

# Mud Sunfish (*Acantharchus pomotis*)

*Freshwater Fish Extirpated*

**Global Rank: G5 (secure)**

**State Rank: SX (presumed extirpated)**

## Description

The mud sunfish (*Acantharchus pomotis*) has a deep, strongly compressed body with a maximum length of around 21 cm. It has two broadly connected dorsal fins, the anterior fin having 10-12 spines and the posterior fin having 9-13 soft rays. The caudal fin is rounded and the scales are cycloid. It has 3-4 parallel black stripes across its face and along each side. The eyes and mouth are large, and the upper jaw extends below eye. Its body is light to dark green; its ear flap has a black spot, sometimes orange in larger species ([www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org)).



Photo:

© Noel Burkhead & Virginia Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries (Fishes of Virginia), [natureserve.org](http://natureserve.org)

## Behavior

The male mud sunfish prepares a nest for spawning. It guards the eggs, after they are deposited above or on the soft muddy bottom, often amid algae or exposed roots. The mud sunfish exhibits a nocturnal activity pattern and is seldom abundant (Cooper 1983).

## Diet

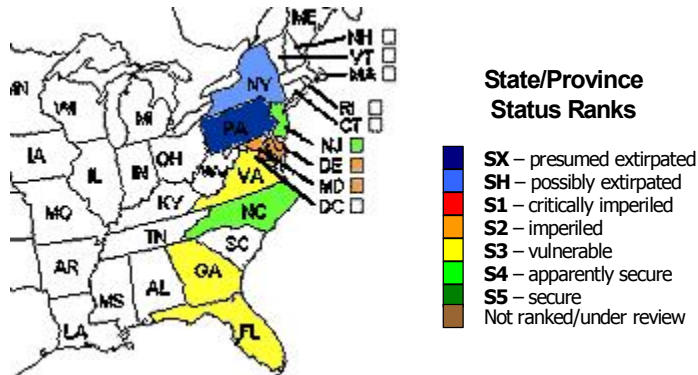
Mud sunfishes feed on invertebrates as well as other fish in both adult and immature life stages. In North Carolina, a study revealed a diet consisting mainly of invertebrates, especially amphipods, decapods, coleopterans, and odonates; larger individuals are more likely to be piscivores ([natureserve.org](http://natureserve.org)).

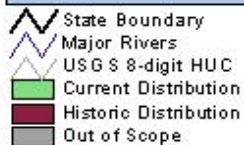
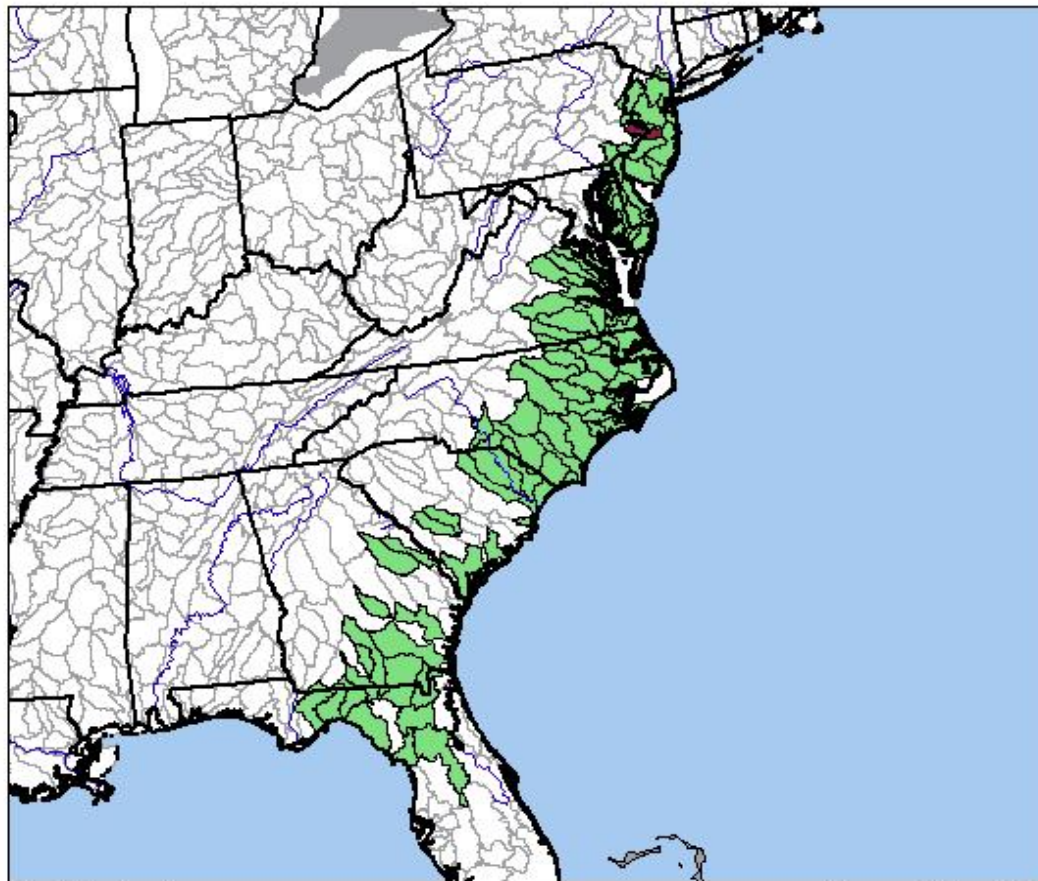
## Threats and Protection Needs

Potential threats to the species include pollution, and habitat modification, such as drainage and damage. The mud sunfish habitat could be protected by conserving the small, heavily vegetated ponds, backwaters, and swamps in which the species lives ([natureserve.org](http://natureserve.org)). Its proposed state rank is Pennsylvania Extirpated, it has disappeared from Pennsylvania since the 1600's but is still seen elsewhere ([www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us](http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us)).

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (September 2007)





*Acantharchus pomotis*  
Mud Sunfish

Map created June 2003



## Habitat

The mud sunfish is a secretive fish found primarily in sluggish streams or small ponds along the Atlantic coastal plain from New York to Florida. The mud sunfish is presumed extirpated from Pennsylvania, but was formerly reported below the Fall Line in the Delaware drainage (Cooper 1983).

## References



- 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).