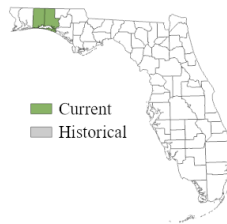


OKALOOSA DARTER

Etheostoma okaloosae



Order: Perciformes

Family: Percidae

FNAI Ranks: G2G3/S2S3

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: Threatened

Description: Small, up to 2 in. (51 mm), darter with well-developed spot above the base of the pectoral fin and five to eight rows of brownish spots along the lateral surface of the body. General coloration ranges from red-brown to green-yellow; ventral surface is lighter. Breeding males have a bright orange band on the edge of first dorsal fin.

Similar Species: The brown darter (*Etheostoma edwini*) is approximately the same size, but its spots are not organized into rows. During breeding, male brown darters have bright red spots on the body and fins.

Habitat: Edges of clear, flowing streams among vegetation, root mats, and decaying material.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present in all seasons.

Florida Distribution: Known only from six tributaries of Rocky and Boggy bayous in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

Range-wide Distribution: Same as Florida distribution.

Conservation Status: Sedimentation of streams from erosion of clay borrow pits and roads is the chief threat. Land managers at Eglin Air Force Base, which includes over 90 percent of the watershed area inhabited by the Okaloosa darter, have taken steps to remedy this problem. Permanent impoundment of streams by dams or by culverts clogged with debris reduces or eliminates darters; beavers frequently use culverts and other midstream structures to increase the durability of their dams. USFWS reports that from 1995–1998 most Okaloosa darter populations were stable or increasing. The species' federal status was changed to threatened in 2011.

Okaloosa Darter

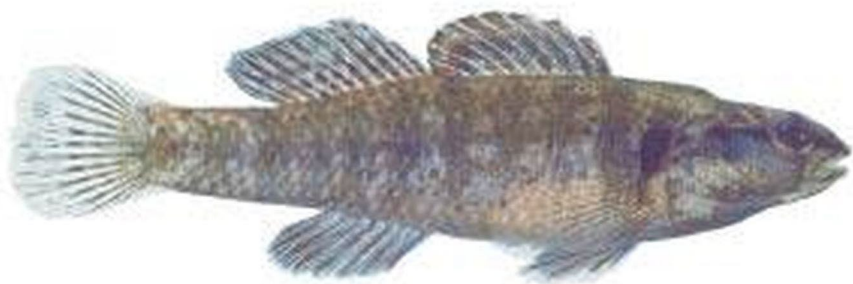
Etheostoma okaloosae

Protection and Management: Maintain adequate water quality and natural characteristics of the darter's habitat. This entails protecting the watershed from pollution, siltation, and physical alteration. Monitor groundwater withdrawals, surface water runoff, and water quality contamination via sewage treatment spray fields and landfills to assess degradation of Okaloosa darter habitat.

References: Gilbert (ed.) 1992, Hoehn 1998, Page and Burr 1998, USFWS 1998c.



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