

Threespine stickleback

Gasterosteus aculeatus

Description

In early 1980s it spread to Lake Michigan, most likely from ballast water, canals and bait bucket transfers; now established in other Great Lakes. Spread by range expansion via canals and diversions; ballast water.

Identification

Up to 4 inches; silver with dark mottling; 3 stout dorsal spines (first two are longer than the third); large eyes; body scaleless with bony plates; breeding fish are colorful and defend their nests aggressively; nests on aquatic vegetation.

Habitat

Native to both coasts of the United States. Found in both salt water and fresh water; shores of larger lakes; shallow, sandy weedy areas in



rivers, streams and ponds.

Reproduction

Defends their nests aggressively and nests on aquatic vegetation.

Impact

Aggressive invader that preys on native species and competes for food and habitat. Will eat eggs and larvae of native fish, capable of hybridizing with native sticklebacks and their stout spines discourage predators.

Similar

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Clean, drain, dry.

Credits

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