



# Channel Darter

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[Lake Erie populations](#)

[Lake Ontario populations](#)

[St. Lawrence River populations](#)

Information summary and survey for the consultations on potentially changing the status of Channel Darter on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk – **Please provide input by May 1, 2017.**

### Consultations

Let your opinion be heard

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) provides legal protection for wildlife species at risk to conserve biological diversity. It also acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in the conservation of wildlife species.

In 2016, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) reassessed the Channel Darter and split the populations into three separate designatable units: 1) Lake Erie populations; 2) Lake Ontario populations; and, 3) St. Lawrence River populations. The Lake Erie and Lake Ontario populations were reassessed from Threatened to Endangered while the St. Lawrence River populations were reassessed from Threatened to Special Concern.

Before deciding whether the three Channel Darter units will be down-listed (St. Lawrence River populations) or up-listed (Lake Erie and Lake Ontario populations) on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, we would like to hear your opinion, comments, and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of these changes under SARA.

### Changing the status of a species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk

The process of down-listing or up-listing a species under SARA consists of several steps: it begins with a status reassessment by COSEWIC and ends with a Government of Canada decision on whether or not to down-list or up-list a species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Public consultations are conducted to gather the opinions of Canadians and are an important step in this process.

### Facts about Channel Darter

The Channel Darter is a small fish (up to 72 mm in

length), and is light sand or olive coloured, with brown speckles and cross-shaped markings on its back. A series of brown, oblong or round blotches often joined by a thin line can be found on its side. A dusky bar or spot may be present beneath the eye and extend forward on to the snout.



(Photo courtesy of George Coker)

The Channel Darter is a warm water benthic species that, in Canada, is found in three general habitats: gravel and coarse sand beaches of Lake Erie; gravel/cobble shoals and riffles in large rivers; and, riffles and pools of small- to medium-sized rivers.



Figure 1. Distribution of Channel Darter in Canada (DFO unpublished data).



### Who assigned the new statuses to the three Channel Darter designatable units?

COSEWIC is an independent committee of experts that assesses which wildlife species are in some danger of disappearing from Canada and assigns a status to these species. It conducts its assessments based on the best available information including scientific data, local ecological knowledge, and Aboriginal traditional knowledge. Under SARA, an Endangered species is defined as one that is facing imminent extirpation or extinction, while a Special Concern species is defined as one that may become a Threatened or Endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.

### Why is Channel Darter at risk?

COSEWIC reassessed Channel Darter (Lake Erie populations) and Channel Darter (Lake Ontario populations) as Endangered because of declining habitat quality, small distribution, and the threat of invasive Round Goby. Channel Darter (St. Lawrence populations) was reassessed as Special Concern because although it is relatively widespread, there is evidence that it has been lost at some locations and it is subjected to threats such as pollution and invasive species that may result in the species becoming Threatened if threats are not managed.

### If a species' status changes under the *Species at Risk Act*

If Channel Darter (Lake Erie populations) and Channel Darter (Lake Ontario populations) are up listed as Endangered, there would be no change in the prohibitions under SARA, as the species was previously listed as Threatened and the prohibitions were already in effect. Under SARA, it is illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture, possess, buy, sell, or trade Channel Darter (Lake Erie populations) and Channel Darter (Lake Ontario populations). However, activities that may affect the species or its critical habitat may be permitted under SARA section 73-74, or exempt under section 83, where that activity does not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species. A recovery strategy for Channel Darter (single unit) has already been developed; it would need to be revised to address only Channel Darter (Lake Erie populations) and Channel Darter (Lake Ontario populations). The recovery strategy and

subsequent action plan(s) would identify measures to address known threats. Critical habitat, the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of Channel Darter, has been identified in the existing recovery strategy.

If Channel Darter (St. Lawrence populations) is down-listed to Special Concern, the prohibitions of SARA would no longer apply. However, DFO would be required to produce a SARA Management Plan for the species (to replace the existing recovery strategy) in an effort to ensure that it does not become Threatened or Endangered due to human activity.

**We would like to receive your comments on the potential impacts of changing the status of Channel Darter on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA. Your comments are important.**

Please fill out the survey for:

[Lake Erie populations](#)

[Lake Ontario populations](#)

[St. Lawrence River populations](#)

**We want to hear from you.**

Before completing these surveys, you may wish to review the following background information found at the links below:

- [Recovery Strategy for the Channel Darter \(\*Percina copelandi\*\) in Canada](#)
- Information on the species can be found on the Species at Risk Public Registry [here](#).

**Thank you for completing this survey.**  
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