

**BONYTAIL**  
*(Gila elegans)*

**STATUS:** Endangered (45 FR 27710, April 23, 1980) with critical habitat (59 FR 13374, March 21, 1994.)

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** This large [averaging 30-36 cm (12-14 in) and achieving 61 cm (24 in) in length] minnow is characterized by a small head, large fins, slightly humped back, and a long, thin caudal peduncle.

**HABITAT:** Found in slower water habitats in the mainstream such as eddies, pools, side channels, and coves. They are found in streams below 1,219 m (4,000 ft) elevation.

**RANGE: Historical:** Endemic to the Colorado River basin and found throughout the mainstem rivers and backwaters of the Upper and Lower Basins.

**Current:** Rarest of the Colorado River fishes and close to extinction. The last natural population is found in Lake Mohave. Hatchery-produced and cove-reared bonytails have been stocked into Lakes Havasu and Mohave (La Paz and Mohave counties, Arizona). Both reservoirs have ongoing reintroduction efforts using Lake Mohave stock.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY:** Modification of original river conditions by dam construction, flow depletion from irrigation and other uses, hybridization with other *Gila* species, and the introduction of non-native fishes. Adult populations exist in reservoirs; however, recruitment under these circumstances is not sufficient to sustain the population.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** In Arizona: National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona State University, and private groups.

**NOTES:** Recovery Plan completed in May, 1984, revised in September, 1990, and updated in 2002.

Critical habitat encompasses the Colorado River from Hoover Dam to Davis Dam and another section of the Colorado River from the northern boundary of Havasu National Wildlife Refuge to Parker Dam including Lake Havasu in Mohave County, Arizona. Additional critical habitat is located in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California.

Captive populations are currently being reared at Willow Beach and Dexter National Fish Hatcheries. Bonytails are stocked annually into Lake Mohave, Lake Havasu, and below Parker Dam on the Colorado River.

Listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Arizona.