

Fish Endangered Species Technical Advisory Committee (ESTAC)

November 9, 2023

10:00 AM

Illinois Natural History Survey Main Floor Conference Room

1816 S. Oak Street, Champaign IL 61820

1. Call to Order, Roll Call of ESTAC Members

Dr. Joyce Hofmann, Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM and welcomed the committee members on behalf of the Board.

Committee members present: Dr. John Chick, Dr. Robert Colombo, Dr. James Lamer, Mr. Brian Metzke, Mr. Steve Pescitelli, Mr. Trent Thomas, Mr. Jeremy Tiemann, Dr. Greg Whitledge, Dr. Philip Willink

Committee members absent: Dr. Chris Taylor

2. Introduction of Guests

Attending the meeting were Dr. Joyce Hofmann (ESPB), Ms. Natalia Maass (IDNR), and Mr. Dale Bowman (writer)

3. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Thomas moved that the agenda be adopted as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tiemann and passed unanimously.

4. Review of the Status of Fish Species on the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Etheostoma histrio is not sampled for effectively, so its true abundance is unknown. The species is extirpated from the Embarras River but still occurs in the state. It is a good candidate for the watchlist.

Stocking of *Acipenser fulvescens* (7,200 over several rivers) has gone a long way toward enabling the species to be delisted. In the Mississippi River, individuals are large enough to reproduce but there is not much evidence of natural reproduction.

There is some taxonomic confusion about *Coregonus artedii*. There is apparently a more recent observation of the species in Illinois, but it isn't in the database. There is federal stocking of the species outside of Illinois.

It was suggested that *Etheostoma camurum* could be upgraded to threatened since it is expanding in the Vermilion River, multiple age classes are seen, and it responds well to dam removal. They

occupy 100% of their range which isn't large. It still needs protection because it is a habitat specialist. The genus name should be changed to *Nothonotus*.

There are a lot of *Hybopsis amnis* in Pool 13 of the Mississippi River.

Macrhybopsis gelida is proposed for federal listing. Illinois has never had a record of reproduction, and the species is a rare find in the state. Brian Metzke believes that individuals in Illinois are just transients, and he thinks the species should be delisted. The other committee members did not agree. The species needs targeted sampling.

Moxostoma valenciennesi is quite rare.

No one at the meeting has seen *Nocomis micropogon*. One final good sampling effort is needed to determine if it is extirpated.

Notropis anogenus is at the edge of its range in Illinois.

Notropis boops is common where found, but there are a ton of historic records in the state.

Notropis heterolepis is rare but still present in glacial lakes.

More surveys are needed for *Notropis maculatus*. There is evidence of recruitment, but the species has a one-year life cycle.

Noturus stigmosus is a very habitat-specific species and requires targeted surveys.

Scaphirhynchus albus is a federally listed species and needs to remain on the Illinois list.

Ammocrypta pellucida is abundant in the Embarras River.

Catostomus catostomus seems stable up north, but it is hard to be certain since they are in a big lake

Cottus bairdii may be starting to do better. It is stable in the Fox River but likely gone from Lake Michigan.

Dams are bad for *Erimystax x-punctatus*, but the species is doing well in the Rock River. It is found in highly dangerous habitats which makes survey work difficult.

Forbesichthys agassizii in Illinois should be *F. papilliferus*, the Shawnee Hills Cavefish.

Illinois has the native threatened Western Banded Killifish, *Fundulus diaphanus menona*, and the invasive eastern subspecies. The western subspecies was almost delisted because the eastern subspecies is common. The Western Banded Killifish is rare. The range has not changed, but it is no longer present in Wolf Lake. A review of the database should occur to make sure that existing records of westerns were correctly identified. There are also weird hybrids.

Hybognathus hankinsoni is rare and should be changed to endangered from threatened.

Hybopsis amblops is doing well where it is currently. If it returns to the Embarras and Kaskaskia rivers, it could be delisted.

There was a consensus to keep the status of the following species unchanged: *Ammocrypta clara*, *Crystallaria asprella*, *Hybognathus hayi*, *Ichthyomyzon fossor*, *Fundulus dispar*, *Lampetra aepytera*, *Lepomis miniatus*, *Lepomis symmetricus*, *Lethenteron appendix*, *Moxostoma carinatum*, *Notropis chalybaeus*, *Notropis heterodon*, and *Notropis nubilus*.

5. Approval of Recommendations for Changes to the Status of Listed Fish Species

Mr. Thomas moved that the status of the Bluebreast Darter *Etheostoma camurum* be changed from endangered to threatened. The motion was seconded by Dr. Colombo and passed unanimously. It was also recommended that the scientific name be changed to *Nothonotus camurus*.

