

Longear sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*)

Freshwater Fish Pennsylvania Endangered

Global Rank: G5 (secure)

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled)

Description

The longear sunfish is a small, thin, deep bodied fish that averages approximately 24 cm in length. It is often mistaken for the more common pumpkinseed, and can be distinguished by looking at the pectoral fins, which are shorter and rounder and do not extend above the lateral line and the gill covers, which are flexible with frilled margins. The longear has a long ear flap on the upper part of both gill covers. The longear is very colorful, with an olive to rusy-brown back, bright orange belly and blue-green bars on the sides of the head (dec.state.ny.us).



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Behavior

When suitable spawning substrate is scarce the longear, like the bluegill, is a colonial nester. Males also construct and defend solitary nests, eggs, and fry (Cooper 1983). The longear spawns in the spring and summer and the nesting cycle lasts about 2 weeks with eggs hatching in about one week (natureserve.org). Longears have a very restricted home range and when displaced, return very quickly to their original location. It also has the tendency to overpopulate its habitat (Cooper 1983).

Diet

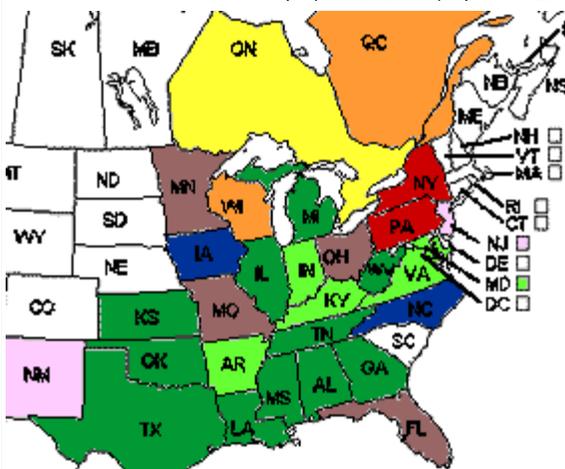
The longear feeds throughout the water column mainly on various invertebrates, fish eggs, and in larger individuals, fish. It is also known to eat filamentous algae (natureserve.org).

Threats and Protection Needs

The longear is critically imperiled in Pennsylvania and listed as Pennsylvania Endangered. On a global scale it is secure (naturallheritage.state.pa.us). It is widely distributed in the central United States and can become abundant in some places (Cooper 1983). Since it prefers clean, low gradient headwater streams with clean waters, habitat destruction could be a cause of its imperilment in Pennsylvania. It now, however, thrives in reservoirs (natureserve.org).

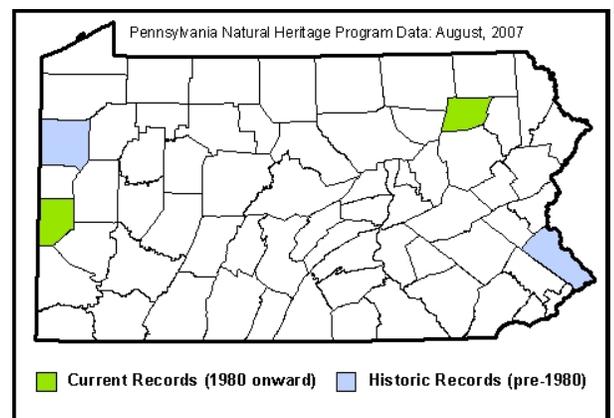
North American State/Province Conservation Status

