

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TWO MORE SPECIES OF COLORADO RIVER FISH IN TROUBLE

Two fish species have been proposed for the endangered species and threatened species lists by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

The proposal, published in the April 24, 1978, Federal Register, lists remaining populations of the bonytail chub as endangered and the razorback sucker as threatened.

The species are known from the Colorado River drainage in California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. Two other fish having a similar range, the Colorado River squawfish and the humpback chub, are already listed as endangered.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a portion of its range.

Because of the extremes of its riverine habitat, the Colorado River system contains few fish species. The river drops in elevation over 2 miles in its 1,700-mile journey from southwestern Wyoming to the gulf of California, resulting in some of the most turbulent waters on earth.

Neither the bonytail chub nor the razorback sucker can breed in the cold tailwaters, and therefore can't use the new habitat that has been created by impoundments and diversions. Many of the individuals remaining are more than 20 years old.

Introduced species such as bass, sunfish, and catfish now outnumber native species in the Colorado basin and compete with them for food and territory. Some are also predators on these species.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is also seeking comments on areas that should be determined to be critical habitat for these species as provided by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. That section prohibits any Federal agency from authorizing, funding, or carrying out any action that could jeopardize an endangered species or adversely affect its critical habitat.

Persons wishing to comment on this proposal should write to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (OES), Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. All comments received by June 26, 1978, will be considered.

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