole-chromosome-representing scaffolds, were lost after the Ars3R (Supplementary Fig. 13). This result indicates that a relevant part of the deduplication process in sterlet occurred by the loss of whole chromosomes or large chromosome fragments and is segmental. This mechanistic conclusion is in contrast to the continuous and genome-wide small-scale ohnologue-by-ohnologue loss in carp/goldfish and salmonids (Supplementary Fig. 12b–d). Earlier molecular cytogenetic studies of sterlet also pointed to a karyotype that is segmental rather than ubiquitously polyplloid\textsuperscript{38}. Such large-scale reduction of duplicates in polyploid organisms, through the loss of whole chromosomes or large chromosome segments, has so far been reported only in autotetraploid yeasts\textsuperscript{39,40}, flowering plants\textsuperscript{41} and endopolyploid human cancer cells\textsuperscript{42}.

Polyploidy can result from duplication of the whole genome in one organism (autopolyploidy) or from the interbreeding of two divergent species with subsequent genome doubling that restores meiotic pairing and disomic inheritance (allopolyploidy). Both of these mechanisms—interspecific hybridization and autopolyploidization—have been discussed to account for the origin of the sterlet chromosome complement, on the basis of conflicting evidence\textsuperscript{12}. To clarify this controversy, we used a strategy that was employed to investigate this problem in the allopolyploid African clawed frog, \textit{Xenopus laevis}, where the fast-evolving repeats and relics of the mobilome are specific to the allopolyploid ancestors, and thus markers for the ancestral chromosomal segments of the two parental species\textsuperscript{43}. A comparison of the TE landscape of sterlet paralogous chromosomes revealed that each pair has an almost identical TE content and that individual TE families are monophyletic (Fig. 3).
and Supplementary Fig. 14). The sterlet genome thus shows no evidence for allopolyploidy.

Chromosomes that have retained a homeologous partner share to a large extent even their gene order (Supplementary Figs. 7 and 8). This phenomenon has also been observed in many polyploid plant species and is called positional orthology. It is explained as a consequence of multivalent pairing in meiosis. Multivalent pairing would also explain tetrasomic inheritance in sterlet, noted earlier from microsatellite studies.

The duplication of a whole genome creates a situation, where one of the two copies is in principle dispensable. The retention of duplicates is explained by several models. They may be preserved if one copy evolves a new positively selected function and simultaneously loses the essential function retained by the other copy (neofunctionalization) or if ancestral positively selected functions partition between the two copies (subfunctionalization). The gene balance hypothesis posits that ohnologues persist because the loss of one copy would lead to a detrimental change in the stoichiometry of macromolecular complexes, the interactome and signalling pathways. The majority of duplicates, however, are predicted to become non-functional or get lost (degeneration) — for example, the ohnologue retention rate from the teleost WGD in the extant teleosts is estimated to be only 15–20%. On the basis of non-coding microsatellites, the sterlet was proposed to have undergone extensive duplicate gene degeneration and has been classified since then even as a functional diploid species. To estimate the duplicate retention rate, we identified 9,914 high-fidelity pairs of ohnologues and 4,175 singletons (Supplementary Note 7). This dataset represents a duplicate retention rate of 70% (Supplementary Table 11), considerably higher than in all teleosts, including the 4R salmonids (Supplementary Note 8). Considering functional terms, we found that sterlet ohnologues are enriched for transcriptional regulators (genes involved in protein turnover, signal transmission, cell proliferation and development), in agreement with predictions from the gene-balance hypothesis. Sterlet singletons are enriched for genes with functions in DNA metabolism, intracellular transport and mitochondria. Enrichment for such categories has been observed in other polyploids, even in plants (Supplementary Table 12).

Like the situation reported for rainbow trout, we found the coding sequence of singletons to be significantly shorter than that of ohnologues (12%, P < 2.2 × 10−16; Supplementary Fig. 15). Long genes may be over-retained as ohnologues, potentially owing to more opportunities for protein domain subfunctionalization.

