



Tuskaloosa Darter (*Etheostoma douglasi*)

The Tuskaloosa darter is a small fish found only in the Locust Fork and Sipsey Fork sections of the Cumberland Plateau in Alabama. This fish looks similar to the greenbreast darter found in other areas of the state.

The sides of a Tuskaloosa darter are olive green with brown blotches on the back. It does not have red on its side, but red bars are present on the dorsal and caudal fins. The lower part of the fish is turquoise. A breeding male may have three to 11 dark vertical bars and eight or nine brown blotches on its back.* The caudal fin is colorful with a narrow band of turquoise or black next to a band of yellow and a broader band of red.* It has no scales on the opercles. A Tuskaloosa darter is small, shorter than a finger, about 1.2 to 2 inches in length.

The Tuskaloosa darter likes to eat insect larvae and sometimes smaller mollusks.* Adults live in moderate to swift flowing water with a slab, cobble, or gravel bottom. Private landowners who care for their land play an important role in ensuring that wildlife and the places they live remain for future generations to enjoy. The Tuskaloosa darter's common name comes from Chief Tuskaloosa.

Vocabulary

Breeding – ready to reproduce.

Caudal fin – the tail fin on a fish, used to make the fish go forward.

Cumberland Plateau - a geological region whose mountains are made of sandstone and shale.

Larvae – an immature insect of a species that changes (undergoes metamorphosis) into adult; larvae and adults look very different (caterpillars are larvae and butterflies are adults).

Opercles – the hard bony flap covering the gills.

Mollusk – A large group of animals that include freshwater mussels and snails.

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The drawing is original artwork by Julie Harris Mitchell. The photograph and some of the information are from *Fishes of Alabama and the Mobile Basin*.