

HARLEQUIN DARTER

Etheostoma histrio



Order: Perciformes

Family: Percidae

FNAI Ranks: G5/S1

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none

Description: Small, typically 2 - 3 in. (51 - 76 mm), very colorful darter. Dorsal surface is black and green with red/brown blotching and six or seven lighter-colored saddles. Most fins are heavily spotted; first dorsal fin clear with a burgundy margin. Ventral surface yellow with dark speckling. Breeding male is emerald green with dark mottling.

Similar Species: None in Florida.

Habitat: Accumulations of leaves and debris over sand or gravel in raceways and riffles of rivers and large creeks. In Florida, snags and other large woody debris have been found to be important habitat types.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present in all seasons.

Florida Distribution: Restricted to the Escambia River system, Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Florida is at the southeastern extreme of the species' range, which extends north to southern Illinois and west to eastern Texas.

Range-wide Distribution: Lower Mississippi Basin and Gulf drainages from western Florida to eastern Texas, northward to southwestern Kentucky; primarily below the Fall Line.

Conservation Status: Range-wide, the species is distributed widely but is generally not abundant; no trends have been reported. In Florida, five of the six known Escambia River watershed localities have been degraded; seems to be well established only at Big Escambia Creek.

Protection and Management: Maintain adequate water quality and natural characteristics of habitat.

Harlequin Darter

Etheostoma histrio

References: Gilbert (ed.) 1992, Hoehn 1998, Mettee et al. 1996, Page and Burr 1998.



© Patrick E. O'Neil, Alabama Geological Survey



© Joe Tomelleri

Florida Natural Areas Inventory, January 2023