In our analysis of transcriptomes from 23 different sterlet organs and developmental stages, we observed the expression of one or both genes for 9,243 of the 9,914 ohnologue pairs. We found 1,139 ohnologue pairs, which showed equal expression in all samples (Supplementary Fig. 16a). We then searched for genes with differing expression patterns among samples, which would be explained by drift models of expression change or would indicate the degeneration or neofunctionalization of one duplicate, or subfunctionalization of both copies. We found 3,230 ohnologue pairs with different expression in at least two samples (Supplementary Fig. 16b and Supplementary Note 8). From just 38 of these ohnologue pairs, only one of them was expressed but never the other in all organs tested. Such a pattern is expected if regulatory elements are degenerating in the redundant copy. For 341 ohnologue pairs, the expression of duplicates was partitioned between different organs or developmental stages. This may indicate subfunctionalization of this subset of genes.

The availability of the sterlet genome now allows the revisititation of important questions concerning the forces that affect the evolutionary fate of gene duplicates. We compared the genomes of sterlet, salmon, trout, goldfish and zebrafish, using gar as the outgroup, to find genes that were commonly retained in duplicate after the various polyploidization events (Supplementary Note 9). We found 27 such genes (Supplementary Figs. 17a and 18, and Supplementary Table 13). This finding suggests complex, independent, lineage-specific evolutionary processes of duplicate retention.

In the same set of species, we identified 191 genes that are singletons in all of them (Supplementary Note 9). Notably, 39 of these singletons are arranged in eight syntenic blocks. A similar phenomenon was seen for the commonly retained ohnologues (Supplementary Figs. 17b and 19, and Supplementary Table 14). The loss or retention of linked genes after WGDs could be explained by the functional relationships of their gene products — for example, through protein–protein interactions. However, a search of singleton genes, embedded in syntenic blocks using the STRING database, did not reveal such protein–protein interactions. An alternative explanation for the conservation of microsynteny is the bystander relationship, where the regulatory region of one gene is located in neighbouring genes. Further studies are required to validate this type of physical association of genes on chromosomes over long evolutionary times rather than functional relationships of their encoded proteins.

**Genome and gene evolution. Positive selection.** Up to 210 genes (Supplementary Table 15) in sterlet are under positive selection, depending on the set of actinopterygian or vertebrate genomes, with which its full gene complement was compared (Supplementary Table 16). Positively selected genes spanned a wide spectrum of cellular and molecular functions and pathways with no particular enrichment.

When the ratios of substitution rates at non-synonymous versus synonymous sites (dN/dS values) were compared between sterlet singletons and ohnologues, we found that most retained ohnologues present higher dN/dS values than singletons (Supplementary Fig. 20), indicating relaxed purifying selection on ohnologues. This result would be expected because of ohnologue redundancy. A pairwise test of dN/dS for the 9,914 ohnologue pairs revealed that 207 are under positive selection in sterlet, pointing to neofunctionalization or subfunctionalization at the protein level (Supplementary Table 17). Notably, many immune-related genes are positively selected, indicating that the sterlet host defence system may have made especially profit from the WGD for evolutionary progress senso Susumo Ohno. A similar phenomenon was observed for duplicated immune genes in salmon.

**Dynamics of gene family size.** We compared the rates of gene family (8,150 gene families) dynamics between phylogenetic tree branches with different WGD histories and found that gene family sizes changed much faster in branches with 4R and Ars3R than in branches with more ancient polyploidization (Supplementary Note 10). Interestingly, one of the most expanding families is the *zona pel lucida* (Zp) sperm-binding proteins (ID: 4190). Zp-proteins prevent polyspermy in mammals and provide thickness and hardness to the fish egg envelope. A total of 116 zp genes were annotated in sterlet (Supplementary Table 18 and Supplementary Note 11). A similar expansion was noted in cold-adapted teleosts and explained as a protection mechanism from physical forces for the developing embryo. The biological reason for the zp gene family expansion in sturgeon is unclear. Because sturgeons spawn on a coarse substrate often in high current velocities, a hard envelope provides protection against mechanical stress of the adhesive eggs on the spawning substrate as well as against polyspermy that would be possible through the multiple micropyles of their eggs. This biological feature might contribute to the crispness of the caviar.

**Evolution of sterlet hox clusters after genome tetraploidization and inference of the ancestral vertebrate Hox complement.** The sterlet has eight *hox* clusters containing 88 genes, reflecting the 1R/2R/3R history of its genome (Fig. 4a and Supplementary Note 12). Pseudogenization was apparent for only one *hoxd14* gene.
The sterlet therefore retains the most complete 3R hox cluster duplicates and the highest number of 3R hox gene ohnologues amongst ray-finned fish. The comparison of the hoxd flanking gene deserts, containing long-range regulatory elements\(^{36,39}\), indicates high conservation of ultraconserved elements (Supplementary Fig. 21). The preservation of all duplicated hox clusters as well as their low divergence, including that of their regulatory regions, shows a remarkable slow evolution of these genomic loci. This stability contrasts sharply with rapidly evolving teleosts, which often show extensive remodelling of duplicated hox clusters\(^{65–73}\).

