



Common Name Colorado River squawfish

Scientific Name *Ptychocheilus lucius*

Status Endangered

Species Description This is the largest native minnow of North America. It can grow to lengths of nearly six feet and weigh up to 80 pounds. The body is slender and long and the tail is deeply forked. A good distinguishing mark for young specimens is a dark, wedge-shaped spot at the base of the tail.

Distribution

Historic The species was once found throughout the Colorado River and its major tributaries from Arizona to Wyoming.

Existing Presently the species occupies natural habitat in Utah and Colorado. Hatchery populations are kept at the Willow Beach, Dexter and Hotchkiss National Fish Hatcheries.

Reasons for Decline River modifications, such as dams and water diversions, have altered water temperatures, water quality and reduced spawning habitat.

Habitat This is a "big river" fish, found in the main channels of large rivers and their major tributaries. Turbid warm waters are preferred.

Food Young squawfish, less than four inches in length, feed primarily on invertebrates. As size increases, the inclusion of other fish in the diet increases. Once squawfish achieve a length of eight inches, fish become the major food item.

Did You Know? The Colorado River squawfish, also referred to as the Colorado River salmon, was a preferred food fish by many individuals in the Colorado Basin when the species was more plentiful.

