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The Topeka Shiner – An Endangered Minnow

The Topeka shiner is a minnow that lives in small prairie streams. Historically the Topeka shiner has lived in waters in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Currently the Topeka shiner is found in small isolated populations. Because the population has decreased by about 70 percent, it is now listed on the federal endangered species list.

The Topeka shiner is currently found in 13 Iowa counties, down from 36 counties where it was found historically. Today it is found in tributaries to the North Raccoon River, Rock River, Little Rock River, and Boone River.

When the Fish and Wildlife Service included the Topeka shiner on the endangered species list, it also listed a number of streams in Iowa as critical habitat.¹ Those are streams where the Topeka shiner live, could be used as routes to connect populations, or have habitat where the shiner could survive. Although a stream may not be listed as critical habitat, Topeka shiner could still be living in the stream.

The Topeka shiner prefers clear, clean slow-moving water. It is found in streams with stable channels and in off-channel oxbows with sandy or gravel bottoms.

The reasons for the decline vary, including sedimentation of the stream habitats, changes in water quality, manure that has run off land application areas into streams, stream channelization, impoundments on streams, and stocking of predator fish such as the largemouth bass.

The remaining population of Topeka shiners can be protected by:

- Reducing impacts to streams and oxbows
- Restoring stream habitat
- Restoring stream channels and oxbows
- Placing vegetated buffers along streams
- Revegetating exposed, eroding banks
- Stopping erosion and conserving soil throughout the watershed
- Removing existing dams or installing fish passages over existing dams



The Topeka Shiner is less than three inches long. Photo courtesy of Fish and Wildlife Service

Sources

www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/fishes/TopekaShiner/tosh-qas.html

http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/profile/speciesProfile.action?spcode=E07R

www.iowaagriculture.gov/livingOnTheEdge/topekaShiner.asp

Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 143, July 27, 2004, pages 44736-44770, 50 CFR Part 17, "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Final Designation of Critical Habitat for the Topeka Shiner; Final Rule"

Bryan Bakevich, Clay Pierce, and Michael Quist, "Rivers and Streams", "Distribution and Abundance of Topeka Shiners in West-Central Iowa", Department of Natural Resources and Ecology, Iowa State University

ⁱ Iowa streams that are listed as critical habitat are found in Calhoun, Carroll, Dallas, Greene, Hamilton, Lyon, Osceola, Sac, Webster, and Wright Counties.