The hox gene complement in sterlets indicates an identical pre-tetraploidization hox gene arrangement and repertoire with the gar (diverging ~345 Ma). Because both species represent early-branching ray-finned fish, this similarity strengthens the scenario whereby hoxd5 and hoxb14 were lost in the common ancestor of bony vertebrates (Euteleostomi) and hoxa14 in the common ancestor of actinopterygians\(^{66}\) (Fig. 4b).

Over-retention of glutamate receptor genes. Glutamate receptor genes (GRGs) show particularly high ohnologue retention rates in teleosts\(^{44}\), which has been connected to the extraordinary cognitive abilities of many teleost species compared with other basal vertebrates. We found that 23 of 26 GRGs retained their Ars3R ohnologue, an ohnologue retention rate of 88.5% (Supplementary Fig. 22, Supplementary Table 19 and Supplementary Note 13). Compared with the genome-wide rate of 70% (9,914 ohnologs and 4,175 As3R singletons), the GRG Ars3R ohnologue retention rate is significantly higher (\(P = 0.04345\), chi-square test). GRGs have thus been convergently over-retained, following the Ars3R and teleost 3R WGD, although to a lower extent in sturgeons.

Absence of differentiated sex chromosomes. The relative rarity of polyploidy in animals versus plants has been ascribed to the disruption of sex determination in gonochoristic animals after genome duplication\(^{78–77}\). Differentiated sex chromosome pairs have largely different gene contents, to which many animals have adjusted by elaborate expression dosage compensation mechanisms. The disturbance of dosage compensation and the disruption of the chromosomal system that determines the sex ratio are thus immediate negative consequences of polyploidization\(^{86}\). Data from induced gynogenesis led to the common belief that all Acipenser species, including sterlet, have a female heterogamic (ZZ/ZW) sex chromosome system\(^{79,80}\). To find out if the polyploid sterlet has differentiated sex chromosomes, we searched for sex-linked sequence differences using a restriction site associated DNA (RAD) sequencing approach. A total of 176,735 markers were obtained, but none showed a bias or specificity for males or females (Supplementary Fig. 23). This result indicates that the sterlet does not have sex chromosomes with considerable sequence differentiation that would require dosage compensation and impair the occurrence of polyploidy. Our data are in agreement with the absence of differences in chromosome morphology and previous failures to isolate sex-specific molecular markers\(^{81}\).

Discussion

The high-quality chromosome-level genome of the sterlet sturgeon permitted important advances in our understanding of the evolution of this lineage of ancient fish. Our results show that the sterlet lineage branched from the vertebrate tree of life about 345 Ma, shortly after the basal split between the lineage of ray-finned fish and that of lungfish, coelacanth and land vertebrates happened. While
the sterlet's slow evolutionary rate of protein-coding genes is not entirely unexpected, given the morphological stasis exhibited in the sturgeon lineage, many of the features of the sterlet's polyploid genome are much different from those of other polyploid lineages. Clearly, genomic and phenotypic evolution do not always march to the beat of the same drummer.

All sturgeons are characterized by polyploidy as a genetic hallmark and paramount feature. It has been proposed that those extant sturgeons with ~120 chromosomes (like the sterlet) represent functional diploids, which originated over 200 Ma by a WGD of a ~60-chromosome diploid ancestor21. The transition between the ancestral fully tetraploid and the modern functional diploids was proposed to have been accompanied by a reduction of duplicate gene functions21. Our estimate of 180 Ma for the Ars3R provides evidence for a WGD in the ancestor of all sturgeons, and that the WGDs that led to the ~240- and ~360-chromosome species happened later, on top of the Ars3R. We found that despite the long evolutionary time that has elapsed since the sturgeon WGD, the sterlet has not returned to a diploid state by gene content or gene expression. Instead, the sterlet has retained an unexpectedly high degree of structural and functional polyploidy. This retention can be ascribed to the slow pace of molecular evolution of most fractions of the sterlet genome.

