

# Fieryblack Shiner

*Cyprinella pyrrhomelas*



Image Courtesy of SC Aquarium (M. Ward)

**Relatives:** Class: Actinopterygii - ray-finned fishes  
Order: Cypriniformes - minnows and suckers  
Family: Cyprinidae - minnows

The name Cyprinidae refers to the largest family of fishes in the world made up of 2,100 species found on the continents of North America, to Africa, Europe and Asia. Minnows, contrary to their name, range in size from an inch to 10 feet in length. It is difficult to characterize this group because it contains a wealth of diversity. Minnows vary greatly with respect to both morphological and ecological characteristics from region to region all over the world.

Ten members of the genus *Cyprinella* are found in the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.

**Description:** The fieryblack shiner has the vertical, diamond-shaped scales characteristic of members of the genus *Cyprinella*. Their body markings include, a red snout, a black bar on the side of the head behind the gill cover, narrow black stripe along the back and a black edge on their caudal fin. The dorsal, pelvic, and anal fins are large and rounded; males use their fins for breeding displays. The body of this species is deep and usually covered by 26 scales. It also has a terminal mouth for feeding within the water column.

**Size:** Adults vary in length from 1.8 – 4.4 inches (47 – 110 mm).

<b>Habitat:</b>	Fieryblack shiners inhabit rocky, fast-moving waters and pools in creeks and small to medium-sized rivers.
<b>Range:</b>	They occur in North and South Carolina. Specifically, this species is found above the fall line from the piedmont region to the mountains in the Peedee and Santee river drainages.
<b>Predators:</b>	Larger fish, crayfish, birds, and mammals all are potential predators to the fieryblack shiner.
<b>Diet/Prey:</b>	Food for this species includes aquatic insects and possibly small fish.
<b>Aquarium Diet:</b>	Mysis, Gel Food, Blood Worms, Mealworms, Cut fish (Smelt)
<b>Reproduction:</b>	Breeding displays and sound production by males help distinguish them from other shiner species. During the breeding season, males snouts turn bright red with blue backs, a bright red and white band on the caudal fin, and their other fins turn white. While males guard specific territories, they do not nurture the young, leaving the females to deposit eggs in protected locations such as crevices and the undersides of submerged logs. Females spawn several times between the months of May and June, releasing eggs at intervals rather than all at once.
<b>Fun Facts:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to 1990, the fieryblack shiner was unknown in the Savannah River watershed. -- however, survey results indicate that fieryblack shiners occur in the Chattooga River system. Biologists believe this species to be introduced to the river through bait bucket releases -- one of the common means of accidental introduction of species</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Connection:</b>	<p>Agricultural, residential, and commercial development along riparian habitat has led to siltation of spawning grounds for many species above South Carolina's fall line. Stream alteration and channeling have also caused a decline in available habitat for many stream and river dwelling species. In addition, the introduction of non-native predatory fish (sportfish species) has shown to decrease native populations. For shiners, increased stocks of smallmouth bass and trout may cause increased predation. Lastly, dams and weirs alter the swift streams that shiners need for survival.</p> <p>Protecting riparian habitat is the undertaking of landowners, business owners, non-profit organizations, and government. Protection of pristine habitat and restoration of spoiled ecosystems is essential to the survival of native species.</p>

Despite the reduction and decline of stream and river systems within their range, fieryback shiners are still considered common in mountain streams, creeks and rivers. There currently is no special concern/status for the conservation of this species.

- Status in SC:** Common in the Santee and Pee Dee River watersheds above the fall line. Also occurs as the result of accidental introduction in the Chattooga River of the Savannah River watershed.
- Aliases:** N/A
- References:** Moyle, Peter B. and Cech, Joseph J., Jr. Fishes—an introduction to ichthyology. Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2000.
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- Page, L.M. and B.M. Burr. Freshwater Fishes of North America North of Mexico. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston and New York, 1991. p. 126.
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