

LANGUISHING SPECIES: MISSOURI

SICKLEFIN CHUB AND STURGEON CHUB

These species are rare in North Dakota and face unique threats because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2001 refused to put them on the endangered species list when they were candidates for listing, even though both species have lost about half their range along the Missouri. All funding for these species must come through state agencies with no active federal role in their protection.

The *sicklefin chub* is a slender minnow with yellowish or tan back and upper sides with silvery highlights. Lower sides and belly are silvery white. It grows to no more than 4 inches long. The *sturgeon chub* grows to a little less than 4 inches, with black-speckled tan to pale green back and silver sides and belly. Both species prefer large, turbid rivers with a diversity of depths and water flow. They live in braided channels and along sand bars, gravel bars and similar substrates. The sicklefin once ranged from the Lower Yellowstone down the Missouri and into the Mississippi downstream from its confluence with the Missouri. The sturgeon chub also inhabited this range but was found further up the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers and their tributaries.

Although these species continue to survive in substantial numbers where turbidity and flow suit them, their overall population has suffered a steep decline from habitat changes. They have been wiped out along 800 miles of the Missouri

due to habitat loss brought on by six main-stem dams. In eastern Montana, they are still relatively common. Monitoring is constrained by the availability of state funds. The Missouri River restoration project, however, should benefit them.



sicklefin chub



sturgeon chub