

Roundtail chub
Lower Colorado River Distinct Population Segment (DPS)
(Gila robusta)

STATUS: Candidate.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The roundtail chub is a member of the minnow family Cyprinidae. Roundtail chub are streamlined, similar to trout in appearance, and characterized by a robust body and tail, are olive gray in color, with silvery sides and a white belly. The roundtail chub matures at about 2-3 years of age and likely lives about 7 years or more. Breeding males develop red or orange coloration on the lower half of the cheek and at the bases of paired fins. Individuals may reach 49.0 cm (19.3 in) but usually average 25-30 cm (9.8 - 11.8 in). Spawning occurs in the late spring; females broadcast about 2,000 tiny sticky eggs over a gravel and cobble bottom. Transparent larvae 25 mm in length (.3 inches) hatch in 5 days and grow to about 76 mm (3 inches) in one year. They are omnivores, feeding mostly on aquatic insects, and to a lesser extent on fishes and other vertebrates.

HABITAT: Roundtail chub occur in cool to warm water over a wide range of elevations in rivers and streams throughout the Colorado River basin, often occupying open areas of the deepest pools and eddies of mid-sized to larger streams. Roundtail chubs are often associated with areas of cover in the form of boulders, overhanging cliffs, undercut banks, or vegetation.

RANGE: Historical: Found throughout the Colorado River basin from Wyoming to Arizona and likely into Mexico, and in the mainstem and most large tributaries. Roundtail chub of the lower Colorado River Basin DPS were historically found in the mainstem and many perennial tributaries of the Colorado, Little Colorado, Bill Williams, Gila, Verde, Salt, San Francisco, San Pedro, and Zuni rivers in Arizona, New Mexico and also possibly in Mexico.

Current: The species is common to rare in the mainstem Colorado River and its larger tributaries in the upper Colorado River basin in Wyoming, Utah and Colorado; and is common to rare in the lower Colorado River basin (constituting the DPS) in approximately 31 localities in tributaries of the Little Colorado and Bill Williams rivers, and in the mainstem and tributaries of the Gila, Salt, and Verde rivers (Apache, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, LaPaz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, and Yavapai counties, Arizona, and Grant County, New Mexico).

REASON FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Roundtail chub populations have declined due to a combination of habitat loss and degradation related to dams, diversions, groundwater pumping, mining, development, recreation, improper livestock grazing, and competition and predation from non-native fishes. Global climate change is anticipated to worsen the effects of these threats. The lower Colorado River DPS of roundtail chub occupy only 18% of their historical range.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: In Arizona: U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, tribal lands, and private lands.

NOTES: Considered a sport fish by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (see http://www.azgfd.gov/h_f/fish_roundtail_chub.shtml).