

BLUEHEAD SUCKER
(*CATOSTOMUS DISCOBOLUS*)

Navajo/Federal Statutes: NESL G4 / not listed under the ESA.

Distribution: Range includes eastern ID and western WY, and south throughout upper Colorado River drainage in UT, CO, and northwestern NM; also found in Colorado River in Grand Canyon area and upper Little Colorado River tributaries in AZ. On the Navajo Nation, known throughout San Juan River and its major tributaries, Little Colorado River at the confluence with the Colorado River, and in several drainages of western Chuska Mountains (Kinlichee, Whiskey, Wheatfields, and Tsaile Creeks). Potential in other Chuska Mountain streams, and perennial stretches of Canyon de Chelly. Chuska Mountain populations, especially Kinlichee Creek, are currently being compared (morphometrics and genetics) to the federal candidate Zuni bluehead Sucker (*C.d.yarrowi*).

Habitat: Occupies a wide range of water conditions within river/stream habitats, including variable water temperatures (16-26° C), and stream volumes (<1 to several hundred m³/second); often occupy the swift-water areas in mountain streams. Smaller tributaries adjacent to large rivers are often nursery areas.

Similar Species: Only suckers have protractile mouths with large, fleshy lips; bluehead sucker is ≤45 cm in length and has silver-blue color; flannelmouth sucker is ≥45 cm in length and has very thick, elongated lower lip completely divided by median groove; razorback sucker is ≤60 cm and has keeled dorsal hump behind head.

Phenology:

- e.MAY-m.JUL: spawning season
- m.JUL-m.SEP: adults maintain brilliant breeding colors
- m.SEP-l.MAY: growth of young, non-breeding season

Survey Method: Evaluations may be based on the presence of habitat. Electrofishing or seine surveys may be important if the proposed action may result in significant habitat alterations.

Avoidance: Within occupied habitat, no surface disturbance year-round within 30-60 m of top of stream bank (depending on stream category, per Navajo Natural Heritage Program, 1994), and prevent changes to water chemistry or quantity.

References:

- Holden, P.B. and W. Masslich. 1997. San Juan River recovery implementation program, summary report 1991-1996, PRN-576-2. BIO/WEST, Inc., Logan, UT.
- Minckley, W.L. 1973. Fishes of Arizona. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Sims Printing Co., Inc. Phoenix, AZ. (description p.170)
- Navajo Natural Heritage Program. 1994. Draft Guidance, Navajo Nation Aquatic Resources Protection Plan. Window Rock, AZ.
- Smith, G.R. 1966. Distribution and evolution of the North American *Catostomid* fishes of the subgenus (*Pantosteus*, Genus *Catostomus*. Misc. Publicat. of Museum of Zoology, Univ. of Michigan, No.129, pp.82.97.