

2-1-1978

News Notes

Southeastern Fishes Council

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Recommended Citation

Southeastern Fishes Council (1978) "News Notes," *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings*: No. 6.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/sfcp060ta6>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/sfcproceedings/vol1/iss6/3>

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channel of the Cumberland River has greatly deteriorated with regard to fish habitation due to the continued heavy silt load.

While the upper Cumberland fish fauna is relatively depauperate, some additional restricted and interesting species are threatened along with the mountain blackside dace. These are the arrow darter, *Etheostoma sagitta*; a supposed subspecies of johnny darter, *E. nigrum susanae* (Jordan and Swain) (previously known only from types; Cole; C.F., 1958; unpub. dissert.); and an undescribed darter of the subgenus *Ulocentra*. Presently, *E. sagitta* appears to be doing quite well in several streams containing *Phoxinus* populations as well as some additional streams which have not undergone drastic alteration. Only seven additional specimens of *Etheostoma nigrum* (the first collected in the upper Cumberland since Jordan and Swain's types, 1883) were collected in the course of the *Phoxinus* survey, indicating their extreme rarity. The undescribed *Ulocentra* apparently inhabits streams of larger proportions than those surveyed for *Phoxinus*, and none have been encountered thus far. However, virtually all streams of these proportions are receiving large amounts of strip mine runoff.

On a stream-by-stream basis, the status of the mountain blackside dace is reasonably clear. Good populations now exist in some streams (Eagle Creek, Archers Creek, Sanders Creek, and Youngs Creek) within the Daniel Boone National Forest, Kentucky. The Brownies Creek locality (Bell County, Kentucky) now appears to be undergoing considerable perturbation from strip mine activities. Other localities listed were based on one or two specimens apparently representing marginal populations. In Tennessee for example, three hours of intensive collecting effort were necessary to obtain a single specimen from Trammel Branch.

The Daniel Boone National Forest area will be proposed as critical habitat and serve as a refugium for the new *Phoxinus* in order to insure its survival. The political atmosphere highly favors the coal mining industry of the upper Cumberland area, and there is little chance that mining activities can be curtailed for any reason in those areas not federally restricted. President

Carter's recent strip mine reclamation bill may help curb some of the long-range effects of strip mining on aquatic ecosystems, but it remains to be seen whether these laws will be enforced.

Outside the national forest, a few populations of *Phoxinus* could persist in small isolated tributaries whose watersheds do not contain readily accessible coal-bearing strata. However, most populations potentially face extirpation within the coming years. Were it not for the existence of those populations within the confines of Daniel Boone National Forest, the mountain blackside dace would be proposed for the endangered category.

Therefore, we make these recommendations with regard to the future preservation of the mountain blackside dace:

1. Restrictions against strip mining in Daniel Boone National Forest should continue.
2. Prudent watershed management should be employed to safeguard the quality of habitat streams, including careful attention to timber cutting practices. Those practices which have, in the past, been consistent with trout management in certain national forest streams should suffice.
3. Any future trout management activities in national forest streams should be conducted with the welfare of the native fish fauna as foremost concern. Thus, poisoning surveys or other massive killing techniques should be strictly avoided in streams harboring the mountain blackside dace.

At this writing, only a little is known of the life history of the new *Phoxinus* of the upper Cumberland, and only tentative conclusions can be made about its ecological requirements. A study of the life history and ecology of the mountain blackside dace has been initiated in recent months by the authors with travel aid from a Forest Service grant. Perhaps, as a result of the findings of this study, further recommendations can be forthcoming to aid in the preservation of this beautiful and striking new minnow.

News Notes

SFC SUPPORTS PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF WATER PROJECTS

The following letter was sent to President Carter on behalf of the Council:

At its annual meeting in Gainesville, Florida on June 19, 1977, the Southeastern Fishes Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of your critical assessment of various federally-funded waterway projects.

The Southeastern Fishes Council is a new and rapidly growing organization composed of fish biologists, ichthyologists, fish and wildlife agency personnel, and other concerned individuals from throughout the United States. Its membership includes a large percentage of those professionals recognized as authorities on the fishes and other aquatic organisms of the country. The council is dedicated to

the preservation of native fishes in the United States, especially the southeastern area. It seeks to halt the decline of environmental quality and promotes the research and management necessary to insure our heritage of bountiful aquatic resources for future generations.

The Southeastern Fishes Council strongly endorses your policy of reappraising the need for environmentally destructive and economically wasteful waterway projects. Your recent actions represent meaningful steps in the direction of environmental preservation. You have awakened the hope that long-ignored environmental concerns may finally take precedence in decisions concerning imprudent alterations of natural stream systems. Our organization encourages you to continue to critically review proposed waterway projects.

Thank you for your interest and concern.

Southeastern Fishes Council
PROCEEDINGS
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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF SOUTHEASTERN FISHES

TENN-TOM WATERWAY BACK IN COURT

Plaintiffs in a suit seeking to halt construction of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway charged the Corps of Engineers with an extensive illegal cover-up in a 77 page amended complaint. The suit charges that the Corps "in a desperate and secret attempt to avoid termination of the project" has: - Intentionally withheld key information from the President, the Congress, and the public. - Continued construction after being advised and admitting that the channel width being constructed is "illegal and not authorized by law." - Submitted "false and inaccurate information" to support annual budget proposals. - Sought to conceal violations behind the size and detail of the project, "hoping that Congress, the public, and the judiciary will be unwilling or unable to penetrate its labyrinthian complexity."

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed critical habitat and threatened status for 5 southeastern species of fishes: *Hybopsis cahni*, slender chub; *Hybopsis monacha*, spotfin chub; *Noturus flavipinnis*, yellowfin madtom; *Speoplatyrhinus poulsoni*, Alabama cavefish; and *Etheostoma boschungi*, slackwater darter.

The leopard darter, *Percina pantherina*, has been determined as threatened and critical habitat has been established.

Endangered status was proposed for: *Notropis* sp., Cahaba shiner; *Noturus lachneri*, Ouachita madtom; *Fundulus* sp., Barrens topminnow; *Fundulus waccamensis*, Waccamaw killifish; *Menidia extensa*, Waccamaw silverside; *Elassoma* sp., spring pygmy sunfish; *Etheostoma perlongum*, Waccamaw darter; *Percina aurolineata*, goldline darter; and *Cottus pygmaeus*, pygmy sculpin.

Considerable controversy has erupted over the inclusion of the Cahaba shiner and goldline darter to the Federal listing. A public hearing has been planned for 15 March 1978, in Birmingham, AL, to measure public response to the action. Members are encouraged to present their views either at the hearing or by writing to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

SNAIL DARTER IN SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court heard arguments on the Tellico Dam case on January 25. The Administration has strongly supported upholding the Endangered Species Act; while the General Accounting Office has reported that "the Congress should prohibit the Tennessee Valley Authority from further work on the project." Major amendments to weaken the act are expected to be filed by Senator Baker of Tennessee during this session of Congress.

SFC Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 13 at 0830 in Room 231 of the Chemistry Building, Univ. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

PROCEEDINGS is a publication of the Southeastern Fishes Council, Inc. and is published in Mississippi State, Miss. Officers are: D. A. Etnier, Chairman; H. T. Boschung, Chairman-elect; F. F. Snelson, Secretary-Treasurer. Editor of PROCEEDINGS is G. H. Clemmer, Drawer Z, Mississippi State, Miss. 39762. Phone (601) 325-5722.