WILD CANDIDATES "85"

It's Your Choice!

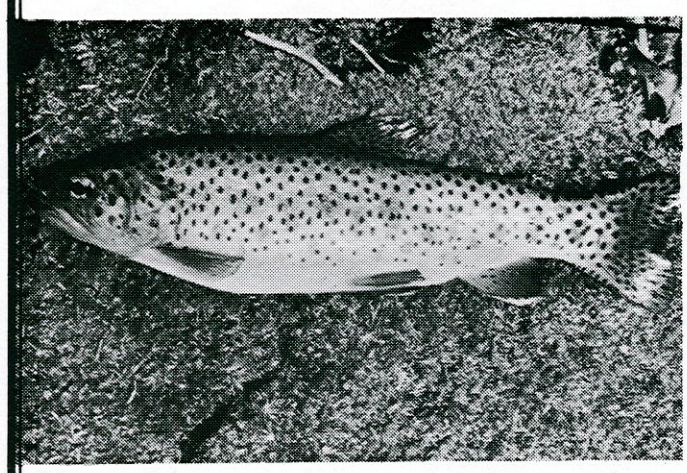
Photo By: Roger L. Hamman

Colorado Squawfish - *(Ptychocheilus lucius)*

The Colorado squawfish is the largest of the fish native to the Colorado River basin. Once common throughout the major rivers of the basin, it is now Federally listed as endangered. It inhabited the deep, fast flowing, often muddy waters and large pools of these rivers. Its white flesh was quite tasty, most appropriate for a fish with the local common name of Colorado River salmon.

The Colorado squawfish is just a minnow, but what a minnow! It is the largest minnow in North America, once growing up to 6 feet in length and 80 pounds in weight. Its scientific name, *Ptychocheilus lucius*, is derived from its body characteristics, *Ptychocheilus* meaning folded lips and *lucius* referring to its shining sides.

Before dams were built, squawfish moved upstream in "runs" before the spawning period, again providing cause of the common name of salmon. Unfortunately, dams were constructed and the squawfish was eliminated from much of its range in Arizona. The Colorado squawfish is virtually extinct in Arizona. The construction of dams has blocked its spawning runs and cooled the water to temperatures to which it is not adapted. Species upon which it once preyed have also declined, causing more stress on it. Nevertheless, brood stocks are being maintained in fish hatcheries to use in a massive reintroduction program in hopes of recovering this magnificent native minnow.



Arizona Game & Fish File Photo

Arizona Trout - *(Salmo apache)*

Historically, Arizona trout occupied headwaters of the Salt, San Francisco and Little Colorado Rivers. Currently there are natural populations still in five streams in the White Mountains. There are additional introduced populations in other streams of the White Mountain area, Pinaleno Mountains and Kaibab Pleateau.

The Arizona trout originally got its scientific name *Salmo apache* from the *salmo*, which is Latin for "leaper," and *apache* for the Indian reservation where it was first identified. The Arizona trout has a yellowish background coloration with dark spots uniformly over the body. The back of the fish is golden to olive brown. The fins are white or yellow tipped and there is a slash of orange to yellow on the lower jaw.

The Arizona trout is not a large fish, and thus is well suited for life in small streams. They seem to prefer small-sized streams at high elevations. The fish rely primarily on pool development, undercut banks and overhanging riparian vegetation for cover. Feeding habits of the Arizona trout seem to vary according to size. Flies are the major food for sub-adult fish, while adults feed primarily on caddis flies. Numerous land insects are also taken by all sizes of fish.

Currently, Arizona trout range is increasing due to joint conservation efforts by state and federal agencies and private organizations. The Arizona trout is listed as a Federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

