

## Aquatic Species at Risk

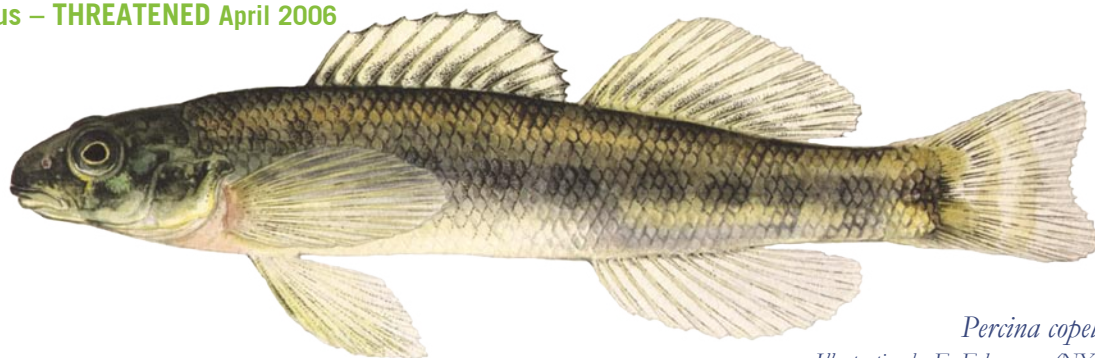


# The Channel Darter... a *Species at Risk* in Ontario

as designated under the federal *Species at Risk Act*

COSEWIC Status – THREATENED May 2002

SARA Status – THREATENED April 2006



*Percina copelandi*

Illustration by E. Edmonson (NYSDC)

This species has been identified as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). It is listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and was

afforded protection under the SARA as of April 2006. Additional protection is afforded through the federal *Fisheries Act*. Under the SARA, a recovery strategy must be developed for this species.

## General Description

The Channel Darter (*Percina copelandi*) is a member of the Perch family, Percidae, and subfamily Etheostomatinae. It has the following characteristics and distinguishing features:

- A small-sized fish between 34 and 61 mm in total length; some specimens as large as 72 mm
- Light sand or olive in colour with brown speckles on its back
- A dark spot or bar may be present below the eye and extending onto the snout
- Has 8 to 18 brown oblong blotches along the lateral line linked by a thin brown line
- Fins are clear or lightly speckled
- The first spiny dorsal fin usually has 11 rays
- Spawning males become dusky with a blackish head



## Distribution

The distribution of the Channel Darter in North America is highly localized. In Canada, its occurrence is uncommon, but disjunct populations can be found in Ontario and Quebec. In Ontario, it is found in Little Rideau Creek, in tributaries of the Bay of Quinte, and in lakes Erie and St. Clair. Along the Huron-Erie corridor, it has been collected from the St. Clair and Detroit rivers. In Quebec, it occurs in some tributaries of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. In the United States, the Channel Darter occurs widely, but disjunctly, in the Ohio and lower Mississippi basins.

## Habitat and Life History

Channel Darters prefer pools and riffles of small- to medium-sized rivers, but have also been found in shallow, slow current areas of large rivers. Substrate preferences include sand, gravel or rock. This fish has also been found in lakes along sand and gravel beaches where wave action is gentle and the current slow. Communal spawning occurs in the spring and early summer in upstream areas with moderate to fast current and over fine gravel or small rocks. Males establish breeding territories. Females spawn with successive males and lay 4 to 10 eggs in each nest; 350 to 700 eggs in total. There is no parental care.

## Diet

Channel Darters are benthic feeders, consuming insects that live on the stream or river bottom such as mayfly and midge larvae. They also eat algae and detritus.

## Threats

This fish is threatened by habitat loss due to sedimentation (agricultural and urban development) and deteriorating water quality. In addition, activities which impede or slow water flow during spawning are a threat to the survival of this species.

## Similar Species

The Channel Darter most resembles the River Darter (*Percina shumardi*). In addition, it can be distinguished from the Johnny Darter (*Etheostoma nigrum*) and the Tesselated Darter (*E. olmstedii*), which have only one anal spine instead of two. It differs from the Blackside Darter (*P. maculata*) in usually having 11 rays on the first spiny dorsal fin instead of 13 to 14.

Text Sources: Scott and Crossman 1998; COSEWIC Status Report 2002.

For more information, visit the SARA Registry Website at [www.SARAregistry.gc.ca](http://www.SARAregistry.gc.ca) and the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Website noted below.

### CHANNEL DARTER DISTRIBUTION



*Cette publication est également disponible en français.*

DFO/2007-1220

©Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada 2007

Cat. No. Fs22-4/40-2007E-PDF ISBN 978-0-662-45697-1

[www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca)

Section 32 (1) of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) states that “no person shall kill, harm, harass, capture or take an individual of a wildlife species that is listed as an extirpated species, an endangered species or a threatened species.”