

Scientists upset: Pupfish face extinction

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Scientists say iridescent blue pupfish living at Devil's Hole, a remote Mojave Desert rock outcropping, might become extinct within another year.

In an incident two years ago -- not publicly announced -- scientists accidentally killed 80 of the fish, which was about a third of the population at the time, The Los Angeles Times reported Monday. Fewer than 80 of the inch-long fish -- among the rarest species in the world -- are in a small, deep pool that's part of the Death Valley National Monument.

A federal recovery team is to meet Thursday in Las Vegas to consider emergency options, including capturing fish, breeding them elsewhere and then restocking Devil's Hole with the offspring, or just leaving the site alone in hopes the fish can rebound without human help, the Times reported.

Carl Hubbs, known as the father of Western ichthyology, named the fish that have survived since the ice age because they play like puppies, nipping at each other's tails.

The "hole" is a large pool 10 feet across and 70 feet long. Divers have ventured down 468 feet without reaching the bottom, the newspaper said.

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