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**THE DISTRIBUTION AND POTENTIAL ORIGIN OF SCULPIN SPECIES IN  
THE SINKS DRAINAGES**

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Three sculpin species are known from the Sinks Drainages: shorthead (*Cottus confuses*), Paiute (*C. beldingi*), and mottled (*C. bairdi*). The shorthead sculpin has been found in all

five Sinks Drainages. Distribution patterns and geomorphic evidence suggest that the shorthead entered one or more of the Sinks Drainages from the Salmon River at least 10,000 years ago. The species then likely gained access to other streams via Lake Terreton. Morphological assessments and preliminary genetic analysis indicate that the shorthead sculpin of the Sinks Drainages are distinct from shorthead sculpin in other drainages. The mottled sculpin is found in the Beaver-Camas, Medicine Lodge, and Birch drainages but is not known from the Big Lost River and Little Lost River drainages. Distribution patterns and geomorphic evidence suggest that the mottled sculpin entered the Medicine Lodge Creek and Beaver-Camas Creek drainages from the Henrys Fork within the last few thousand years and that the occurrence of mottled sculpin in Birch Creek is either a reporting error or due to anthropogenic introduction. The Big Lost River is the only drainage within the Sinks known to contain Paiute sculpin. It is unclear how or when this species entered this basin. Early sampling efforts and distribution patterns suggest that this species is native to the drainage. Additional genetic analyses are being pursued to help clarify the origin of the sculpin in the Sinks Drainages and assess how much genetic change has occurred in these species since they were isolated.