

Chub flub causes rub: Species distinction puts Verde trout season in question

By Steve Ayers
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Courtesy of U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service The Verde Trout is also known as the roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), a very close relative of another chub known as the headwater chub (*Gila nigra*). It is difficult for even an expert to tell the two apart. However, the two fish have two distinct differences. First, they are genetically different from one another. And second, the headwater chub is a candidate for the endangered species list and protected by Game and Fish's regulations from being fished.



CAMP VERDE - There is an odds on chance that if you go to Fossil Creek next weekend to hook a Verde trout, that you will in fact be reeling in a lesser known but very much endanger spices of chub instead.

This fact is leading to a controversy as to whether or not the planned Verde trout season is being carried out by Arizona Game & Fish in contradiction of their own fishing regulations.

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In September of last year, Game & Fish was notified by Paul Mash, an expert on fish species at [Arizona State University](#), that the vast majority of chub in Fossil Creek are headwater chub.

According to a study done by Marsh and fish geneticist Thomas Dowling, all the chub in Fossil Springs are headwater chub, 92 percent of those in the reach from the springs to the former Irvin power plant are headwater chub and almost half of those between Irving and the down stream fish barrier are headwater.

In spite of the scientists' objections, and objections from the Bureau of Reclamation, the Game & Fish board approved the special season in October 2008.

Last week the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental organization that advocates on behalf of threatened and endangered species, filed a petition with Game & Fish to close Fossil Creek to sport fishing for roundtail chub.

"They are fishing for the wrong species," says Robin Silver of the CBD, "It is not cool that the fish being fished for is

Photo courtesy of Fish and Wildlife Service Oct. 3 will mark the opening of the first ever Verde Trout season on Fossil Creek. Also known as the roundtail chub, the fish is notorious for its fighting ability, in spite of the fact it seldom grows past 14 inches.

one that is protected by their own order."

Silver says that even though the regulations allow only catch and release there is still a danger to the headwater chub.

"There is evidence to show that chub do not survive well when handled. They will look like they have been revived but they will swim off and die," Silver says.

However, according to Rory Atkins, spokesman for the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the season will open as planned unless the Game & Fish board decides otherwise between now and opening day Oct. 3.

"At this pint it looks like we are headed for litigation," says Silver, "We can't let them fish for the wrong fish."

Friday, the Game & Fish Commission called an emergency meeting for Wednesday at 1 p.m. in Phoenix to discuss the issue.