It was recommended that the common and scientific names of the Spring Cavefish *Forbesichthys agassizii* be changed to Shawnee Hills Cavefish *Forbesichthys papilliferus*.

Mr. Pescitelli moved that the status of the Brassy Minnow *Hybognathus hankinsoni* be changed from threatened to endangered. The motion was seconded by Dr. Colombo. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Discussion of Potential Additions of Fish Species to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

The first record for the Tippecanoe Darter *Nothonotus* [*Etheostoma*?] *tippecanoe* in Illinois was in the Vermilion watershed in 2014 but it was not identified to species until 2019. It is expanding its distribution throughout the watershed and can be common at sites, with all age classes present. It is believed that dam removals and the subsequent habitat improvements have facilitated the upstream movement of this species from Indiana. It was suggested that the species be listed as threatened.

The first record for the Streamline Chub *Erimystax dissimilis* in Illinois was in the Vermilion watershed in 2020. It has been found at a few sites, usually no more than a few at a time, and only adults. More sampling needs to be done as they prefer to live in fast water over gravel where the depth is a little greater than can be seined easily. It is believed that dam removals and the subsequent habitat improvements have facilitated the upstream movement of this species from Indiana. It was suggested that the species be listed as threatened.

It was suggested that the Northern Studfish *Fundulus catenatus* be added to the Illinois Endangered and Threatened Species List. There are three records (one individual each) in Illinois from the years 1973 (Mississippi River), 2007 (Shoal Creek), and 2014 (Mississippi River). The species can be common in the Missouri Ozarks. There was a discussion about whether the

Illinois individuals just wandered over from Missouri, were bait bucket introductions, or perhaps aquarium releases.

There are quite a few historical records for the Trout-perch *Percopsis omiscomaycus* along the Lake Michigan shoreline and the length of the Illinois River. There are very few recent records in the Illinois River and none in Lake Michigan, with usually only one individual found at a time. This species was discussed at the previous Fish ESTAC meeting several years ago, but no petition was submitted. It was suggested that the species be listed as threatened.

The distribution and abundance of the Banded Pygmy Sunfish *Elassoma zonatum* is very similar to that of the Bantam Sunfish *Lepomis symmetricus* (which is listed as threatened). The Banded Pygmy Sunfish is perhaps a little more abundant, but not common. It prefers vegetated waters in swamps, which is a rare habitat that is under threat. It was suggested that the species be listed as threatened.

It was asked if Brook Trout *Salvelinus fontinalis*, or a species like it, would ever be listed as threatened or endangered. The last inland waters record was decades ago. It is occasionally seen in Lake Michigan, but these individuals are most certainly from populations in northern Lake Michigan. The consensus was that if there is ever a reproducing population within Illinois, then it could be considered for listing, but its sport-fishing status would probably be taken into consideration.

7. Approval of Recommendations for Additions to the Fish Section of the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Dr. Colombo moved that the Tippecanoe Darter *Nothonotus* [*Etheostoma*?] *tippecanoe* be listed as threatened. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tiemann. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Thomas moved that the Streamline Chub *Erimystax dissimilis* be listed as threatened. The motion was seconded by Dr. Colombo. The motion passed with Mr. Metzke voting no.

Mr. Pescitelli moved that the Trout-perch *Percopsis omiscomaycus* be listed as threatened. The motion was seconded by Mr. Metzke. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Whitley moved that the Banded Pygmy Sunfish *Elassoma zonatum* be listed as threatened. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thomas. The motion passed with Mr. Tiemann voting no.

8. Assignment of ESTAC Members to Complete Petition Forms for Recommended Changes or Additions to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Mr. Tiemann and Mr. Thomas will work on the petition for changing the status of the Bluebreast Darter *Etheostoma camurus* (*Nothonotus camurus*).

Mr. Tiemann and Dr. Willink will do the petition for changing the status of the Brassy Minnow *Hybognathus hankinsoni*.

Mr. Thomas will take the lead on the petition for the addition of the Tippecanoe Darter *Nothonotus* [*Etheostoma*?] *tippecanoe*.

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Tiemann will write the petition for the addition of the Streamline Chub *Erimystax dissimilis*.

Mr. Pescitelli will work on the petition to add the Trout-perch *Percopsis omiscomaycus*.

Dr. Whitley will do the petition to add the Banded Pygmy Sunfish *Elassoma zonatum*.

9. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

10. Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:26 PM.