

slough darter *Etheostoma gracile*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Perciformes

Family: Percidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The slough darter's lateral line arches upward. This lateral line is incomplete and marked with a pale streak. There are no scales on the breast, the front of the belly and the body in front of the dorsal fin. The back is brown and may have nine or 10 crossbars. The sides are light brown with green blotches or bars and dark zigzag lines. The red eye is surrounded by four dark lines. The first dorsal fin is black at the base and has a red band and a row of red dots. The second dorsal fin and tail fin have brown lines. The average length for a slough darter is about one and one-half to two inches.

BEHAVIORS

The slough darter lives in swamps, sloughs, ditches and creeks that have clear water, little or no current and many plants. This fish reaches maturity at about one year of age. It spawns in late May. The male courts the female by following her, stroking her with his pectoral fins and rubbing his chin on her head and snout. The eggs are laid and fertilized one at a time, being deposited on a stick or other submerged vegetation. Eggs hatch in about five days. The slough darter feeds often in the spring but little in the summer. The slough darter eats insects and crustaceans.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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