

## Endangered Species and Spaces

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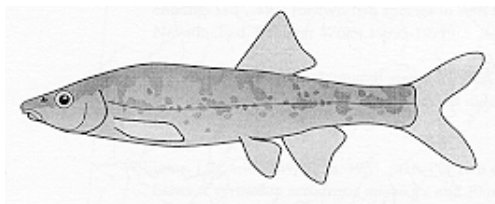
### 6.1 Umatilla Dace: *Rhinichthys umatilla* (Gilbert and Evermann)

Family: *Cyprinidae* - Minnows or Carps

#### Status

Global Rank: G4  
Provincial Rank: S2  
COSEWIC: Vulnerable

Provincial Listing: **Red**



#### *Distinguishing Features*

The Scientific name of *R. umatilla* is derived from either the town of Umatilla, Washington, the Umatilla River, or possibly Indian bands that live in the area. Only in recent years has the Umatilla Dace *R. umatilla* been verified as a species distinct from the similar looking Leopard Dace *R. falcatus*. They average 7 to 10 cm in size and are creamy in colour, somewhat darker on the back, with many large irregularly shaped spots. Umatilla Dace of the Columbia River are less spotted than other populations of *R. umatilla* and *R. falcatus*. The largest Umatilla Dace are females.

#### *Distribution*

Columbia Basin: Within the Columbia Basin, Umatilla Dace are found in the lower Columbia River, the Kootenay river and the Slocan River.

British Columbia: In addition to those locations in the Columbia Basin, the only known populations in Canada of Umatilla Dace are in the Kettle and Similkameen Rivers.

North America: Umatilla Dace are known from the large main rivers of the lower Columbia Basin of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia including: Columbia River at Umatilla, Oregon; Payette River Idaho; Salmon River Idaho; Columbia river at Rock Island Dam; and in the Columbia River east of the Cascade Mountains.

#### *Habitat*

Umatilla Dace prefer rivers with a cobble or stone bottom and relatively warm, productive waters. Yearling dace are commonly found in shallow cobble habitat near current. Current flow has been found to represent an obvious, but major influence on Umatilla Dace habitat with the dace seeking faster currents than Leopard Dace. The dace use very different habitat as a nursery area in contrast to adult habitat. The shallow nursery zone is warmed by the sun in the summer which likely adds to the productivity and metabolic activity of young dace in these habitats.

## Threats

Umatilla Dace is likely to be endangered in Canada due to an extremely small population size, extremely restricted distribution and presumed habitat preference. Much of the original habitats of the Umatilla Dace on the Columbia River are now dammed. The presence of rare fish in the Columbia Basin means that special care must be taken when planning land use, including the building of any dams, around or on local waters, especially those of the Columbia and its tributaries. Currently, Umatilla Dace faces presumed threat of hydro dams in the Columbia River although the effects of dams are unknown (Cannings and Ptolemy, 1998).

## Biology

A large female Umatilla Dace (119 mm) can have up to 3,200 eggs or more. Little information is known otherwise about female reproduction. Beyond observations of Umatilla Dace seeking refuge under rocks, no information is available on their behaviour since they have not been observed in open water. Stomach contents saved from collected specimens appear to contain mostly insect remains. They have not been identified completely but algae are not seen as a major factor in the food habits of the species compared to Speckled Dace. Predation and competition by sympatric *Cottus asper*, *C. rhotheus* or *Salmo gairdneri* may affect Umatilla Dace's abundance, although hiding under rocks could provide dace with protection from predation.



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## Living Landscapes