

FISH ENDANGERED SPECIES TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 12, 2017 MEETING

ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY

1816 SOUTH OAK STREET, CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820

Approved by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board at the 188th meeting, November 13, 2020

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Robert Colombo, Dr. James Lamer, Mr. Steven Pescitelli, Dr. Christopher Taylor, Dr. David Thomas, Mr. Trent Thomas, Mr. Jeremy Tiemann, Dr. Matthew Whiles, Dr. Philip Willink

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. John Chick

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Joyce Hofmann (ESPB), Dr. Tracy Evans (ESPB)

1. Call to Order, Roll Call of Fish ESTAC Members, and Introduction of Guests

Dr. Hofmann called the meeting to order at 10:39 A.M. She conducted a roll call of committee members and announced that a quorum was present. No members of the public were in attendance.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Thomas moved that the agenda be adopted as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Whiles and carried by a unanimous vote.

3. Review of Listed Fish Species

Dr. Thomas mentioned a report on the potential effects of climate change on Illinois wildlife by Dr. Jeff Walk of The Nature Conservancy of Illinois. Higher floods, more drought, and higher temperatures are projected for Illinois and these changes could affect fish. The list of species vulnerable to climate change in the report includes some that aren't currently endangered or threatened, but could become so in the future.

Dr. Taylor displayed a map showing records from different periods of time for each listed fish species as the group discussed them.

American Brook Lamprey: Dr. Willink stated that locations for this species may not change, but numbers could decrease. Dr. Thomas pointed out that it is vulnerable to climate change.

American Eel: Dr. Taylor said that looking at the distribution map would make someone wonder why this species is on the List. Dr. Willink mentioned that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had considered listing it. Dr. Hofmann pointed out that a petition to remove the American Eel from the List has been received by the Board. There was a consensus to delist the species.

Banded Killifish: This species is common in big rivers in Illinois, including the Chicago River, as well as the Ship and Sanitary Canal. There was a consensus to delist the species.

Northern Brook Lamprey: Dr. Taylor expressed the opinion that no change in status was warranted for this species.

Blacknose Shiner and Blackchin Shiner: Dr. Taylor pointed out that the Blacknose Shiner has a larger range, but is less common than the Blackchin Shiner.

Bigeye Chub: Dr. Taylor said that this species occurs in the Salt Fork and is common in the Vermilion River. Mr. Thomas stated that it has been found at Urbana, but is not in the Embarras River. There was a consensus to change the species' status to threatened.

Bigeye Shiner: No change in the status of this species was considered necessary.

Bantam Sunfish: This species is locally abundant. No change in its status was proposed.

Cisco: Dr. Willink noted that commercial fishing has had a serious negative impact on the Cisco. Dr. Colombo pointed out that it doesn't like warm water. Dr. Willink said that there has been talk about recovery efforts for the species. Dr. Whiles thought that its status should be changed to endangered. Dr. Taylor stated that such a change seemed necessary, although Dr. Willink pointed out that sampling was patchy. There was a consensus to change the species' status to endangered.

Cypress Minnow: Dr. Whiles expressed the opinion that the species should stay listed as endangered.

Greater Redhorse: Dr. Taylor said that only one of these fish is caught at a time and there is not much evidence of reproduction. Mr. Pescitelli reported that the species is gone from a site where it had been common. He said greater redhorse remain rare in northern Illinois, but can be found in Aux Sable Creek. The Fox River near Aurora also supports a small population. They have been collected in Big Rock Creek, but not recently. Dr. Colombo pointed out that there are many misidentifications and he is doing genetic studies.

River Redhorse: Mr. Pescitelli said that this species is not as abundant as it was in the 1970s. It is reliably found in the Kankakee River, but rarely in the Illinois River. It has also been hard to find in the Fox River over the last 25 years. The number of rivers in which the species occurs has declined.

Lake Sturgeon: According to Dr. Willink, the species is common in Indiana and reproducing.

Longnose Sucker: Dr. Willink pointed out that this species is fairly common now that he knows where to look for it. He caught nine individuals in one day. The species is at the southern end of its range in Illinois.

Northern Madtom: The consensus was to leave the species as currently listed.

Pallid Sturgeon: This species is federally listed so it is automatically on the Illinois List.

Pallid Shiner: According to Dr. Taylor there is only one good location for this species.

Pugnose Shiner: No change in the status of this species was proposed.

Ironcolor Shiner: Mr. Tiemann pointed out that the species is relatively common, but has a restricted range.

River Chub: No change in the status of this species was proposed.

Sturgeon Chub: Dr. Taylor stated that he has never seen this fish. Dr. Colombo mentioned that there is an Eastern Illinois University record.

Starhead Topminnow: Dr. Taylor said that this species is extremely common in ponds in southwestern Illinois. Mr. Thomas pointed out that it is abundant in creeks in the sand prairie regions, although it was not found in the Iroquois basin in 2015. Dr. Willink stated that it occurs in some glacial lakes and is common near the state line in the Kankakee River. According to Mr. Thomas the species has been reintroduced at Emiquon and is doing very well there. Dr. Taylor pointed out that there are geographically separated populations that seem to be in healthy condition. Dr. Whiles thought that the species' status should be reconsidered in a few years.

Redspotted Sunfish: The specific epithet for this species may be changed to *punctatus*. Mr. Tiemann expressed the opinion that this species' status should be changed to threatened. Mr. Thomas strongly concurred. He pointed out that it has been reintroduced at several sites along the Illinois River and at Allerton Park. Dr. Colombo asked about the situation in southern Illinois. Mr. Thomas stated that the southern population was genetically different. There was a consensus to change the species from endangered to threatened.