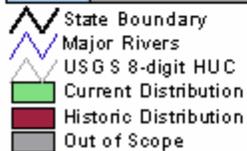
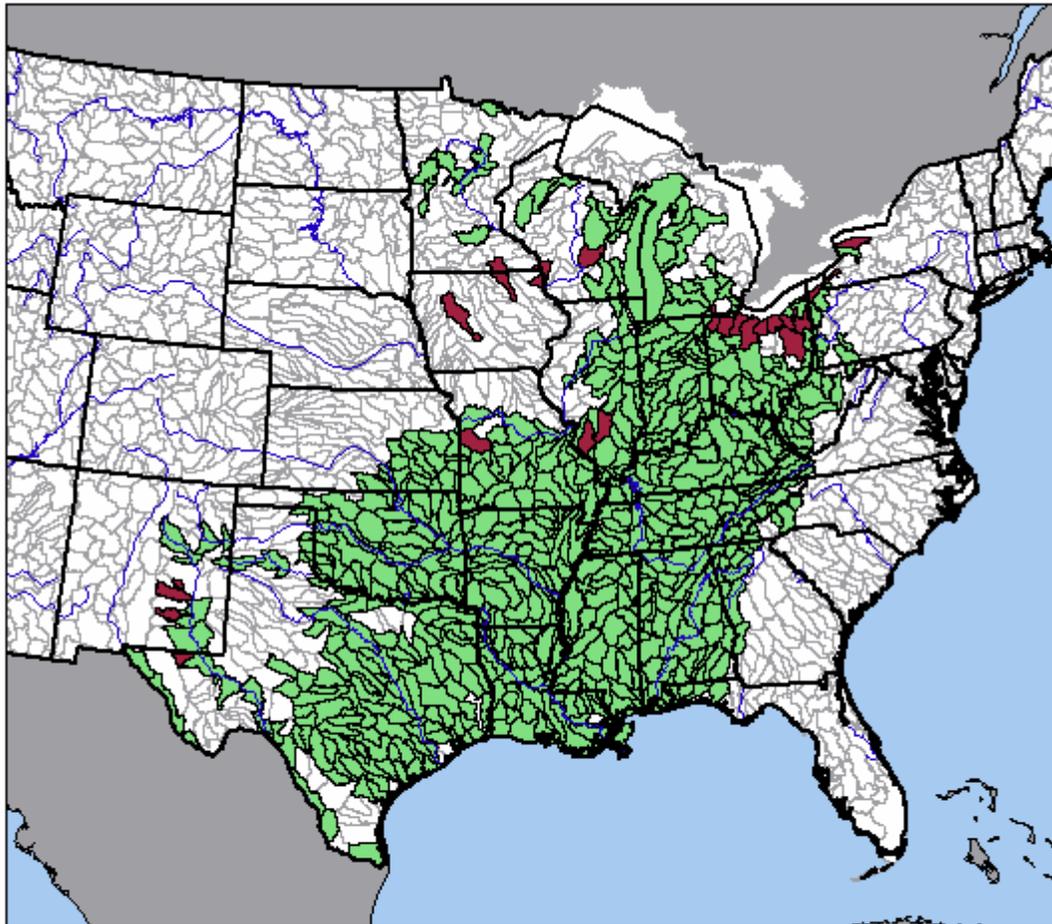
Map by NatureServe (September 2007)



State/Province Status Ranks

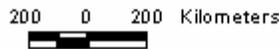
SX	presumed extirpated
SH	possibly extirpated
S1	critically imperiled
S2	imperiled
S3	vulnerable
S4	apparently secure
S5	secure
	Not ranked/under review
	exotic





Lepomis megalotis
Longear Sunfish

Map created June 2003



Habitat

The longear prefers clear, shallow, well-vegetated, headwaters of low gradient streams and rocky and sandy pools. It is generally absent from downstream lowland sections. It avoids strong current, turbid water, and silt bottoms. It is native to St. Lawrence-Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, Mississippi River, and Gulf Slope drainages west of the Appalachians from southern Quebec south to the Florida panhandle and southern Texas. It has been introduced to other locations in the US (natureserve.org).

References



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

- Cooper, Edwin L. Fishes of Pennsylvania and the Northeastern United States. The Pennsylvania State University Press and University Park and London. 1983
- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: September 4, 2007).
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Longear Sunfish FactSheet. <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/endspec/Ingersun.html>. Accessed: 9/12/05.