



## **Alabama Darter** (*Etheostoma ramseyi*)

The Alabama darter is only found within Alabama. It lives in rocky streams of the Alabama River and the Cahaba River. The fish's scientific name honors Dr. John Ramsey, an Auburn University professor that studied the fishes of Alabama.

The Alabama darter is a fish that is one to two inches long, shorter than the length of your finger. The male is colorful during breeding season from late-March until the water temperature reaches 68°F.\* Orange decorates the soft dorsal fin and the lower sides and rear of the Alabama darter's body.\* The orange areas become darker and more reddish towards the front of the fish. Other blotches are turquoise, green, brown and black. A darter's large pectoral fins keep the fish on the bottom of fast flowing streams by using the flowing water over the fins to push down.\*

In smaller streams without fish predators, the Alabama darter will live in pools with sand and gravel bottoms. In larger streams, it likes rocks and logs that break up the fast water of the riffle areas.\* Alabama darters can be common in these areas. Maintaining healthy places for people and wildlife depends on each of us taking responsibility to be informed about our natural world. The Alabama darter needs rocky areas and clear water that is not affected by dirt washing into streams.

### **\*Vocabulary**

Breeding – ready to reproduce.

Pectoral fins – a pair of side fins behind the head.

Riffle – areas of faster, shallow water in streams.

Soft dorsal fin – the fins on top of a fish that are not spiny.