

## TESSELLATED DARTER

*Etheostoma olmstedi*



**Order:** Perciformes

**Family:** Percidae

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S1

**U.S. Status:** none

**FL Status:** Threatened

**Description:** Slender, elongate, moderately large darter, commonly 2.5 in. (63 mm) and up to 4 in. (102 mm); coloration generally brown with characteristic series of 9 - 11 X-or Y-shaped, dark markings along the side in both sexes; enlarged second dorsal fin on breeding male.

**Similar Species:** Superficially resembles several other Florida darters, but the side markings of the tessellated darter, coupled with its restricted distribution within the state, should be diagnostic.

**Habitat:** Small to medium-sized streams in areas where the current is below maximum, including flowing pools. Species does not seem to be limited to any specific bottom type.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Present in all seasons.

**Florida Distribution:** Limited to Lower Ocklawaha River system in Putnam and Marion counties.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Atlantic coastal streams from Ontario to Florida.

**Conservation Status:** Although the tessellated darter is common throughout much of its range, in Florida it is found regularly at only one of four sites (Orange Creek). Furthermore, only one of the sites (Eaton Creek) has unimpaired water quality. The construction of the Rodman Dam no doubt negatively affected this species.

**Protection and Management:** Halt the spread of *Hydrilla* to avoid further degradation of tessellated darter habitat. Prevent further habitat modification. The restoration of the Ocklawaha River would likely increase habitat for the Florida population.

## Tessellated Darter

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**References:** Gilbert (ed.) 1992, Hoehn 1998, Page and Burr 1998.



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