The slow evolution may also explain why the sterlet genome in several aspects represents an earlier step in the process of redundancy-reduction than the salmonid genomes, which originated from a more recent WGD. During the evolution of a polyploid genome, the initial one-to-one relationship of whole chromosomes (as still seen in the goldfish) is reduced to homology between arms of chromosomes and then further to much smaller regions (as evident in salmonids). Sterlet seems to be in the transition towards the highly dynamic pattern of colinear duplicated blocks, but still has some fully homoeologous chromosomes (Supplementary Fig. 24).

A recent wave of TE multiplication apparently swept through the sterlet genome after the Ars3R. The large-scale expansion and movement of TEs are known to increase under genomic stress26, suggesting that WGDs cause TE activation. TE expansions in the centromere induce chromosomal instability36 and might have facilitated the large chromosome rearrangements of homoeologue arm changes.

The timing of the Ars3R to have evolved earlier than the cyprinid and salmonid 4Rs allows comparisons of the three apparent tetraploid lineages to give insights into the processes of polyploid genome evolution. Despite its apparent evolutionary advantage as a source of genomic matter for evolution in the long run, tetraploidy seems to be an evolutionarily unstable situation. In all known instances, the initial dispensability of two sets of genes led to deduplication of the genome, with only a certain fraction of gene duplicates being retained.

The process of duplicate gene loss after the teleost, salmonid and goldfish WGDs affected the whole genome in a homogenous fashion. Unexpectedly, the sterlet genome analysis uncovered a phenomenon that creates a segmental rather than a continuous partial tetraploidy. In the sterlet, most chromosomes or chromosome arms were found to be in either a diploid or a tetraploid state. The loss of entire chromosomes can be seen as a fast stochastic process for rediploidization. The numbers of genes that were either commonly retained or deduplicated after the WGDs in the fish lineages are substantially above random but are much lower than one would expect if strong adaptive processes determined duplicate retention or loss on the single-gene level. This conclusion, and our finding that structural features rather than protein–protein interactions are relevant for the deduplication of neighbouring genes, suggest complex processes of different lineage-specific evolutionary drivers of duplicate retention, and largely stochastic events in redundancy reduction. In sterlet, besides the adaptive evolutionary mechanisms, neutral processes have considerably shaped its genome, most obviously manifested by the loss of whole chromosomes from homoeologues pairs.

Methods

Experimental animals. All fish used in this study were derived from the sterlet sturgeon population maintained at the Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries. This stock is derived from the Danube population of A. ruthenus. Adult individuals were sexed by gonad morphology and genetec content. The fish were euthanized by state-of-the-art humane killing (American Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Council of Animal Care in Science). The experiments were carried out in accordance with the European Directive 2010/63/EU and German national legislation (animal protection law, TierSchG). All experimental protocols were approved through an authorization (File No. ZH 114, issued 6 February 2014) of the LAGESe, Berlin, Germany.

