



Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Banded Sunfish *Enneacanthus obesus*

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The Banded Sunfish is a small, stout-bodied fish, and the only local sunfish with a rounded tail fin and short-round pectoral fins. It is olive-green to brown with numerous small bronze, silver-green, and light blue spots on the body, and 5 to 8 dark vertical bars. This species rarely exceed 2 to 3 inches in length, although specimens over 4 inches have been recorded from Massachusetts. Banded Sunfish usually live three to four years, although five-year-old specimens have been recorded. They feed on a wide variety of small aquatic invertebrates, including cladocerans, copepods, dipterans, and amphipods. The relative size and seasonal abundance of prey greatly influence their diet.

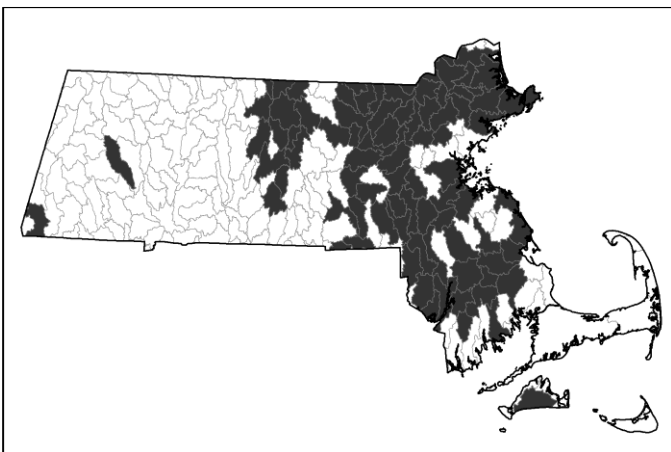
DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE: This species is widespread in most of eastern Massachusetts, but known only from a few sites on Cape Cod and two locations on Martha's Vineyard. In the inland portion of the state, Banded Sunfish have been seen only in the upper Chicopee Drainage (Burnshirt and Ware rivers), Nashua River, and the upper Millers River drainages. These Chicopee and Millers populations are most likely the result of stream capture with the Merrimack Basin. This species is still common in the proper habitat but has declined with urban sprawl when small, swampy wetlands were drained.

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: Banded Sunfish live in quiet backwaters, swamps, and ponds. They are frequently associated with heavy aquatic vegetation and have been observed to thrive in naturally acidic waters.

THREATS: It appears that the major threat to this species is loss of its shallow wetland habitats to development and/or pollution.

REFERENCE:

This species description was adapted, with permission, from: Karsten E. Hartel, David B. Halliwell, and Alan E. Launer. 2002. *Inland Fishes of Massachusetts*. Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts.



Data from DFW Fisheries Surveys and Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology

Updated 2015

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

1 Rabbit Hill Rd., Westborough, MA; tel: 508-389-6300; fax: 508-389-7890; www.mass.gov/dfw