

Channel Darter (*Percina copelandi*)

Pennsylvania Threatened

State Rank: S2 (imperiled) Global Rank: G4 (apparently secure)

Identification

This delicate, tan, brown-spotted species seldom exceeds 2 1/2 inches. The fleshy connection (frenum) linking the middle of the snout with the frontmost paired bones of the upper jaw is very weakly developed or lacking in this species. Males have a row of large, spined scales along the hindmost midline portion of the belly. The body and fins of males darken greatly during breeding, and a blue-green sheen develops over the sides of the body.

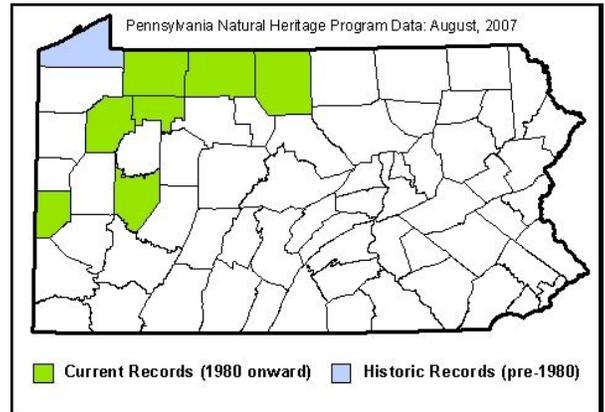


Biology Natural History

Spawning takes place in spring to mid-summer. Males select and establish small territories downstream from large stones scattered over a clean sand-small gravel bottom. Females move into these territories, burrow into the gravel behind each stone, and spawn here with various males. Small numbers of eggs are deposited and fertilized with each spawning, until up to 400 eggs are laid. Small aquatic insect larvae, as well as algae and organic detritus, are their food items.

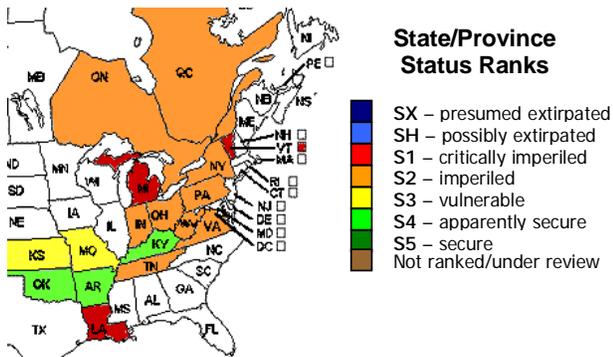
Habitat

The channel darter inhabits large clean streams and rivers with moderate current and bottoms consisting of large rocks, fine gravel and sand. Riffle areas are utilized during spawning and summer feeding, and deeper, quiet backwaters during the winter.



North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



Reasons for being Threatened

This species is discontinuously distributed across the Deep South and Midwest, and in a separate, larger area of the Ohio River, Great Lakes, and St. Lawrence drainages. In Pennsylvania, it is known from Lake Erie and larger tributaries, where its populations have declined, and the upper part of the Allegheny River drainage. It is seldom abundant at any locality.

Management Practices

Strict watershed management is required to safeguard against the physical and chemical deterioration of the upper Allegheny River system. This darter and other animals associated with it in this habitat are excellent barometers of the health of this stream system.

Reference:

NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: August 20, 2007).