Genome sequencing and assembly. The DNA for sequencing was derived from the testis and blood of a single adult male. We generated x4 Illumina reads (150-base-pair (bp) paired end) on a NovaSeq 6000 platform with libraries produced using the TrueSeqDNA PCR-Free kit. A 53.7-fold coverage of genome sequences was produced with PacBio Sequel technology. Hi-C library generation was carried out according to a protocol adapted from Poisson et al.24. A blood sample was spun down, and the cell pellet was resuspended and fixed in 1% formaldehyde. Five million cells were processed for the Hi-C library. After overnight digestion with HindIII (NEB), the DNA ends were labelled with Biotin-14-DCTP (Invitrogen), using Klenow enzyme (NEB), and then religated. Next, 1.14 µg of DNA were sheared by sonication (Covaris) to an average size of 550 bp. Biotinylated DNA fragments were pulled down using M280 Streptavidin Dynabeads (Invitrogen) and ligated to paired-end adaptors (Illumina). The Hi-C library was amplified using paired-end primers (Illumina) with 10 PCR amplification cycles. The library was sequenced using Illumina HiSeq2500 V4 (Illumina) generating 150-bp paired-end reads at 20-fold genome coverage. The raw Sequel BAM files were converted into subreads in fasta format using the SMRT Link software package (v.5.0.1) from Pacific Biosciences42. PacBio reads were assembled with smartdenovo (v.1.0)39 with standard parameters. Contigs were polished with two rounds of racon (v.1.3.1), using long reads aligned with minion2 (v.1.22) and minimap2 (ref. 2) (v.2.2.1) A contig was defined as single copy in the whole Illumina reads. The Illumina reads were aligned with bwa mem (v.0.7.12-r1039)40 with standard parameters and the same file, which had been compressed, sorted and indexed with samtools view, sort and index (v.1.3.1)25, using standard parameters before pilon polishing. The genome size was 15% smaller than expected, and a fraction of the contigs showed twice the expected read alignment depth, indicating that chromosome parts had merged during assembly. The single- and double-copy coverage threshold was found by visual inspection of the contig coverage bimodal distribution, and the contigs were separated into two sets, corresponding to single and double coverage. A polymorphism VCF file was generated from the short data with bcftools (v.1.8) under standard parameters. The VCF file shows an overall much higher variation density in double coverage contigs. PacBio long reads were used in the next steps to generate haplotypes of these variations to split the genomic locations that had been merged. Long reads were aligned to contigs, and the alignments of double coverage contigs were processed with HapCut2 (v.1.0) using the following parameters: extractHAIRS --out 1 and HAPCUT2 --haplo --out 1. For each contig, a haplotyped VCF file was produced. Some of these files contained more than one haplotype segment. These contigs have been split according to the haplotype segment information found in the VCF file, using an in-house script. The resulting haplotyped VCF files were then processed with lifto (v.0.7.0 using standard parameters)39 to generate VCF files, separated by haplotype. These VCF files and the reference were used to produce haplotype contigs using vcf-consensus from the bcftools package (v.1.8) under standard parameters. Both contig sets, unique and split, were then merged using the Unix cat command. The Hi-C short reads were aligned to the contigs with Juicer27, and the scaffolding was performed with 3D-DNA41 with parameter -r = 0. Finally, the candidate assembly was manually reviewed using the Juicebox Assembly Tools27. The contig metrics were calculated with the assemblathon_stats.pl script.

Repeat annotation and TE analysis. To search for repeated elements, the sterlet genome and raw Illumina reads were used as input. The assembled genome was used in the RepeatModeler open-1.0.11 tool43 with standard settings. LTR-retriever v.2.5 (ref. 48) was used to search for full-length LTR elements, and the data were used as input derived from the LTRharvest44 (similar, 90%, v10, -seed, 20, -seqids, yes; -minlenifr, 100; -maxlenfr, 7,000; -minstds, 4; -maxstds, 6; -motifms, 1) and LTR_FINDER45 (D, 15,000; -d, 1,000; -I, 7,000; -l, 100; -p, 20; -CM, 0.9) tools. To exclude non-LTR (-lineib) and DNA transposons (-dnalib), protein sequences of these TEs from the RepeatPeps database of the RepeatMasker tool24 were used. This also excluded protein sequences that were not related to TEs. The SWISS-PROT sequence library46 was also used (-plantprotlib).

The sequences obtained using the previous steps were combined into a single FASTA file using CD-HIT-est47 (−a 5, −s 1; −c 1; −e 1; −t 1; −g 1; −p 0). The resulting FASTA
file was aligned against the RepBase v.2.4.07 (ref. 9) and FishTEDb10 databases using blastn (–eval, 10 × 10^-4) and against SWISS-PROT and RepeatPeps using blastx (–eval, 10 × 10^-5) to filter incorrectly annotated sequences.

Raw reads were mapped using the TAREAN Table (see Supplementary Table 20) we used an in-house Perl (https://www.perl.org) script.

To analyse the expression of TEAs, raw reads from RNA-seq were used. The reads were trimmed using fastp (–detect_adapter_for_pe -g -c 150 -5 -3), and then aligned against the FASTA file containing TE sequences obtained in the previous step using bowtie2 v.2.3.5.1 (ref. 90) (very-sensitive -dovetail). The raw read count for each superfamily was calculated. The raw counts were normalized to the total number of sequence reads (reads per million, the number of aligned reads for each superfamily × 10,000,000/total number of reads), and then the proportion of superfamilies in the transcriptome was calculated (reads per million × 100/total number of aligned reads). To compare the RNA-seq data with the genome proportion of the respective TE superfamily, the proportion of TEAs in the genome was calculated (the number of nucleotides occupied by superfamily in the genome × 100/total nucleotides occupied by TEAs in the genome). The results were transformed to the log2 values and visualized with geplot11 and MATLAB12.

