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# Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species: *Species facing threats to their survival*

## Robust redhorse sucker

(*Moxostoma robustum*)



Robust redhorse/Photo credit: USFWS

## Description

The robust redhorse (*Moxostoma robustum*) is a large, long-lived member of the redhorse sucker family. Adults can reach 31 inches in length and weigh up to 18 pounds, although the average length in sample populations is 25 inches and the average weight is 9 pounds. The maximum known age is 27 years. The fish has a thick, robust body with rose-colored fins and a fleshy lower lip.

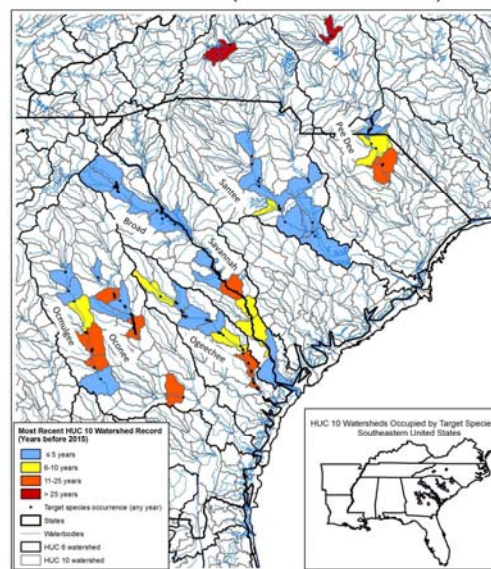
## Range

Historically, the robust redhorse inhabited Atlantic slope drainages from the Pee Dee River system in North Carolina to the Altamaha River system in Georgia. In the Altamaha River drainage, the species is presently known to exist the Oconee River, a short section of the Ocmulgee River, and in a tributary to Lake Sinclair. Individuals also have been found in the Savannah River in the Augusta Shoals area as well as below the New Savannah River Bluff Lock and Dam. In addition, robust redhorse have been captured in the Pee Dee River below Blewett Falls Dam in North Carolina. Robust redhorse populations have been reintroduced within their historic range into the Broad, Ocmulgee, and Ogeechee rivers in Georgia, as well as the Broad and Wateree rivers in South Carolina.

## Habitat

The robust redhorse inhabits southeastern Piedmont Plateau and upper Coastal Plain sections of large South Atlantic slope rivers. Piedmont reaches are characterized by rock shoals, outcrops, and pools, particularly along the Fall Line. The upper Coastal Plain reaches typically have sandy banks and beds interspersed with a few shoals and occasional gravel bars. The upper Coastal Plain reaches also have extensive networks of swamps, oxbows, and floodplains. Woody debris and fallen trees seem to provide preferred habitat for adult robust redhorse in the Oconee River, and clean gravel bars are necessary for spawning and development of larval fish.

Conservation Status Assessment Map  
Robust Redhorse (*Moxostoma robustum*)



Oconee, Pee Dee, and Savannah are wild populations. Broad, Ocmulgee, Ogeechee, and Santee populations have been stocked. However, population augmentation has occurred in the Pee Dee and Oconee and wild fish may occur in the Ocmulgee. Watersheds in upper Santee (Catawba River) and upper Pee Dee (Yadkin River) basins are historic localities referenced by Cope in 1870. Zooarchaeological occurrences not shown. Map created December 31, 2015 by Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute and is available for use (please include this note). Contact Brett Albanese for data sources.

## Status

The Robust Redhorse carries no legal status in South Carolina, but is listed as state endangered in Georgia and North Carolina. Previously considered a Category 2 candidate for Federal listing, it is considered critically imperiled (S1) in Georgia

and North Carolina, which are the only other states where it occurs.

## Threats

Threats to the species include habitat loss and disruption of spawning migrations from dams and impoundments; predation and competition by introduced nonnative species; and significant deterioration of water quality due to sedimentation and pollution. Additionally, the limited range of known populations and low rates of recruitment to the adult population represent challenges to the species' future.

## Management/Protection Needs

The Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee (RRCC) is a voluntary partnership formed in 1995 under a Memorandum of Understanding between state and federal resource agencies, private industry, and the conservation community. This group is actively committed to the restoration of the species and identifies priority conservation needs for the species and its habitat and coordinates implementation of those programs. Their work entails continuing to refine the life history of the species, completing reintroductions and confirmation of recruitment, and continuing research, education and outreach initiatives.

## References

Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee. 2014. Report of the Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee Annual Meeting. Compiled by J. Zelko. Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center, Mansfield, GA. October 21-23, 2014.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources—State Wildlife Action Plan: 2010-2015.

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