

RAZORBACK SUCKER

Xyrauchen texanus (Endangered Colorado, Federally)

Restoration stocking of razorback suckers is occurring in the Green, Colorado, Gunnison and San Juan rivers.



THE RAZORBACK SUCKER IS a large, bronze to yellow fish that attains a weight of about 15 pounds and has a sharp-edged keel behind the head. Originally widespread in the Colorado River system, wild populations were reduced to a small number of individuals in the Yampa, Colorado and Gunnison rivers in Colorado. Reproducing populations remain only in the middle Green River in Utah and in an off-channel pond in the Colorado River near Grand Junction. The razorback is most often found in quiet, muddy backwaters along the river. It has been observed spawning over gravel bars in the mainstream river. Like most suckers, it feeds on both plant and animal matter. Loss of large floodplain habitats and non-native fish predation

are believed to be primary factors in the decline of this species. Since the monitoring program began in 1978, significant survival of young razorback suckers into adulthood has not been documented. Restoration stocking of razorback sucker is occurring in the Green, Colorado, Gunnison and San Juan rivers to develop and augment adult populations. Restoration of flooded bottomland habitats and non-native fish control are being conducted hand-in-hand to provide suitable nursery habitats for young razorback sucker. Survival of young razorback sucker may also be reduced by high concentrations of selenium and may require additional work to reduce selenium pollution sources. Natural reproduction from stocked razorback sucker has been documented in the San Juan River.