

harlequin darter *Etheostoma histrio*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Perciformes

Family: Percidae

ILLINOIS STATUS endangered, native

FEATURES

The harlequin darter has two spots at the base of the caudal fin. Its belly and the underside of the head have dark speckles. The back is yellow to green with six to seven dark crossbars, and there are seven to 11 dark spots on each side. The first dorsal fin is dark red along the edge. A dark teardrop mark is present below the eye. The front half of belly is scaleless. The anal fin has two spines. The pectoral fins are very long. All fins have narrow dark lines and spots. This species may grow to three inches in length.

BEHAVIORS

The harlequin darter can be found in Illinois only in the Wabash River in southeastern Illinois. It formerly lived in the Embarras River, too, but has not been found there recently. It prefers shallow water with a sand or gravel substrate where there are plenty of dead leaves and sticks. This species is listed as endangered in Illinois due to its limited range, small population size and the continued effects of siltation and agricultural pollutants. It eats small crustaceans and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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