Genome annotation. Genome annotation was done by an in-house pipeline (Supplementary Fig. 25) improved from a previous version13. First, the pipeline assessed the assembly quality using BUSCO on the basis of the Actinopterygiiodb database. The process was then used for the first training of the Orthology assignment. RepeatModel (http://www.repeatmasker.org/), and the other an in-house fish RepeatExplorer2, the correctness of the previous TE annotation was further verified. The content of repeated elements in the genome was estimated using RepeatMasker open-4-0-9-p2 (-s
< 150 -5 -3) using an in-house Perl (https://www.perl.org) script.

Phylogenetic analysis and divergence time estimation. We reconstructed the phylogenetic tree for sterlet on the basis of one-to-one orthologous species across 15 species. These protein sequences were first aligned using MUSCLE v.3.8.31 (ref. 14). Next, regions with bad quality were then trimmed using trimAl15 with the following parameters: (–gt 0.8, –gu 0.01). The trimmed sequences were concatenated and transferred to RAxML v.8.2.9 (ref. 16) for phylogenetic tree reconstruction. The parameter PROTGAMMAUTO was used to select the optimal amino acid substitution model. Sea lamprey was set as the outgroup, and 100 bootstrap samples were performed to test robustness.

In order to support the phylogenetic tree, we also used MrBayes v.3.2.6 (ref. 17). The Markov chain Monte Carlo algorithm was implemented in 3 runs with a total of 6 chains for 500,000 generations. Trees were sampled every 1,000 generations, and in the end the first 25% of the sampling were discarded as burn-in. After the burn-in threshold, the average standard deviation of split frequencies remained ≤0.01.

To support the phylogenetic tree, the alignment of sequences was used to approximate likelihood calculation and maximum likelihood estimation of branch lengths performed18. First, the phylogenetic tree and the coding sequences alignment were imported into baseml19 to roughly estimate the substitution rate. The substitution model was determined using modelgenerator.jar. Then mcmctree was run for the first time to estimate the gradient and Hessian. The resulting file, out.BV, was then used for the final run of MCMCtree to perform approximate likelihood calculations. The final Markov chain Monte Carlo process was run for 2,005,000 steps. The first 5,000 steps were discarded as burn-in; then 20,000 samples were collected with sampling every 10 steps. We used the following model: O. latipes–T. nigroviridis (~969–130.9Ma), D. rerio–G. aculeatus (~149.5–165.2Ma)18, A. gigas–S. feroxous (~110–156 Ma)20,21 and a time for the root (<700 Ma).

Positive selection analysis. Protein and complementary DNA fasta files from all fish (Supplementary Table 14) were downloaded. To identify orthologous proteins, all protein sequences were compared with sterlet using inparanoid22 with default settings. To match proteins and cDNA, sequences were blasted by tblastn, and only 100% hits were kept. Codon alignments for the protein–cDNA sequence pairs were constructed using pal2nal v.14.16 (ref. 23). The resulting sequences were aligned using MUSCLE17 (option: –fastest), and poorly aligned positions and divergent regions of the DNA were eliminated by Gblocks v.0.91b (ref. 22) (options: –b 10; –b5; n: 3; –n: c = e). An in-house script was used to convert the Gblocks output to paml format.

For the generation of a phylogenetic tree as input for the detection of positive selection, sequences from all homologous genes, detected by inparanoid, were concatenated after the selection of conserved blocks by Gblocks and aligned using MUSCLE. The tree was generated using PhyML v.3.6924 with CatB1n(123) model (comparison 3–3) or L. chalumnae (comparison 3–4) as the outgroup (Supplementary Table 14). For the phylogenetic analysis by maximum likelihood, we used the Phylip v.3.6924. The resulting tree was then used for the detection of gamma selection, and the tree from the dN/dS value was plotted on the phylogenetic tree using the iTOL (interactive Tree of Life tool) (https://itol.embl.de/).