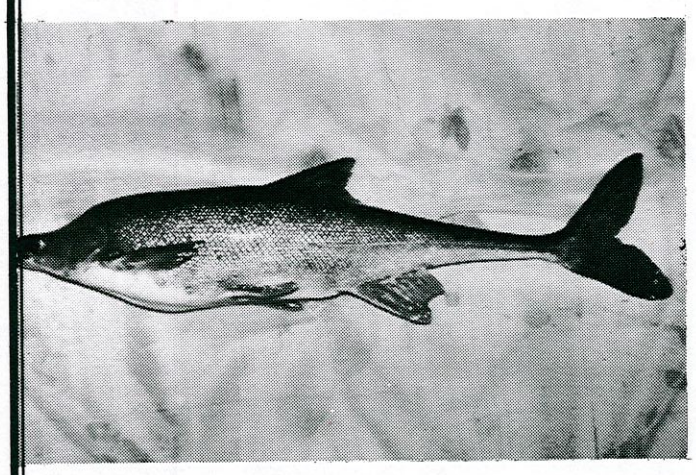


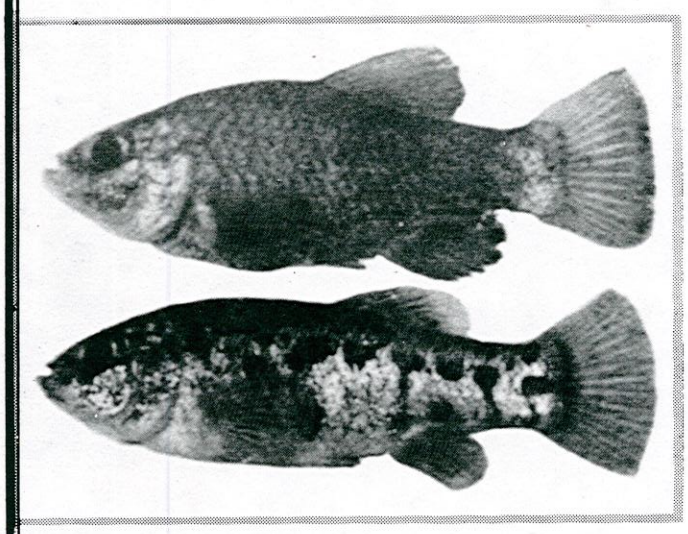
Photo By: Roger L. Hamman

Bonytail Chub - *(Gila elegans)*

The bonytail chub is one of several fish native to the Colorado River basin now considered endangered species by the Federal government. It once occurred in the mainstream Colorado River, as well as in the Salt and Gila Rivers. The chub thrived in warm, often muddy backwaters and eddies adjacent to swift water. Now it is known only from Lake Mohave, on the Colorado. The Lake Mohave population consists of old adults, with no successful reproduction having been documented in the wild for more than twenty years.

The bonytail chub is large compared to most fishes native to Arizona. It reaches lengths of almost 24" and weights of up to two pounds. The chub has a long, slender body that is highly streamlined. This probably enabled it to withstand the severe floods that characterized the large rivers in which it occurred. The chub's body is very dark above but silvery on the sides, often yellowish at the base of the fins. Adult chubs eat filamentous algae, plant debris and plankton. Young chubs eat primarily aquatic insects.

The bonytail chub has disappeared from Arizona as its habitat has been changed or destroyed. Our warm desert rivers have been dammed and made into cold water fisheries, well suited to trout and other fishes that are not native to Arizona. State and Federal biologists are working hard to prevent further declines in the chub population and to restore it to its former abundance.



Arizona Game & Fish File Photo

Desert Pupfish - *(Cyprinodon macularius)*

The desert pupfish is one of two small native fish that once occurred throughout the marshes, backwaters and springs of the desert rivers and streams of the Gila River basin and the Lower Colorado River. Usually, the water in which it thrived was shallow in depth and often choked with aquatic vegetation. As these shallow waters disappeared from the landscape or had non-native, predatory fish introduced into them, the desert pupfish also disappeared. By 1970, it occurred in Arizona only in a few places including Quitobaquito Pond, in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Although small in size, adults being less than 1-1/2" in total length, the desert pupfish is one of the more colorful and interesting fish native to Arizona. During the spring and early summer breeding season, males become a beautiful iridescent blue, with yellow fins and dark bands on their tails (females remain a drab, pale gray-brown year-round).

Desert pupfish are voracious eaters. Young pupfish begin feeding on aquatic invertebrates soon after hatching. Desert pupfish rarely live more than a year in the wild, although some may reach three years of age.

The desert pupfish, recently eliminated from much of its historic range in Arizona, is now being introduced at carefully selected sites. State and Federal biologists cooperated with private landowners to establish the pupfish at four sites in 1983 and 1984. Hopefully, in 1985 and 1986 more than twenty other sites will have pupfish, and the species will be well on its way to recovery in our state.