

Longhead Darter (*Percina macrocephala*)

Pennsylvania Threatened Fish Species

State Rank: S2S3 (imperiled), Global Rank: G3 (vulnerable)

Identification

This is one of our larger darters, reaching a maximum length of about four inches. The head is elongated with a sharp, cone-shaped snout. The upper body is brown marked with black; the lower body is white. A series of large black blotches are joined along both sides of the lateral line. A separate round black spot is situated at the base of the tail fin that is diffusely extended downward. A black "tear" mark below each eye continues backward onto the lower front corner of the cheek. Breeding males are darkly colored.



Photo Credit: Rob Criswell

Biology-Natural History

No spawning observations are on record, largely because this species is encountered only sporadically and in small numbers throughout its range. Adults feed on small crayfish and larger insect larvae.

Habitat

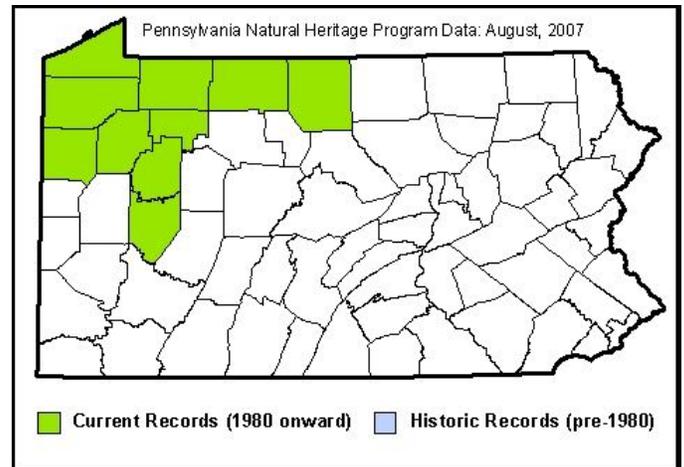
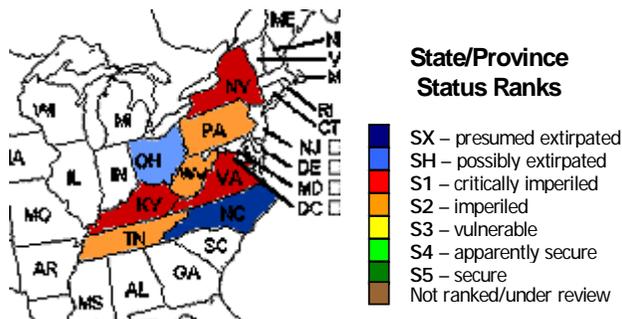
The longhead darter prefers clean, fast, rocky riffles, or clear pools. Medium sized, unpolluted streams with a moderate current are required.

Reasons for Being Threatened

This species is known in Pennsylvania only from scattered sites in the Allegheny River and French Creek headwaters. It is only sporadically encountered throughout its distribution along the western side of the Appalachians, from southwestern New York to North Carolina and Tennessee.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



Management Practice

The sporadic encounters of small numbers of the longhead darter indicate its vulnerability to environmental degradation. 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.

References:

- 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 21, 2007).

