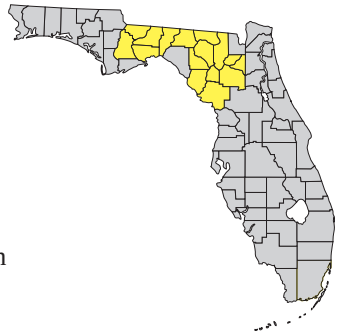
SUWANNEE BASS
Micropterus notius



Order: Perciformes
Family: Centrarchidae
FNAI Ranks: G3/S3
U.S. Status: None
FL Status: Species of Special Concern

© Joe Tomelleri

Description: Medium-sized bass, up to 16 in. (406 mm), similar in coloration to the more common largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*); upper jaw extends to a point below the eye; breeding males develop bright turquoise on the cheek, breast and belly.

Similar Species: Upper jaw of largemouth bass extends well past eye. Suwannee bass usually has teeth on the tongue, while largemouth bass usually does not; these teeth can be detected by examining with thumb.

Habitat: Prefers fast-moving shoal areas with a limestone bottom which is often covered by sand. Suwannee bass generally prefers neutral or basic waters, such as those provided by springs emanating from the limestone aquifer. Found occasionally in the lower, tidally influenced portions of the Suwannee River, but not found in the upper portions where the acidic character of the Okefenokee Swamp dominates stream composition.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present in all seasons.

Florida Distribution: Ochlockonee, Suwannee/Santa Fe, St. Marks, and Wacissa rivers.

SUWANNEE BASS *Micropterus notius*

Range-wide Distribution: Ochlockonee and Suwannee River basins in Georgia and Florida and the above-mentioned Florida drainages.

Conservation Status: Most of the inhabited rivers in Florida have some impairment of water quality or are expected to experience a downward trend. However, populations appear to be stable in the Suwannee/Santa Fe system; less is known of their status in the Ochlockonee River. Populations in the St. Marks and Wacissa rivers are thought to have been introduced.

Protection and Management: Monitor water quality and ameliorate sources of degradation. The current 12-in. (305 mm) size limit on bass, in the Suwannee River and westward, should protect Suwannee bass from over-exploitation by anglers.

Selected References: Georgia DNR 1999, Gilbert (ed.) 1992, Hoehn 1998, Page and Burr 1998.