Transcriptome analysis. Total RNA was isolated using TRIzol Reagent (Thermo Fisher Scientific) according to the supplier's recommendation, in combination with the RNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen). To support genome annotation, the same adult male sterlet RNA samples were used to get the data sets of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries as used for the whole-genome sequencing were sampled. RNAs were obtained from six adult male (brain, testis, muscle, spleen, liver and skin) and three adult female (ovary, liver and brain) tissues. In addition, mixed RNAs (brain, heart, eyes and spleen) of one juvenile male (20 cm) were sequenced. RNA-Seq reads were used as transcriptomic
Articles

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5. Braasch, I. & Postlethwait, J. H. in 3. Dehal, P. & Boore, J. L. Two rounds of whole genome duplication in the 2. Lynch, M. & Conery, J. S. The evolutionary fate and consequences of

obtained that were present in at least one individual with a minimum depth of 10.

The same analysis was performed with minimum depths of 1, 2 and a minimum depth of 10 (–min-cov 10) to consider a marker present in an
distribution dataset was generated using radsex

distrib process dataset was generated using radsex

non-polymorphic, thus allowing straightforward presence–absence comparison of markers in males and females was then computed with radsex

distrib

reads that would belong to the same polymorphic locus using standard analysis

reads for each sample on the Illumina Hiseq4000 platform.

reads for each sample on the Illumina Hiseq4000 platform. The in-house scripts have been deposited in Github (https://github.com/

Acipenser ruthenus

31 females and 30 males was extracted from 90% ethanol-preserved fin clips

RAD-tag sequencing and analysis of sex-specific tags. The genomic DNA of 31 females and 30 males was extracted from 90% ethanol-preserved fin clips

5) in both

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Code availability

The in-house scripts have been deposited in Github (https://github.com/dukecomeback/sterlet_Msch).

Data availability

The Acipenser ruthenus Whole Genome Shotgun project has been deposited at DDBJ/ENA/GenBank under the accession VTUV00000000. The version described in this paper is version VTUV01000000. Genomic and transcriptomic reads are deposited in the Sequence Read Archive under accession numbers SRR10188515-10188518 and SRR11034541-11034548.

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Author contributions
M. Scharf, M. Stock, Y.G., J.H.P. and W.C.W. conceived the study. M. Stock, S.W., J.G. and W.K. provided the biological materials. M. Stock, P.F. and C.S. prepared the DNA and RNA for sequencing. C.I. generated the Hi-C data. C.K., C.C. and C.T. produced the assemblies. K.D. performed the annotation. K.D., S.K., D.P., J.M.W., A. Meyer, B.K., M.C.A. and M. Scharf analysed the genome. A. Makunin, I.K. and V.T. mapped the microdissection chromosome library. R.F., Y.G., L.I., H.P. and J.H.P. did the RAD-sequencing analysis. M. Scharf, K.D., M. Stock, J.H.P. and A. Meyer wrote the manuscript. All authors commented on the manuscript and were involved in the interpretation of the primary data.
Competing interests
The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional information
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Life sciences study design

All studies must disclose on these points even when the disclosure is negative.

- **Sample size**: One individual male was used for whole genome sequencing. RNA-seq was done on samples from RNAs were obtained from six adult males, one juvenile male and three adult females. RAD-tags were generated from 31 females and 30 males.
- **Data exclusions**: No data were excluded from the analysis
- **Replication**: n/a
- **Randomization**: n/a
- **Blinding**: n/a

Reporting for specific materials, systems and methods

We require information from authors about some types of materials, experimental systems and methods used in many studies. Here, indicate whether each material, system or method listed is relevant to your study. If you are not sure if a list item applies to your research, read the appropriate section before selecting a response.

- **Materials & experimental systems**: n/a
  - ☑ Antibodies
  - ☑ Eukaryotic cell lines
  - ☑ Palaeontology
  - ☑ Animals and other organisms
  - ☑ Human research participants
  - ☑ Clinical data

- **Methods**: n/a
  - ☑ ChIP-seq
  - ☑ Flow cytometry
  - ☑ MRI-based neuroimaging

Animals and other organisms

Policy information about studies involving animals; ARRIVE guidelines recommended for reporting animal research

- **Laboratory animals**: Acipenser ruthenus, from the sterlet sturgeon population maintained at the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland fisheries (IGB), Berlin. This stock is derived from the Danube population of A. ruthenus.
- **Wild animals**: n/a
- **Field-collected samples**: n/a
- **Ethics oversight**: The experiments were carried out in accordance with the European Directive 2010/63/EU and German national legislation (Animal protection law, TierSchG). All experimental protocols that are part of this study were approved through an authorization (File # Zh 114, issued 06.02.2014) of the LAGESo, Berlin, Germany.

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.