

Fish once thought extinct in Grand Canyon found in Colorado River

October 19 2012, by John M. Glionna

Researchers in Grand Canyon National Park have discovered a prehistoric-looking sucker fish once thought to be extinct from the area.

The [fish](#), known as the razorback sucker, is the first of its species to be caught in the [Grand Canyon](#) in more than 20 years. The fish is characterized by a long, high sharp-edged hump behind its head. The creature was snagged by Arizona fish and [wildlife officials](#) in the Colorado River last week, in the lower part of the canyon system.

So is this find one of those river monsters featured on cable television?

"In terms of river monsters, it's probably more dinosaur fish," Brandon Albrecht, fisheries section manager of the environmental consulting firm BIO-WEST, told the [Los Angeles Times](#). "It has a nice hump to it. It's a very uniquely shaped fish."

The razorback sucker was one of the biggest sucker fish in North America at up to 3 feet in length, and it used to be found throughout the [Colorado River system](#).

The last one on record in the Grand Canyon had been caught in 1990. That changed on Oct. 9, when an annual fish-surveying group passed into the lower part of Grand Canyon.

"We had basically classified the fish as being extirpated from (or locally extinct from) the park," Brian Healy, fisheries program manager at

Grand Canyon [National Park](#), told the Arizona Daily Sun.

The National Park Service is taking another look at what lives in the Grand Canyon and what's dying out there. The Sun reported that, according to a position paper by the Grand Canyon [Wildlands](#) Council, a [conservation group](#), a number of species are at risk in the region, including seven kinds of plants, nine types of insects, eight types of fish, 19 birds and 31 mammals.

The researchers who found the rare razorback sucker were using electricity to stun fish for short periods and then sample what floated to the top. The fish don't reproduce easily in temperatures below 50 degrees and are eaten by a number of other fish. Researchers believe the fish might have traveled upstream some 50 miles from Lake Mead.

Albrecht said he has been doing research on the razorback since 1996.

"It's pretty exciting to find that some fish in Lake Mead, which are under threat, to have expanded and moved upstream to the Grand Canyon," he told the Times. "That's a huge deal for the recovery of these fish."

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