



Tricolor Shiner (*Cyprinella trichroistia*)

The tricolor shiner is a type of minnow endemic to the Mobile basin, which means it only lives in Mobile River drainage streams.* Found mostly in streams that are part of the Cahaba and Coosa river watersheds, the tricolor shiner looks similar to the Tallapoosa shiner that is found in the Tallapoosa River watershed.*

The tricolor shiner is not as deep bodied and is lighter in color than the Tallapoosa shiner. A breeding male tricolor shiner has an orange tail fin with a black margin and white tips.* The dorsal fin is orange in the front, with the rest of the dorsal fin having black membranes and contrasting white fin rays.* Other fins are yellow-orange in the front and milky white in other areas. A tricolor shiner has a dark, blue-gray lateral band bordered above by a narrow stripe. An adult tricolor shiner is about as long as your finger, 2-1/2 to 3 inches.

A tricolor shiner's shape and deeply forked tail help it swim in fast water. A tricolor shiner eats drifting insects and plant matter. It lives in habitats that are diverse and healthy.* People need to be sure their activities do not adversely affect aquatic habitats, as all living things benefit from a healthy environment.

***Vocabulary**

Breeding – ready to reproduce.

Diverse habitats – in a stream, diverse habitats include a variety of substrate, water speeds and depths.

Dorsal fin – the fin or fins on top of a fish.

Endemic – only found in a certain area.

Fin rays – the hard, but flexible, boney part of a fin.

Membranes – the tissue part of a fin; a thin layer of tissue.

Watershed – all the land and streams that drain down to one point.

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The drawing is original artwork by Julie Harris Mitchell. The photograph and some of the information are from *Fishes of Alabama and the Mobile Basin*.