Weed Shiner: Dr. Taylor stated that this species could even be found in drainage ditches. There was a consensus to leave the status as is.

Bluebreast Darter: Mr. Tiemann stated that the species is common, but has a small range.

Dr. Taylor moved that the committee recess for lunch at 12:45 P.M. The motion was seconded by Dr. Whiles and passed unanimously. The meeting reconvened at 2:15 P.M.

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

Ozark Minnow: Dr. Willink stated that there were many in the Apple River, but few near Rockford. Transients from the Ozarks appear in southern Illinois. Mr. Pescitelli said that the species has a limited distribution and seems to be declining. Dr. Willink said that the catch per effort has decreased. Mr. Pescitelli thought it could be listed as threatened.

Northern Studfish: Dr. Taylor said that this species is considered to be a transient and there are only three Illinois records. He raised the question of at what point it should be considered part of the Illinois fauna. Dr. Whiles thought there should be surveys before a

decision is made. There was a consensus that the Board recommend surveys for this species to the IDNR.

Blacktail Shiner: Dr. Taylor stated that a status survey revealed very low numbers of this species except in Clear Creek and thought it should be listed as threatened. Dr. Whiles agreed. Dr. Colombo mentioned that there seems to have been a dramatic decrease in its range over 15 years.

Fringed Darter: Dr. Taylor pointed out that this species occurs only in Big Creek. Dr. Whiles expressed the opinion that it should definitely be listed. Dr. Colombo said it was a “poster child” for an endangered species.

Spottail Darter: Dr. Taylor stated that this species has a limited range, including Big Grand Pierre, Lusk, and Big Creeks. Dr. Whiles pointed out that it occurs in just two counties. Dr. Taylor said that it occupied an area that is less likely to be disturbed, but Dr. Whiles mentioned the possibility of fracking. Mr. Tiemann said the species was common for a darter and occupied multiple basins. Dr. Colombo agreed.

Stripetail Darter: The range of this species has not decreased and its numbers also have not declined. Dr. Colombo mentioned potential impacts of listing on fracking permits. Dr. Willink thought the species was borderline for listing.

Spring Cavefish: Dr. Whiles asked if the species might always have been present at a low density. Dr. Taylor thought so. The species is a true habitat specialist and sensitive to habitat change.

Mottled Sculpin: Dr. Whiles stated that this species does not seem to be declining. Dr. Willink said that there are two recent records for Lake Michigan. The species is gone from several sites (some have silted in), but common in the Fox River. It likes cool water. Wisconsin has done a climate assessment and it is not encouraging for the Mottled Sculpin.

Trout-perch: Mr. Pescitelli asked to see the map for this species. Dr. Whiles expressed the opinion that it should be listed.

Largescale Stoneroller: Mr. Thomas said that this species is gone from the Kaskaskia River, but still present in the Sangamon River. Dr. Colombo pointed out that it is hard to identify. There was a consensus not to list it at this time.

Brown Bullhead: This species is also hard to identify. There was a consensus not to list it.

Lake Chubsucker and Banded Sculpin: The consensus was to leave these species unlisted.

Cypress Darter: This should be considered a “watch list” species.

Mountain Madtom: Mr. Thomas stated that he has never collected this species in the Embarras River. Dr. Colombo said it is abundant in the Wabash River. There was no proposal to list the species.

5. Approval of Recommendations for Changes to the Fish Section of the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Dr. Whiles moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend approval of the petition to remove the American Eel from the Illinois List. Dr. Colombo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Whiles moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend removing the Banded Killifish from the Illinois List. Dr. Colombo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Thomas moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend changing the status of the Bigeye Chub from endangered to threatened. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tiemann and passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend changing the status of the Cisco from threatened to endangered. Dr. Willink seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Thomas made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend changing the status of the Redspotted Sunfish from endangered to threatened. Dr. Lamer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Thomas moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend changing the status of the Western Sand Darter from endangered to threatened. Mr. Pescitelli seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Tiemann moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend removing the Iowa Darter from the Illinois List. Dr. Taylor seconded the motion and it passed with one negative vote.

Mr. Pescitelli made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Ozark minnow to the Illinois List as threatened. Dr. Whiles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Blacktail Shiner to the Illinois List as threatened. Dr. Whiles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Fringed Darter to the Illinois List as endangered. Dr. Whiles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Whiles moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Spottail Darter to the Illinois List as threatened. Dr. Colombo seconded the motion, but it received five negative votes and failed.

Dr. Taylor made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Spring Cavefish to the Illinois List as threatened. Dr. Willink seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Pescitelli made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Mottled Sculpin to the Illinois List as threatened. Dr. Willink seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor made a motion that the Fish ESTAC recommend adding the Trout-perch to the Illinois List as threatened. Mr. Pescitelli seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend removing the American Brook Lamprey from the Illinois List. Dr. Whiles seconded the motion. The motion passed, with two negative votes and one abstention.

Mr. Tiemann moved that the Fish ESTAC recommend changing the status of the Crystal Darter from threatened to endangered. Dr. Taylor seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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

The following committee members will prepare petitions to the Endangered Species Protection board for the recommended changes.

Dr. Lamer: Banded Killifish and Western Sand Darter

Dr. Taylor: Bigeye Chub, Blacktail Shiner, Trout-perch, and American Brook Lamprey

Dr. Willink: Cisco

Mr. Thomas: Redspotted Sunfish

Mr. Tiemann: Iowa Darter and Crystal Darter

Mr. Pescitelli: Ozark Minnow and Mottled Sculpin

Dr. Colombo: Fringed Darter and Spring Cavefish

7. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

8. Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Adjournment

Dr. Colombo made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Mr. Pescitelli and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Submitted by Joyce Hofmann