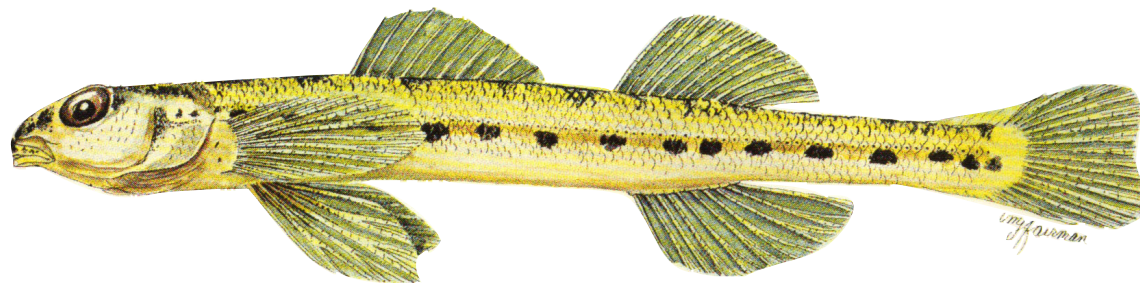


Aquatic Species at Risk



The Eastern Sand Darter (Ontario populations)... a Species at Risk in Canada

COSEWIC Status - THREATENED, May 2002; November 2009
SARA Status - THREATENED, June 2003



Percina copelandi
Illustration by H. Chrisp & E. Edmonson

General description

The Eastern Sand Darter (*Ammocrypta pellucida*) is a member of the Perch family, Percidae, and has the following characteristics:

- Average adult size is 45 to 70 mm total length;
- Body is partially scaled;
- Slender and elongated, translucent body;
- Yellowish or silvery in colour; and
- Series of 10 to 14 lateral dark spots on the sides, located just below the lateral line scale row.

The Eastern Sand Darter (Ontario populations) has been identified as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). In 2009, COSEWIC split the populations into two separate designatable units: the Quebec populations; and the Ontario populations.

It is currently listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and was afforded legal protection as of April 2006. Additional protection is afforded to the Eastern Sand Darter under the *Fisheries Act*. Under the *Species at Risk Act*, a recovery strategy must be developed for this species.



Distribution

The global range of Eastern Sand Darter is limited to North America. Its main range is located in the eastern central United States, north to the southernmost part of Ontario. A smaller range is located in Quebec, and includes a few tributaries in Vermont and New York. In Ontario, it lives in Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, and several streams in southwestern Ontario.

Habitat and life history

Eastern Sand Darter are usually found in sandy areas in streams and on the sandy shoals of lakes. The Eastern Sand Darter buries itself in the sand, sometimes completely or leaving only its eyes exposed. This enables the fish to stay put in fast water and perhaps hide from predators. In known habitat areas, aquatic plants are either absent or sparsely distributed. Females are ready to spawn one year after they have reached a length of about 36 mm. Total number of eggs has been reported to range from 22 to 829.

Diet

The Eastern Sand Darter feeds mainly on midge larvae and zooplankton.

Threats

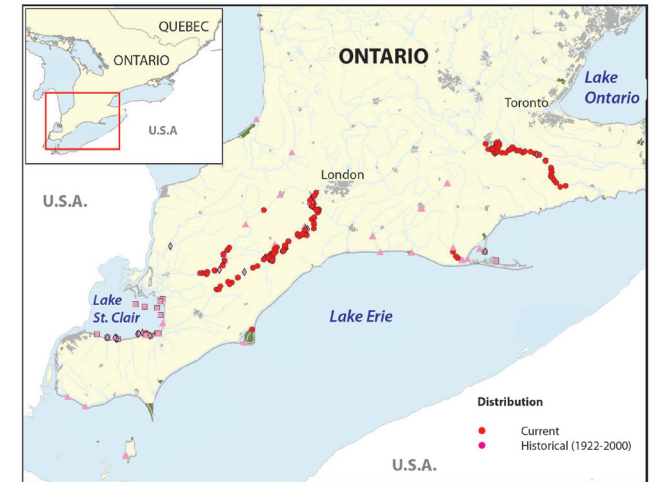
The population of this species in Ontario is approximately half compared to its numbers in the 1970s, as a result of habitat loss and degradation from increasing urban and agricultural development, stream channelization and pollution. Dams have also created barriers to movement and affected habitat on some streams. A potentially significant threat relates to invasive species, with growing concerns relating to the ongoing colonization of the Round Goby in Great Lakes tributaries where the Eastern Sand Darter lives. The species is classified as threatened or endangered in most of its American range.

Similar species

Similar in appearance to the Channel Darter (*Percina copelandi*), Johnny Darter (*Etheostoma nigrum*) and Greenside Darter (*Etheostoma blennioides*), but these species are not transparent or as elongated.

Text Sources: COSEWIC Status Report on the Eastern Sand Darter (*Ammocrypta pellucida*) in Canada. 2009; Trautman, M.B. The Fishes of Ohio. 1981; Holm, E. and Mandrak, N.E.. 1996. The status of the Eastern Sand Darter, *Ammocrypta pellucida*, in Canada. Canadian Field-Naturalist 110(3): 462-469.

Distribution of Eastern Sand Darter (Ontario populations)



Cette publication est également disponible en français.

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For more information, visit the SARA Registry at www.SARAreistry.gc.ca or the website below.

www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca

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