

...BUT NO REDFINS

by David L. Hall, Lohman, Missouri

In late April, 1986, I teamed up with NANFA members Mike Lucas and Gene Fletcher for a trip to southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas. Mike had come all the way from New York to visit in-laws, but I suspect that the real reason was the possibility of catching Redfin Darters (Etheostoma whipplei). For Mike's version, see AC, September, 1986--Ed./

I met Mike, Gene, and their brother-in-law Dave in Kansas City and then we headed south on Highway 71 to the Carthage/Joplin area. Mike had planned our trip and had scheduled our first stop on the Spring River. With seines, nets, and buckets in hand, we entered the Spring River via the Walnut Bottoms Access (north of Carthage) and soon had our first fish, a handsome Longear Sunfish (Lepomis megalotis).

Before we left that area of the Spring River, we had collected Blackstripe Topminnows (Fundulus notatus), Duskystripe Shiners (Notropis pilsbryi), Ozark Minnows (Notropis nubilis), Stippled Darters (Etheostoma punctulatum), a Channel Darter (Percina copelandi), a Least Darter (Etheostoma microperca), Orangethroat Darters (E. spectabile), a Brindled Madtom (Noturus miurus), Slender Madtoms (N. exilis), and Logperch (Percina caprodes)--but no Redfins.

After a bite to eat, we tried a few other locations, but found nothing new, and so headed south. We wanted to make it to Arkansas early enough to get our fishing licenses and get a good night's sleep before our big day of collecting Redfins. On our way south on Highway 71, we spotted what we figured was a nativist's dream--40 acres for sale just across the highway from the Elk River and it looked to be a prime collecting spot. There was a catch, though--the "For Sale" sign was posted halfway up a bluff. Perfect for cliff-dwellers, we guessed!

The next day we headed for Keck's Creek (AC--Sept., 1985) in hopes of collecting some more Stippled Darters and some Speckled Darters (Etheostoma stigmæum). We made several "unscheduled" stops before reaching Keck's Creek, but found nothing new. At Keck's, we did get some more Duskystripes--or, as Mike kept calling them, Bluenoses. We also found three immature Arkansas Saddled Darters (Etheostoma euzonum), which Mike said looked a lot like the Variegated Darters (E. variatum) he had collected before. Unfortunately, we didn't find any Stippled or Speckled Darters.

Mike was still showing us pictures of the Redfin in his American Darters book, spurring us onward in hopes of finding some, but time was running short. We headed for the Mulberry River and stopped at a couple of drainages, but no Redfins. Mike was very disappointed, but consoled himself with the fact that we had a number of nice fish in our styros.

Back in Kansas City, we divided up the spoils. I took some Duskystripes and some Slender Madtoms. As I headed back to Lohman, Mike, Gene, and Dave drove on north to Polo.

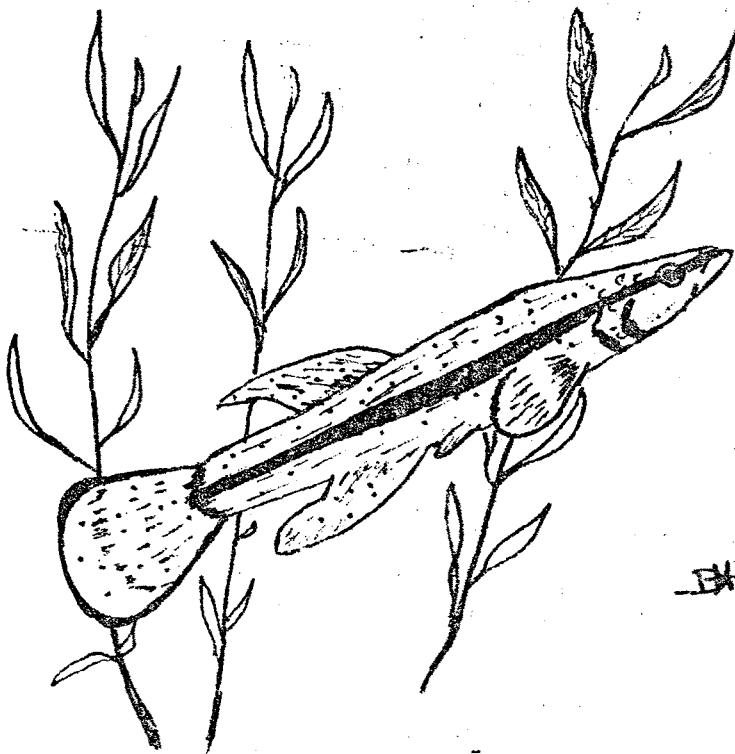
It was a successful but somewhat disappointing trip. Gene and I spoke of getting together soon to try again. Who knows, maybe we'll get some Redfins for Mike after all.

References

Kuehne, Robert A., and Roger W. Barbour. The American Darters. Lexington, Ky., University Press of Ky., 1983.

Lucas, Michael J.

Ribitzki, Paul, "Return to Keck's Creek, Arkansas," AC, September 1985, 11.



Fundulus olivaceus
Blackspotted topminnow

(not mentioned in article, but similar to F. notatus)