

## DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF MONTANA PRAIRIE STREAM FISHES<sup>AFS</sup>

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During 1999-2004, we took 820 samples for fish in 561 prairie streams in Montana. The streams ranged in size from the Powder River down to ephemeral headwater streams. Of the 820 samples, 480 (56 %) were from sites with fish present, whereas fish were absent at 340 (44 %) of sites. We captured over 176,000 individual fish representing 48 species and 11 families. Thirty of the fish species and 89 percent of individuals captured were native to Montana, whereas 18 species and 11 percent of individuals were introduced species. At sites with fish present, native species richness averaged 4.5 and ranged from 1 to 14 species per sample, whereas introduced species richness averaged 1.9 and ranged from 1 to 8. Only two species, fathead minnow and white sucker were captured at more than 50 percent of sites with fish present. Twelve native and 3 introduced species were captured in 10-50 percent of samples with fish present, and 15 native species and 16 introduced species were captured in < 10% of samples with fish present. Of the 30 native species, 13 species were found in close proximity to large rivers or in larger streams, 13 species were found primarily in smaller streams, and 4 species were in coolwater streams in proximity to higher elevations. We documented the distribution of four species of special concern and 6 potential species of concern.