



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Longnose Sucker *Catostomus catostomus*

State Status: **Special Concern**
Federal Status: **None**

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Longnose Suckers are torpedo-shaped fish with a snout that extends beyond the subterminal mouth. They can grow to over 500 mm (~20 in.); however in New England they are generally smaller. They are silvery-gray to yellowish in color and sometimes have darker blotches or saddles along their sides. During the breeding season they will have a red lateral stripe and tubercles (pimple-like bumps) on their head and fins.

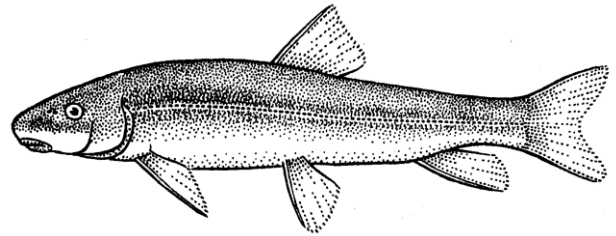


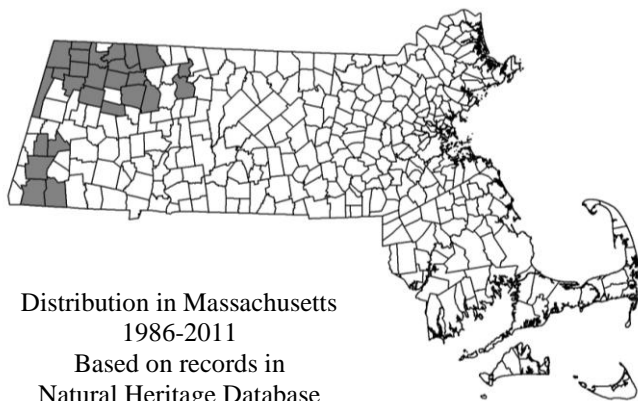
Illustration by Laszlo Meszoly, from Hartel et al. 2002.
Inland Fishes of Massachusetts.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Longnose Suckers and White Suckers (*Catostomus commersoni*) can be easily confused. Longnose Suckers have finer scales and have 85 lateral line scales, compared to 75 for White Suckers. The lateral line pores can sometimes be easily seen in the Longnose Sucker whereas in the White Sucker the pores are not visible. In the Longnose Sucker, the lower lips look like two square flaps, whereas in the White Sucker the lower lips are more tapered.

HABITAT: In Massachusetts, Longnose Suckers are found mainly in cool upper sections of streams and rivers with rocky substrates. They are only found in the western part of the State, specifically in the Deerfield, Housatonic, Hoosic, and Westfield watersheds. In other parts of their range they are found in lakes and have been found as deep as 600 ft.

LIFE HISTORY: Longnose Suckers reach maturity at around 5 to 7 years of age, or 130-400 mm (~5 to ~16 in.) in length. They can live up to 20 years and can spawn multiple times during their life. Upstream spawning migrations occur from mid-April through July. They may migrate many kilometers to reach spawning grounds. Their peak spawning activity is relatively short lasting, between 5 and 10 days, and only occurs during daylight hours. Spawning occurs in areas that have moderate to fast stream currents and gravel substrates. Longnose Suckers do not build nests but release adhesive, sinking eggs and show no territoriality.

Young-of-the-year can be found in midwater feeding on plankton. Adult Longnose Suckers feed primarily on benthic invertebrates, specifically *Gammarus*, *Daphnia*, and a variety of insect larvae as well as algae. Longnose Suckers are vulnerable to predation during spawning by



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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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a variety of animals, such as Northern Pike, Black Bears and other mammals, and Ospreys.

THREATS: Habitat alteration is a major threat especially through erosion and sedimentation, flow alterations, and increased water temperatures. This species relies on clean, well oxygenated gravel substrates for their eggs to develop and all of these threats can severely decrease their reproductive success. In addition, dams can prevent their migration to preferred spawning habitats.

BREEDING SEASON:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Updated 2015

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